

To: HSU Executive Committee  
From: HSU Graduate Council  
Re: Proposal to update Graduate Student Tuition Waiver programs  
Date: December 6, 2010

During Fall 2010, a cross-divisional working group comprising graduate faculty from all three colleges, academic administration, and staff in Academic Programs, Student Financial Services, and Financial Aid convened to improve the procedures for administering the two tuition-waiver programs established by Executive Orders to support graduate students. EO 605 authorizes the waiver of tuition for up to 25 % of nonresident graduate students enrolled in the university, and EO 611 authorizes the waiver of tuition for Graduate Assistants and Teaching Associates.

As the group researched requirements for – and the evolution of -- the procedures used to administer these tuition waivers, it also noted the failure of the allocation levels to keep pace with the level of need.

As a result of comprehensive discussions about improving these two tuition waiver programs, we are recommending specific changes to the total amount of waiver available, as well as changes to timelines and procedures. We believe that modest increases in the level of support available will serve to enhance HSU's graduate programs. We also believe that the procedural changes proposed will reduce the time required of faculty and staff; more importantly, they will diminish the uncertainty and anxiety of students.

## Tuition waivers for nonresident graduate students (EO 605)

### Background

1. Executive Order 605 (July 21, 1993) delegates to campus presidents or their designees the authority to waive full or partial nonresident tuition for up to 25% of the total nonresident graduate student population. About half (as of 1993?) of the CSU campuses provide such waivers as a means of supporting the recruitment of quality graduate students.
2. It is difficult to recruit the very best graduate applicants into our Masters-level programs given the sometimes minimal financial support which is available. The problem for nonresident students is compounded by the prospect of paying out-of-state tuition. The University could ease this problem considerably by making more effective use of EO 605 to waive nonresident fees for the most highly qualified nonresident applicants..
3. Problems with the current approach to allocating nonresident fee waivers include the following:
  - a. **The number of nonresident tuition waiver units available overall.** Though this seems to have approached the 25% allowed for nonresident tuition waivers at some points, it has in recent years diminished even as tuition has increased and as residency has become more difficult for students to attain.

2007-2008	total units for which nonresident fees were waived:	217
2008-2009		224
2009-2010		78
2010-2011		76

- b. ***The method for allocating nonresident tuition waiver units across graduate programs.*** Historically, HSU has allocated a variable number of fee-waiver units to graduate programs based on a complicated ratio of a five-year rolling average number of their nonresident applicants to a five-year rolling average number of their nonresident enrollees. This method is unnecessarily cumbersome and the formula is outdated.
- c. ***The current timeline and procedures for granting nonresident tuition waivers.*** These currently require a great deal of manual work on the part of Financial Services, Financial Aid, Graduate Studies, and departmental personnel; they also create uncertainty and anxiety for students.

### Proposal

The Academic Program Prioritization Final Report and Recommendations (2009) notes that “An eye must be kept on the quality of our graduate programs in terms of admission requirements, curricular quality, rigor or standards, and quality of thesis/project work.” One way to do this is to work to recruit the most qualified applicants into our graduate program. EO 605 could help do this by allowing the very best nonresident applicants to pay resident tuition.

Accordingly, the proposal below is intended to address all three problems with the current program listed above.

#### **A. *Increase the number of nonresident tuition waiver units available overall***

EO 605 allows fee waivers for up to 25% of the non-resident graduate student population. During fall semester of each year, the head count of all non-resident graduate students enrolled in all graduate programs across campus will be determined. This will exclude students enrolled through Extended Education and students enrolled in any credential program. This figure will be used to calculate the total fee waiver availability for the following academic year.

We recommend translating nonresident fee-waiver availability from a number of students to the equivalent number of units, as has been the practice at HSU in the past, to facilitate wider distribution across graduate programs. A full load for graduate students is 12 units per semester or 24 units per year. Thus, the number of fee waiver units available for the following year will be calculated as follows: total number of non-resident graduate students x 0.25 x 24 units per year. For example, there appear to be 40 non-resident graduate students enrolled during fall 2010 (Table 1). We would thus have 240 fee waiver units available for AY 2011-2012 (40 non-resident students x 0.25 x 24 units per year = 240 units).

#### **B. *Simplify the method for allocating nonresident tuition waiver units across graduate programs***

EO 605 limits fee waiver units based on the numbers of nonresident graduate students at the university. Thus, the central metric for determining number of fee waiver units to allocate to individual programs should be the number of nonresident graduate students in those programs. Each Masters program will be allocated a percentage of the University’s total fee waiver allocation based on the percentage of the total number of non-resident graduate students enrolled in that specific program during the previous fall semester. Using the numbers in the example above, with a university-wide availability of

240 units of fee waiver, if the MS in Natural Resources has 21% of the enrolled non-resident graduate students, the MS in Natural Resources would be allocated 21% of the fee waiver units for the following academic year (240 units x 0.21 = 50 units).

Using this approach, then, the nonresident fee waiver allocations for Fall 2011 would be based on nonresident enrollments for Fall 2010 as shown here:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Number nonresident students in program</b>	<b>% of total (40) nonresident students Fall 2010</b>	<b>Fee waiver units to be allocated, based on a total of 240 university-wide</b>
Biology	3	7.5%	18
Business	3	7.5%	18
Education	1	2.5%	6
English	2	5.0%	12
Environ. Systems	6	15%	36
Kinesiology	2	5.0%	12
Natural Resources	14	35.0%	84
Psychology	1	2.5%	6
Sociology	2	5.0%	12
Social Science	3	7.5%	18
Social Work	2	5.0%	12
Theatre	1	2.5%	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>240</b>

**C. Shorten the current timeline and streamline the procedures for granting nonresident tuition waivers.**

Each Masters program will develop their own protocol for awarding fee waiver units to individual applicants. Each protocol is expected to be competitive and fair. Programs are expected to submit the names of awardees to the Graduate Studies office by March 15, and the Graduate Studies office will send out letters requesting written or email commitments from awardees by April 15 for the following academic year. Any nonresident fee waiver units not allocated by April 15 of each year will be returned to a common pool to be awarded on a competitive basis.

Possible Impacts

1. Cost of the Program

- a. The 240 units of fee waiver, projected on the basis of figures for Fall 2010, would support 10 students each taking 12 (or more) units for both fall and spring semesters. Without fee waivers, these students would pay an additional \$372 per unit or a grand total of \$89,280. This is the maximum possible cost to the program. However, the reality is that, without fee waivers, some proportion of these 10 highly qualified nonresident students would likely be replaced with 10 lesser qualified resident students who would not pay the nonresident fee anyway. The real cost would lie in the number of nonresident students who got fee waivers who would

have attended anyway and paid the extra \$372 per unit. There is no accurate way to determine or even estimate this.

In AY 09-10 and 10-11, the university granted a total of 76 fee waivers each year, at an approximate cost of \$25,764. The total proposed represents an increase of \$63,516.

- b. Maintaining a strong nonresident fee waiver program is not likely to increase the size of many graduate options. The number of graduate students that we can accommodate in many, if not most, of our Masters programs depends a good deal on the number of available faculty. Many programs are already operating at capacity. Thus, there may be some modest growth in smaller Masters programs as a result of fee waivers, but only to the degree that growth could be accommodated with current staffing and classroom offerings.

## 2. Benefits

- a. The benefits to nonresident fee waivers are substantial. Most importantly, it would provide a means to attract the most highly qualified graduate students into our MS programs. This would raise the standards for all applicants and subsequently all students. Ultimately, this would raise up the elevate the quality of our MS programs. At the same time it would bring in students from different states and different parts of the country who may or may not think like we do. Diversity of experiences and diversity of thought enriches our graduate programs and the entire campus.
- b. Supporting nonresident fee waivers would be a strong positive statement about the value of graduate programs at the University. Graduate programs clearly enhance undergraduate education. This would be an excellent opportunity to reinforce Humboldt's commitment to graduate education.

## 3. Proposed effective date: Fall Semester 2011

# **Tuition waivers for Graduate Assistants and Teaching Associates (E0611)**

## Background

1. E0611 allows campus presidents or their designees to waive the State University Fee for graduate students who are employed as Teaching Associates (Class Code 2353 or 2354) or Graduate Assistants (Class Code 2355). Funding for the program depends on discretionary allocations from the campus president.
2. The TA fee waiver program began at HSU in 1999. President McCrone allocated \$40,000 for the first year, to be divided more or less equally between the two semesters. Even though graduate student fees have increased substantially since 1999 (145% for half-time; 175% for full-time), the annual allocation for TA fee waivers has remained at \$40,000. The number of full-time waivers we can offer

per semester has dropped from about 21 to 8; the corresponding numbers for half-time enrollment are 33 to 13.

3. Initially, recipients of the waivers were required to enroll for 9 units, and they received funding to cover full-time fees. However, in January 2010, this policy was amended to allow students who enroll for 6 or fewer units to receive a waiver sufficient to cover half-time enrollment.
4. TA wages have increased a modest 13% since 1999 (\$150/WTU/month in 1999; \$170/WTU/month today). A graduate student who teaches one 3-hour lab section per week earns \$2010, which is approximately \$600 less than the cost of full-time enrollment.
5. In the current system, decisions are made at the beginning of each semester, and students often learn whether they will receive a waiver only several weeks after classes have begun. The awarding of a fee waiver at that point in the semester can result in an adjustment of the student's other financial aid awards, which is confusing and disappointing when the student thinks that he or she will be receiving a refund of fees paid.
6. It is not necessary to grant tuition waivers to all students employed as Graduate Assistants or Teaching Associates, because an alternative source of funding exists to cover GA/TA student fees. Qualifying students are awarded State University Grants (SUG). Since the dollar amounts are comparable, a student who receives a SUG is not eligible for a TA fee waiver. Many of our graduate GA's and TA's are covered by SUGs, but the current level of support for the TA fee waivers is not sufficient to provide full fee relief for the rest.

## Proposal

### ***A. Increase the allocation available for GA/TA tuition waivers***

Fees are going up by another 15% for next year. Accordingly, we propose that the allocation for TA fee waivers be increased such that *all* GA's and TA's who do not qualify for a SUG or other waiver would be covered. Based on the experience of the past few years, we estimate that a waiver level of \$50,000 to \$60,000 (\$10,000 to \$20,000 more than current availability) would be sufficient to provide coverage at this level.

### ***B. Revise the schedule for awarding GA/TA tuition waivers***

As noted above, in the current system, decisions are made at the beginning of each semester. To improve efficiency as well as to provide a more timely and humane projection of expected financial support for GA's and TA's, we propose that decisions about fee waivers be made on a yearly basis, at the end of Spring semester. Under this plan, prospective recipients would know the level of fee obligation they face for the next academic year well in advance.

### ***C. Clarify the procedure for awarding GA/TA tuition waivers***

We propose the following procedure

1. To be considered for a GA/TA fee waiver, a student must apply for a SUG by filing a FAFSA by the March deadline. Only students who do not receive a SUG or other fee coverage will receive a TA fee waiver.

2. Students who receive GA/TA fee waivers must be enrolled for at least two units related to their academic program. The amount of the fee waiver will vary; students who enroll for 6 or fewer units will receive funding for half-time enrollment, and those that enroll in more than 6 units will receive support for full-time enrollment. Students in the latter category must enroll for at least 7 academically relevant units, i.e., a student who enrolls for 6 academic units relevant to his program + 1 unit that is not will not be eligible for full-time support.
4. Students must be appointed at a minimum of 15 hours/week as a Graduate Assistant (Class Code 2355) or minimum of 2 WTU's as a Teaching Associate (Class Code 2353 or 2354).
5. Departments will forward the names of graduate TA's for the next academic year to Financial Aid by April 15. Once eligibility for SUG support has been determined, Financial Aid will send names of students to be awarded a GA/TA fee waiver to APUGS, who will inform students and departments. This process will be completed by the end of finals week.
6. To simplify the process in the face of inevitable uncertainties related to course offerings and the number of units taken by GA's and TA's, allocations made each Spring will assume full-time support for the next two semesters. Departments will be charged with verifying the student's employment and their enrollment in program-relevant coursework within the first two weeks of each semester, and will inform Financial Aid about the level of support appropriate for each TA.
7. Eligibility for a GA/TA fee waiver does not guarantee employment as a GA or TA.
8. Proposed effective date: Fall Semester 2011