

Graduate Student Funding Review

I. Introduction – Review of University-Wide Graduate Scholarships

As Wright State University continues to face ongoing enrollment and budget challenges, we present this review of current graduate tuition support mechanisms across the University to help continue the conversation and guide policy for AY 2021-2022 and beyond.

This review is the product of a summer working group of graduate directors and graduate faculty who evaluated the current state of University-wide graduate funding. The document was reviewed by the Faculty Budget Priorities Committee and Graduate Advisory Board and has been revised by the Graduate Academic Policies Committee. The primary goals of this review are:

1. To articulate the value of graduate education at Wright State, including its connections to undergraduate and graduate research, faculty research, visibility of the university, and connections to the regional and national workforce.
2. To advocate strongly for funding models that offer predictability to program directors and increase Wright State's competitiveness to attract and retain students.
3. To recognize the importance of sufficient funding to maintain high-quality graduate programs at the university.
4. To encourage increased transparency and awareness of the sources, uses, and impact of graduate student funding support in the effort to be careful stewards of these limited resources.

This review focuses on scholarship support for graduate students at WSU. While it lies beyond the scope of the current review and recommendations, we strongly suggest conducting a comprehensive evaluation of other mechanisms of graduate student support, such as Graduate Assistantships, WSU Foundation Funding, and other means of funding that may be specific to a college or program.

II. Recommendations from the Review

(1) Recognize graduate studies align perfectly with the mission and values of a Wright State education

- a. Graduate education transforms the lives of students who complete advanced degrees and certificates, and enriches their communities. Graduate students conduct scholarly research and creative endeavors critical to the quality of the environment at Wright State and in the surrounding region.
- b. Graduate students provide meaningful service on behalf of the University in furthering the undergraduate mission through mentorship and teaching assignments.
- c. Graduate studies enhance the qualifications and professional networks of students who are a major force in the economic revitalization of our region and state.

(2) Create a centralized funding strategy with college-level administration of funding¹

- a. Four distinct mechanisms administered by the Graduate School have been used at the University to support graduate studies:
 - i. Graduate Scholars
 - ii. Wright Fellows
 - iii. Wright Patterson Air Force Base Scholarships
 - iv. Graduate Tuition Scholarships (GTS)
- b. The Graduate Scholars and Wright Fellows Scholars programs are currently suspended due to budget constraints.
- c. These four programs, isolated as they are from other means of graduate support at the university, are not clearly informed by a coherent and strategic vision for increasing opportunity across a broad range of graduate studies.
- d. While there should be a university-level strategy for graduate student financial support, the colleges should primarily be responsible for the administration of funding, given the variety of degree programs and the access they have to other funding mechanisms.
 - i. Recognize that even a centralized model will not be one-size-fits-all.
 - ii. Encourage communication between programs and across colleges to promote successful practices.
- e. Update funding procedures with the goal of optimizing student recruitment efforts. The current funding model leaves no room for strategic expenditures to support particular programs or initiatives.

(3) Decrease the barriers to non-Ohio enrollment: bring “Resident” and “Non-Resident” tuition rates closer to one another

- a. We recognize the benefits of the recent decision by the WSU Board of Trustees to allow WSU to approximate in-state tuition rates (fee reduction of 99% of the non-Ohio resident surcharge) for graduate students who received a bachelor’s degree in Ohio.
- b. Decreasing the non-resident surcharge for all graduate students, regardless of where they earned their undergraduate degree, would likely increase overall graduate student enrollment and tuition revenue.
 - i. This would increase our competitiveness with other schools in our region, the state of Ohio, and nationally.
 - ii. Non-resident students paying resident tuition rates generate more tuition revenue for Wright State University than if those students attend other schools.

(4) Expand the effective Resident Tuition area

- a. Target areas: Northern Kentucky and further into Indiana

¹ As recommended by the 2017 Review of the Office of the Vice President for Research. While Recommendation 27 of this report specifically referred to GTA funding, the rationale in this recommendation highlighted the need to attract and retain high quality students. The 2017 recommendation also justified central funding to decrease financial strain on specific units which may rely on TA support more heavily than others.

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- b. As an example, individuals employed in Cincinnati (an hour drive from Wright State University), but who live in Northern Kentucky are required to pay “Non-Resident” tuition.
- c. Eliminating this barrier would enhance our marketability in the surrounding areas.
- d. This goal might be achieved by reducing the out-of-state surcharge across-the-board.

(5) Analyze level and distribution of program funding

- a. Graduate funding mechanisms must be transparent to the colleges and programs.
- b. At the beginning of each academic year, the Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC) of the Faculty Senate should review university-wide data on the allocation of funding awards during the previous year. The GSAC, which is charged to “initiate study of issues regarding improvement of any aspect of graduate education ... including recruiting and enrolling students,” shall make recommendations to the Faculty Senate no later than November of each year.
 - i. GSAC recommendations should be visible and available to programs and faculty.
- c. Continue to ensure that Graduate Tuition Scholarship (GTS) support does not exceed 50% of tuition revenue at the level of each college.
- d. Analyze impact of current and past funding.
 - i. Analyze the allocations from the four tuition support mechanisms outlined above to the various colleges over time to enable strategic and equitable decisions about future funding.
 - ii. Request programs to report the impact of tuition support on graduation and placement rates.
 - iii. Future reviews could analyze the impact of tuition support on doctoral and master’s degree programs.

(6) Reinstate Wright Fellows program or create new graduate funding support designed to increase diversity and equity among under-represented populations.

- a. Funding should support University-wide diversity and equity goals.
- b. Prior Wright Fellows program lacked specificity in the definition of under-represented populations.

(7) Notify colleges (Program Directors and Deans) of centralized funding support no later than January 15 each year

- a. Predictability is critical for strategic planning.
 - i. Maintain a set date every year for informing colleges what funding they will have to offer.

III. Rationale for Supporting Graduate Funding

- Graduate programs enhance undergraduate education.

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- A high-quality undergraduate education provides students with not only foundational background information, but also the most recent findings from cutting-edge modern research. One of the best ways to do this is to conduct that research within the walls of the university, allowing faculty to integrate their findings in their undergraduate classes.
- Undergraduate student participation in research activities conducted by graduate students and faculty provides creates an experiential learning opportunity that makes these students more competitive for employment and graduate school.

- Graduate students reduce the cost of undergraduate programs
 - Graduate assistantships are a low-cost means to secure competent teaching assistants and laboratory instructors.
 - Graduate students also act as role models for undergraduates and are effective ambassadors for promoting advanced education.

- Graduate programs enable retention of faculty as well as enhance the scholarship of faculty teaching in graduate programs.
 - For many research programs, graduate students comprise a critical part of the research labor force and are critical contributors to the intellectual environment that pushes research into new and productive avenues.

- Graduate degrees are a requirement for entry-level positions in high-demand sectors of the work force in the Dayton area.
 - Research jobs at AFRL and WPAFB
 - Education leadership positions, including principals, superintendents, and school counselors
 - Many within the health and human services sector, including nurse practitioners, clinical psychologists, and licensed independent counselors

- Graduate education empowers students' career advancement and enables greater contributions to the communities served by Wright State.
 - Graduate degrees lead to higher educational attainments, promotions at work, and life-long learning
 - Highly educated workers
 - Create employment opportunities for less educated workers
 - Spend more discretionary income in their communities
 - Highly educated citizens
 - Build stronger communities through civic participation, volunteering, and philanthropy

- Students who earn graduate degrees in Ohio tend to stay in Ohio.
 - This is true even if they originate from nearby states (Kentucky, Indiana).

IV. Existing Mechanisms for Graduate Student Support

This section highlights the intended function, level of funding, and value of the four University-wide programs used to support graduate students at WSU. Two of these programs are currently suspended (AY 2020-2021) due to budget constraints.

• **Graduate School Scholars**

- **Funding for this program is suspended for AY 2020-2021.**
- This program was established to enable recruitment and retention of the top applicants to Wright State graduate programs.
- Competitive awards based on nominations from graduate programs.
- This award covered the first year of a student’s enrollment, and the nominating program was required to articulate their level of support for the student beyond the first year.
- Level of student support: Full tuition and \$13,000 annual stipend per student

The table below shows funding awarded by college over the past three years. This data highlights the uneven distribution of funds in this University-wide program among colleges, with some colleges (BSOM, CONH, and RSCOB) receiving zero funds during this time. Limited nominations from these colleges may have contributed to this inequity, but this data highlights the need for a strategic funding plan going forward.

Graduate School Scholars \$ Amount Awarded by College

	BSOM	CECS	CEHS	COLA	CONH	COSM	RSCOB	Total
2017	\$ 28,361	\$ -	\$ 53,322	\$ 59,959	\$ -	\$ 59,580	\$ -	\$ 201,222
2018	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50,420	\$ 99,118	\$ -	\$ 85,615	\$ -	\$ 235,153
2019	\$ -	\$ 59,750	\$ 33,238	\$ 33,898	\$ -	\$ 107,218	\$ -	\$ 234,104
	\$ 28,361	\$ 59,750	\$ 136,980	\$ 192,975	\$ -	\$ 252,413	\$ -	\$ 670,479

• **Wright Fellows**

- **Funding for this program is suspended for AY 2020-2021.**
- This program was established to enable recruitment and retention of individuals from under-represented populations.
 - Caveat: definitions of “under-represented” differed between programs and there is a critical need for a program-level mission to enable student diversity according to broad university-based values.
- Competitive awards based on nominations from graduate programs.
- Similar to the Graduate School Scholars program, this award covered the first year of a student’s enrollment, and the nominating program was required to articulate their level of support for the student beyond the first year.
- Level of student support: Full tuition and \$13,000 stipend per student

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Funding for this program over the past three years is shown below. Again, inequities in the distribution of these funds, which may reflect nominations among colleges, are apparent. BSOM, CONH, CECS, and RSCOB received no funds during this time and awards decreased in COLA and CEHS. This variability is of particular concern given the mandate of this program to promote diversity.

Wright Fellows \$ Amount Awarded by College

	BSOM	CECS	CEHS	COLA	CONH	COSM	RSCOB	Total
2017-18	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 41,262	\$ 56,621	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 97,883
2018-19	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 48,038	\$ 30,160	\$ -	\$ 26,200	\$ -	\$ 104,398
2019-20	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,920	\$ 33,898	\$ -	\$ 72,786	\$ -	\$ 127,604
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 110,220	\$ 120,679	\$ -	\$ 98,986	\$ -	\$ 329,885

• **Wright Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB) Scholarship**

- This program is active in AY 2020-2021.
- Provides up to \$6,000 of tuition support per year (\$2,000 per semester) for qualified WPAFB employees or their family members who are enrolled full-time in a graduate program at Wright State.
 - Limit of 1 scholarship per qualifying family. (M.D. and PsyD. students are not eligible for the WPAFB Scholarship)
- Calculations based on full-time status being 6 credit hours and the lowest possible tuition rate of \$660/credit hour = \$3,960 tuition per semester. WPAFB Scholarship pays \$2000 per semester, meaning net tuition revenue of \$1960 (or 49.5% of total tuition charge) per semester. Tuition revenues are even higher if students register for more than 6 credits.
- Without this scholarship, many of these students would not choose Wright State, leading to lost tuition revenue.
 - Air Force/DoD recently capped tuition reimbursement at \$8,000 or 75% of total tuition. This factor, in combination with the WPAFB Scholarship, makes Wright State an affordable option compared to other regional institutions.

This table shows University expenditures for the WPAFB scholarship program for the past three years. Based on the calculations above, tuition revenue would be equal to or (more likely) exceed scholarship funds provided.

WPAFB Scholarships \$ Amount Expended by College

	BSOM	CECS	CEHS	COLA	CONH	COSM	RSCOB	Total
2017-18	\$ 19,732	\$ 87,940	\$ 131,352	\$ 39,968	\$ 38,902	\$ 15,000	\$ 351,886	\$ 684,780
2018-19	\$ 13,500	\$ 74,820	\$ 102,590	\$ 47,920	\$ 28,340	\$ 14,000	\$ 332,878	\$ 614,048
2019-20	\$ -	\$ 64,380	\$ 33,960	\$ 48,792	\$ 18,000	\$ 9,640	\$ 260,717	\$ 435,489
	\$ 33,232	\$ 227,140	\$ 267,902	\$ 136,680	\$ 85,242	\$ 38,640	\$ 945,481	\$ 1,734,317

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• **Graduate Tuition Scholarship Awards (GTS)**

- This program is active in AY 2020-2021.
- Distribution of these funds is managed at the college level, and total support is currently no more than 50% of total tuition generated by registrations. At the college’s discretion, individual students may receive more than 50% support, but the college aggregate remains below the 50% mark.
- Current funding is based on previous years’ expenditure. GTS funds are allocated from the Graduate School to the individual colleges, currently based on expenditures in the prior year.

The table below shows GTS data for the previous two years. Currently, CECS and CONH do not receive GTS support. The table highlights the positive net tuition revenue generated from students supported by this program. As currently structured, the University’s net tuition revenue exceeds the tuition paid by the University, even with one college (COSM) awarding a significant number of scholarships beyond 50% tuition costs. As such, the GTS program demonstrates net gains by the University, in raw dollars.

GTS \$ Amount Expended & \$ Tuition Return by College

	BSOM	CECS	CEHS	COLA	CONH	COSM	RSCOB	TOTAL
2018-2019								
Total Tuition	\$ 45,540		\$535,398	\$984,585		\$328,443	\$ 64,236	\$1,958,202
School Paid (GTS)	\$ 9,000		\$274,701	\$350,314		\$299,045	\$ 31,460	\$ 964,520
Net Tuition Revenue	\$ 36,540		\$260,697	\$634,271		\$ 29,398	\$ 32,776	\$ 993,682
2019-2020								
Total Tuition	\$ 17,820		\$176,868	\$909,300		\$316,802	\$ 68,235	\$1,489,025
School Paid (GTS)	\$ 9,891		\$ 93,420	\$317,370		\$203,253	\$ 29,375	\$ 653,309
Net Tuition Revenue	\$ 7,929		\$ 83,448	\$591,930		\$113,549	\$ 38,860	\$ 835,716

V. Conclusions

Currently operating scholarship programs demonstrate significant return on the University’s investment in terms of additional tuition revenue received. However, uneven distribution and the lack of flexibility to make strategic investments with the current “budget on last year’s spend” model, highlight a critical need for a coherent and comprehensive vision for supporting graduate education across the University.

Graduate programs at Wright State enhance the quality of undergraduate education through undergraduate research and teaching opportunities. Graduate students also enhance the scholarship profile of the university by supporting critical research needs of faculty, and enrich our surrounding communities.

Given that only small percentages of students in each program receive graduate tuition assistance through the programs described, the value of such investments, in terms of maintaining a critical mass of students for the success of graduate education, greatly exceeds the costs of such programs.