

Proposal for a Livable Stipend

Drafted by the Duke Graduate Students Union

1. **Guarantee an annual stipend floor of \$31,800 before taxes** for all graduate student work in 2019-2020. This is the Graduate School's recommended 12-month stipend, but many PhD students do not receive it. Graduate student research and teaching is a vital part of any R1 institution, and this work should be recognized as part of Duke's own commitment to a campus-wide living wage.
2. **Shift the funding cycle to a 12-month pay structure** so that all graduate student workers make a living wage 12 months out of the year. Peer institutions, including Emory, operate on a 12-month funding cycle. Duke's current funding cycle leaves many graduate student workers without pay for months at a time, including during summers and at the end of each semester.
3. **Shift the funding cycle to begin in August** to match the academic calendar and avoid unnecessary hardship for both incoming and continuing students. Peer institutions, including Cornell and Columbia, begin their yearly funding cycle in August, at the start of the fall semester. Duke's current funding cycle does not begin until the end of September, leaving both incoming students--and continuing students who are denied summer funding--without a paycheck for well over a month at the beginning of fall semester.
4. **Provide a \$1,000 relocation stipend** to each incoming graduate student worker. Duke graduate student workers come from all over the world and across the country to conduct their research. Relocation costs are burdensome and make it difficult for us to begin work at Duke. Other universities, including UC San Francisco, provide a one-time relocation stipend to new students, and DGSU believes the university should do the same for its employees.¹
5. **Eliminate continuation fees for advanced PhD students.** Continuation fees amount to an additional \$3,700/per semester fee for PhD students after their 6th year. This fee increases by about 4% every year and is not related to any resources or services utilized by fee-paying students. Duke's fees are considerably higher than those of peer institutions. They require PhD students to work additional jobs to fund their research and often lengthen their time to degree.

Key points:

- This is a pay **floor not a universal stipend**; no one should make less than their current stipend amount.
- This should be **funded by an increase in The Graduate School's overall budget**. No department should be asked to accept fewer PhD students to pay current students a livable stipend.
- In 2018, **Emory University announced it would increase the base PhD stipend to \$31,000** -- a 29% increase for some graduate students. If Emory -- a peer institution with a smaller endowment -- can do it, Duke can too.

¹ <https://synapse.ucsf.edu/articles/2016/01/22/4000-incoming-students-offset-housing-cost>

The Graduate School's recommended 12-month Stipend amount is \$31,800 for '19-'20.

DUKE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL TUITION, FEES & STIPENDS				
	Actual	Budget	Projected	
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Ph.D. Stipends²				
<i>Trinity, Nicholas School and Sanford programs</i>				
<i>Per Month</i>	2,596.67	2,650.00	2,700.00	2,750.00
Academic Year - 9 Months, September to May	23,370	23,850	24,300	24,750
Summer Term - 3 Months June to August	7,790	7,950	8,100	8,250
Full Year Total - 12 Months, September to August	31,160	31,800	32,400	33,000
Note: Teaching Assistant (Instructor per course rate)	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Teaching Assistant (Grader per course rate)	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000

¹ For longer term projections, the tuition remission rate can be assumed to increase 0.7% per year.

² The stipend rates listed are the amounts recommended by The Graduate School. Ph.D. programs provide either 9- or 12-month funding depending on each program's available resources. Current and prospective students should check with their programs to find out which funding package is offered.

Some PhD students don't make this amount, and many struggle to get by

BY THE NUMBERS: GRADUATE WORKER LIVING COSTS

What Duke says

Monthly paycheck	2,545.83
Room and board	1488
Books and supplies	137
Local transportation	195
Personal & miscellaneous	383
Total	2203.00

Based on information from the Duke Graduate School website (<https://gradschool.duke.edu/financial-support/cost-attend> and https://gradschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/tuition_fees_stipend_schedule.pdf).

Actual graduate worker budget #1 (7th year)

Monthly paycheck (after taxes)	1,161.00
Rent	350
Gas and electric	70
Internet and phone	93
Car insurance	32
Groceries	200
Duke health insurance	250
Credit card minimum payment	120
Therapy co-pay	50
Total	1,165.00

Actual graduate worker budget #2 (5th year)

Monthly paycheck (after taxes)	1,970.00
Mortgage	900*
Electric	160*
Internet and phone	100*
Groceries	400*
Transportation/gas	80*
Car insurance	50*
Dental insurance	40**
Health insurance for dependent	255.83**
Medical co-pay (postnatal care, baby immunizations, routine check-ups)	60*
Daycare	500***
Baby clothes	60*
Baby formula	140*
Baby wipes, diapers	80*
Teaching supplies	20
Research supplies	50
Miscellaneous expenses	100
Student loan repayment	100
Total without partner	3,095.83
Total with partner	1,702.91

*Amounts represent total that graduate worker splits with their partner

**Via plan with Blue Cross / Blue Shield through Duke

***This amount takes into account the \$500 Duke childcare subsidy but does not include summer months. Further, the application for this subsidy must be renewed every academic year, there is a maximum of 3 years for applying to the subsidy, the amount received is not secured.

This is a moral issue: All workers deserve a living wage

- The living wage in Durham has increased 23% over last 5 years; Duke PhD stipends have gone up 8% in same period.²
- Sub-\$31k stipends impose **undue financial hardship on PhD students**, especially in their later years.
- Sub-\$31k stipends **discriminate against students from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds**, as well as international students, who are prohibited, by law, from seeking other forms of employment while studying in the United States.

What are peer institutions doing?

1. **Yale:** PhD students in the Arts and Sciences are paid twice a month for 12 months beginning in August.³ The minimum annual stipend for Yale PhDs is \$31,000.⁴ Yale assesses no continuation fees for non-resident PhDs.
2. **Harvard:** The minimum PhD stipend is \$27,600, paid out on a 10-month funding cycle, plus \$5,520 in summer funding.⁵ Harvard assesses continuation fees of \$150/semester for non-resident PhDs.
3. **Princeton:** PhDs in the humanities and social sciences are paid on a 12-month cycle⁶ and stipend amounts go up to \$32,400.⁷
4. **Cornell:** Annual stipend amount is between \$31,994 and \$35,235 for PhD students who work as TAs and RAs.⁸
5. **Emory:** PhD students are paid a minimum of \$31,000 on a 12-month funding cycle⁹, which, as of this year, will begin in August.
6. **Northwestern:** The minimum PhD stipend is \$32,196 for 4 quarters of work, guaranteed for 5 years.¹⁰
7. **UC San Francisco:** Incoming PhD students receive a one-time \$4,000 housing stipend to fund their relocation.

² "City of Durham's Livable Wage Rate History," from 2013-2018, <https://durhamnc.gov/3695/Livable-Wage-Rate-History>

³ <https://gsas.yale.edu/funding-aid/stipend-payments>

⁴ <https://gsas.yale.edu/funding>

⁵ <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2016/3/22/gsas-phd-stipend-increase/>

⁶ https://gradschool.princeton.edu/sites/gradschool/files/docs/FIN/Graduate%20School%20Costs%20and%20Funding%20-%202014-15_FINAL.pdf

⁷ <https://gradschool.princeton.edu/node/1012>

⁸ <http://gradschool.cornell.edu/costs-funding/stipend-rates>

⁹ http://www.gs.emory.edu/uploads/funding/LGS%20Stipends_17-18.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/index.html>

GPSC Livable Stipend Resolution -- Passed 11/13/28

Resolved, that Duke University ensures that:

1. **stipends for doctoral students are comparable with competitive institutions;**
2. the Duke Administration consult with faculty members in stipend-granting graduate programs about how to **support graduate students with 12-month stipends that are at least \$31,160;**
and
3. the Duke Administration institutes **a stipend floor where all graduate student stipends are at least \$31,800 for the 2019-2020 academic year** (as communicated in the TFE schedule).
4. In order to promote transparency, the Duke administration **releases detailed information regarding stipends and fees** across all departments within the University.