

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

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Sponsor(s): Sen. Joslin, Sen. Gómez

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Calling for the Creation of a Graduate Student Bill of Rights

Whereas, The University of Houston offers Teaching Assistantships, Graduate Assistantships, and Teaching Fellowships for rising Graduate Students;

Whereas, Teaching assistants are asked to work up to 20 hours per week, including grading papers, administrative work, etc., while being expected to maintain their coursework to the highest standard and produce the excellent research that has driven the University toward its Tier One status, usually doing so without receiving pay for this aspect of their work;

Whereas, Graduate Teaching Assistant work often exceeds the required 20 hours during peak semester times like exam blocks, midterms, and finals weeks;

Whereas, Teaching assistants are key to quality mass instruction at the University of Houston together;

Whereas, Teaching fellows are graduate students who fully, independently teach courses at the University of Houston, while maintaining their status as Graduate Students;

Whereas, Teaching Fellows are paid \$1264 per month, on average¹, and Teaching Assistants are paid \$1333 per month, on average²;

Whereas, Graduate Assistantships are monthly stipends awarded in amounts ranging from \$600 to \$2500 per month³;

Whereas, Graduate Teaching assistants are specifically requested not to hold additional employment outside of their assistantship positions;

Whereas, Teaching Fellows were last described by the University of Houston as “have[ing] direct student contact in a formal instructional setting... charged with the

primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit under the direct supervision of a faculty member... Teaching fellows are listed as the instructor of record...TFs should possess at least a master's degree in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline... Examples of duties may include, but are not limited to: classroom/laboratory teaching; recitations, lectures, developing syllabi and lesson plans; holding office hours; consulting on group projects, counseling students; tutoring; and leading student tours and field trips⁴;

Whereas, functionally, Adjunct professors and Teaching Fellows often perform a great deal of the same instructional duties;

Whereas, Adjunct professors at Houston Community College are paid \$670 per credit hour per semester instructed⁵;

Whereas, Graduate students holding assistantship positions are not considered eligible to enroll in many of the benefits extended by the University to regular benefits-eligible employees⁶, and are often discouraged by their departments from holding additional employment within or exterior to the University;

Whereas, Graduate Instructional Assistants, Teaching Assistants, and Teaching Fellows are automatically placed on Summer Work Breaks beginning 06/01 of each Spring semester, and will often not receive payment again until 09/01 of each Fall semester⁷, meaning that many students employed by the University of Houston will receive no financial benefits during the summer, unless they are awarded rare Summer assistantship positions;

Whereas, international graduate students are particularly harmed by low pay due to constraints on employment, such as the F-1 visa which allows students to work only 20 hours per week at their sponsoring University⁸, and the mandate that they buy health insurance;

Whereas, Graduate Students are over-worked and underpaid, and retention rates are predictably lower for students who feel financially unsupported by their university;

Therefore, be it resolved by the Student Government Association of the University of Houston:

That the University of Houston adopt a Graduate Student Bill of rights which shall outline a list of requirements that the university shall meet on behalf of anyone holding the following positions: Teaching Assistantships, Graduate Assistantships, and Teaching Fellowships;

Be it further resolved, that the University of Houston should establish a standard work week for Graduate Student workers, complete with outlined expectations, which will be outlined in the aforementioned Graduate Student Bill of Rights;

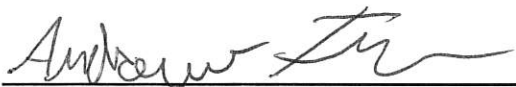
Be it further resolved, that the University of Houston should raise the stipends of Teaching Assistants 2% annually as a cost of living increases, and a raise should be applied retroactively to years when the cost of living increases were not observed.



Cameron Barrett
Student Government President

Date of President's Approval: 9/5/18

APPROVED



Andrew Trinh
Speaker of Senate

Date of Senate Approval: 9/5/18

¹https://salaries.texastribune.org/search/?q=Teaching+Fellow&selected_facets=entity_exact:University%20of%20Houston&page=2&page=3&page=4&page=5&page=6&page=1&page=2&page=1&page=2&page=3&page=4&page=5&page=6&page=7&page=8&page=9&page=10&page=11&page=12&page=13

²https://salaries.texastribune.org/search/?q=Graduate+Assistant&selected_facets=entity_exact:University%20of%20Houston

³<https://www.uh.edu/financial/graduate/assistantships/>

⁴<http://www.uh.edu/grad-catalog-archive/2011/graduate-student-assistantships/teaching-fellow/index.php>

⁵<http://www.hccs.edu/media/houston-community-college/district/pdf/Approved-Budget---FY-2018.pdf>

⁶<http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=26&navoid=9423>

⁷<https://www.uh.edu/human-resources/employees/graduate-students/>

⁸<http://pfforphds.com/can-a-graduate-student-have-a-side-income/>