

GSSA Meeting

[2018-04-05] – [LBC 203]

I. Call to Order **6:30pm**

II. Approval of Minutes **Approved**

III. Guest Speakers:

- I. Brianna Mohan (bshaymoh@tulane.edu) Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Career Advisor

IF you are graduating this May – you need to buy or rent regalia by April 13th. Purchase generic PhD regalia for \$90. Information on Gradfest site as well.

For TAs – CELT/OGPS “Ready, Set, Teach” program - May 15. Please RSVP!

April 11th 11-2pm, you can support DACA students by taking pictures with signs by the LBC!

There will be moves to try to understand why Tulane has low Ph.D. and URM retention.

Career related events: April 12 9:30am (Interviews and Prep), April 19 3:30pm (Teaching Statements), April 25, 9:30am (Managing stress and frustration during your job search). Can sign up through OGPS webpage.

Online Career Conference – May 5th and May 2th – “Beyond the Professoriate”. \$49 for registration.

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PhD Regalia options

This year, there are three options for regalia for participation in graduation ceremonies (hooding, unified, any departmental or other school events requiring robes). All need to be ordered from the bookstore by **April 13** to avoid incurring any late fees. After that date, a \$30 late fee will be applied.

Option 1: Purchase custom Tulane green PhD regalia \$921.00

Option 2: Rent custom Tulane green PhD regalia \$314.98

Option 3: Purchase student grade generic black PhD regalia: \$89.96

Jennifer and Emily info

[The Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching \(CELT\)](#) and the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies \(OGPS\)](#) will offer a day-long teaching workshop on Tuesday, **May 15, 2018**, for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who have or anticipate having a teaching assignment or TA position. The workshop will offer both large format discussions as well as smaller, breakout sessions. Workshop topics will include classroom management and setting boundaries, leading discussions, collaborative/group work, grading, and active learning.

The workshop will be held in the Qatar Ballroom of the LBC on the Uptown Campus from 8:45 am to 5:00 pm. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Undoc Day of Support

Anyone in an educator role of any sort is welcome to come to the 2nd floor breezeway of the LBC **Wed. April 11, 11:30 AM – 2 PM** to have their photo taken and publicly posted as a supporter of DACA and undocumented students.

Retention

Tulane is aware that we need to improve our retention rates in our PhD programs, especially for our underrepresented populations. No specific efforts, programs, etc. are being rolled out, but GSSA will likely be asked for input in the future.

Career events

Interview Skills and Preparation

Thursday, 4/12, 9:30 – 10:30 AM

Teaching Statements for Academic Positions – led by Dr. Ana Lopez

Thursday, 4/19, 3:30 – 4:30 PM

Managing Stress, Anxiety, and Frustration During Your Job Search – led by Ramon Zelaya (CAPS)

Wednesday, 4/25, 9:30 – 10:30 AM

Register for workshops on the OGPS main page.

Beyond the Professoriate
Online Career Conference May 5 and 12. \$50 if you register by 4/14

IV. Officer Reports

I. President – Lydia Crawford (lcrawfo2@tulane.edu)

A. Faculty Award winners:

I. SLA: Faycal Falaky from French and Italian

II. SSE: Quincy Brown from Biomedical Engineering

B. Travel Deadline April 15th – **This is for summer conferences - remind your constituents! We will not send an email to all students.**

C. Representative transitions reminder – teach new reps about responsibilities

D. Versatile PhD Ask Me Anything

I. Dr. Fatimah Williams (Cultural Anthropology, 2011) and Dr. Thi Nguyen (Neuroscience, 2010)

April 17-19, 2018 participate anytime during the 3 days

Start here: <https://versatilephd.com/ama>

E. Elections

I. President

I. Nomination: Ted Sawyer

0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

II. Vice President

I. Nomination: Evan Wells

0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

III. Treasurer

I. Nomination: Bree Sullivan

0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

IV. Secretary

I. Nomination: Sarah Khalil

0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

II. Vice President - Davette Gadison (dgadison@tulane.edu)

A. Crawfish Boil – April 13th 6pm in the Academic Quad

B. Trivia – April 19th 5:00pm (trivia starts at 5:30pm)

II. Treasurer – Robyn Brooks (rbrooks3@tulane.edu)

There are packets outside Jennifer O’Brien’s room because they are not filled out correctly!

A. Budget for 2018-2019

Item	New % budget
Operating Supplies	3.5%
Honoraria	2.0%
Entertainment	42.0%
Misc Meeting Expenses	6.0%
Domestic Transportation	20.0%
Domestic Lodging/Other	20.0%
Visiting Professionals	6.50%

0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

B. Currently, we have -\$899.02 in the bank for events

C. We have \$2884.53 in speaker funding

D. Thus, \$1985.51 total left

E. Event Requests

Department	Event Title	Date	Amount Requested	Expense	Expected Attendance	Per person
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Cell Molecular Biology	& CMB - ATCG Business Meeting	4/12/18	\$150	Food and non- alcoholic beverages	12	\$13
Chemical Biomolecular Engineering	& CBE end of semester party	4/28/18	\$250	Cane's chicken fingers, Snack, and soft drink	35	\$7
Computer Science	Careers After Graduate School Panel Discussion	4/26/18	\$250	Hors d'oeuvres spread from Olive Blue	30	\$8
Psychology	End-of-Year Psych Picnic!	5/12/18	\$553	Catering from Whole Foods, Water from CVS, Balloons from Amazon	45	\$12

Total

\$1203 (\$650 without the over \$250 requests)

Motion to approve all events under \$250 – 0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

Motion to fund all events under \$250 - 0 opposed, 0 abstain, 31 approve

Psychology

Budget:

Item	Vegan or Vegetarian	Size/Quantity	Serves	Source	Price
Cheese Plate	Vegetarian	Small	15	Whole Foods	\$60
Mediterranean Feast	Vegetarian	Medium	30	Whole Foods	\$70
Miniature Empanadas (Spinach)	Vegetarian	Small	15	Whole Foods	\$48
Grilled Asparagus and Portabello Salad	Vegan	3lbs	12	Whole Foods	\$36
Mac & Cheese	Vegetarian	3lbs	12	Whole Foods	\$18
Whole Wheat Penne with Tomato, Spinach and Garlic	Vegan	Half Pan	12	Whole Foods	\$30
Petite Baguette Sandwiches (Roast Beef, Ham, Chicken Salad, Smoked Turkey, and Portabello Mushroom)	Vegetarian available	Medium	30	Whole Foods	\$110
Fruit Plate	Vegan	Medium	15	Whole Foods	\$50
Sweet Bites Tray	Vegetarian	Medium	30	Whole Foods	\$75
Water	--	3x 24-packs	72	CVS	\$10
Blue and Green Balloons	--	--	--	Amazon	\$20
Utensils/Plates	--	provided by WF	--	--	--
Taxes					\$26
Total					\$553
Number of Attendees					45
Amount Per Attendee					\$12.30

Motion to fund Psychology – 0 oppose, 0 abstain, 31 approve

III. Secretary – Sarah Khalil (skhalil@tulane.edu)

V. New Business

I.

II.

VI. Old Business

I. SSE Stipend Committee Update

SLA stipend committee has not met yet – will continue and present at next meeting or Fall

SSE – Met with the associate dean of SSE multiple times. SSE gets a certain amount of \$ for TA stipends, and it gets passed on as a lump sum to departments. Departments can play with that money as they want.

Document will be shared below. Please share the WHOLE DOCUMENT when sharing this information, including the talking points.

Committee determined it will be a multi-year approach in order to get SSE to raise the TA stipend. Also, Dean's will want you to start working at the departmental level to raise your stipends.

Document on how to go about to petition stipend raise also attached.

SSE stipend committee is now dissolved.

II.

VII. Announcements

I. WISE will have a game night Stern 2002 5-7pm, April 12th

II. Anthropology Colloquium - Dinwiddie 102 4pm – Migrations in the Caribbean

VIII. Adjournment **7:13pm**

SSE Stipend Committee

Steps to take to your department (if you choose to):

1. Compare to peer institutions – important for competitive recruitment, important to admin
 - a. Duke
 - b. Vanderbilt
 - c. Washington University in St. Louis
 - d. Rice
 - e. Emory
 - f. Carnegie Mellon
 - g. Wake Forest
 - h. University of Miami

- i. George Washington
2. Compare TA stipend to RA stipend and fellowships (within your department)
 - a. Important within department/to faculty
3. Determine cost of living in New Orleans
 - a. Fair-market rent prices have increased 12% from 2011–2014, making New Orleans a top 10 city for increased cost of living
 - b. rated as one of the ‘worst places to live’ by Business Insider in 2017 due to the rising cost of living
 - c. 2017 Cost of living: \$23,482 (MIT)
4. Brainstorm possible sources of income
 - a. 4+ 1 programs, endowments, chair level petition to dean
 - b. Note about endowments: most endowments pay out approximately 5%
5. Approach your department liaison or chair (as appropriate by department)
 - a. Can be done as formal letter and followed by in person conversation
 - b. Be specific in your request (e.q. summer stipend, exact salary number, etc)
6. Follow up: keep it at the forefront of your department’s mind
 - a. This is a multi-conversation process

2% raise going to TA lines next year

SSE level raises:

complicated because of how far in advance SSE level budget is put together

Would need all SSE departments on board with plan

If you share the historical TA levels, please include entire document. The notes at the bottom were an important aspect of us receiving the information, and we want to respect departments’ comments.



Dear Tulane University Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Faculty:

We, the EEB graduate students, have been grateful and impressed with the receptiveness that you have shown in the past regarding issues we've presented before you. We truly appreciate the steps you've taken to re-invent our qualifying exams, include us in evaluating prospective hires, and inform us of our teaching assignments as soon as possible. We now hope that you will be similarly receptive in addressing an incredibly pertinent problem – teaching assistant stipends. The current stipend that EEB Ph.D. students earn is low relative to local cost of living expenses and as such it presents two main issues. First, it creates a financial burden for Ph.D. students, and second, it makes our program uncompetitive in comparison to similar programs and departments.

Before taxes, the current TA stipend is \$20,800 paid over 9 months; this totals \$18,600 after taxes. The EEB TA stipend has been stagnant for over 7 years, while during that same time the cost of living in New Orleans has increased significantly. The cost of housing plays an important role in driving the overall cost of living in metropolitan areas¹, and increasing rent prices have driven sharp increases in the overall cost of living in New Orleans^{1,2}. Fair-market rent prices have increased 12% from 2011-2014³, making New Orleans a top 10 city for increased cost of living and, as a result, was rated as one of the 'worst places to live' by Business Insider in 2017 due to the rising cost of living². This increasing cost of living in New Orleans is not reflected in our graduate student stipends, which creates a financial burden graduate students must bear. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology calculated the living wage for one adult living in Orleans Parish, LA to be \$23,482⁴. Our stipend wage is starkly below the wage needed to pay the basic costs of living in this region. Because of this we often find ourselves unable to save for emergencies or for the future. Many of us do not have dental or eye insurance because they are not included in our Tulane student insurance plans and are too costly to purchase separately. Some of us have families that depend on us. While we love what we do and we are fortunate to be here to work with all of you, we have all felt financially unstable and stressed during our tenure in EEB. These difficulties are exacerbated during the summer months, when the majority of us do not receive any income.

Furthermore, the low TA stipend creates an uncomfortable dynamic between those graduate students on TAsip and those that are on Fellowship. BOR Fellows receive \$30,000 over 12 months, while NSF GRFP Fellows now receive \$34,000. In addition to working towards their dissertation, students on TAsip teach and grade for classes, but are paid over 30% less. It should be noted that any student that has already completed a masters is ineligible for the GRFP. This discrepancy in pay between graduate students is, simply put, unfair.

Secondly, the current TA stipend makes our program uncompetitive in comparison to other departments and programs. When compared to other departments in Tulane's School of Science and Engineering, our department's TAs makes considerably less (Table 1), even among departments of similar size, such as Earth and Environmental Science. Similarly, when compared to other EEB departments of institutions of the same rank, our department pays TA substantially less (Table 2). In our view, the current stipend offered to TAs will begin to impact the quality of applicants our program is able to attract and the quality of students that will accept positions in our department. This will

likely begin to impact the department in the coming years considering the BOR Fellowship will no longer be available as a recruiting tool that attracts top students.

The Strategic Plan for EEB for 2012 - 2022 that was reviewed by the EEB faculty and the SSE Dean outlined under the 'future objectives and needs' section that a goal of the department is to increase TA stipends to match those of national competitors in order to attract the best graduate student candidates. In the same vein, the review of our EEB department in 2015 by an external examiner appointed by the Provost's office cautioned that the EEB stipend might be a serious problem for recruitment, especially considering the 'low and inconsistent use of summer salary for graduate students'. The reviewer suggested collecting data on applicants who did not accept positions at Tulane and on stipends at similar departments in other universities. The results of these data should then be used to determine if stipends are sufficient to attract top students. While we do not have access to past applicants' information, the figures we provide (Table 1 and 2) show that our stipend is well below peer programs.

We are asking you to take steps forward in helping us solve these issues. We are hopeful that our department can increase transparency in explaining how TA stipends are decided across departments within SSE and what happens to EEB TA funding when students in our department are awarded fellowships through programs such as the NSF GRFP. We are also asking that our TA stipends increase so that we receive the average stipend that other departments in SSE receive – \$27,000 paid over 12 months. While we understand that no faculty member in EEB can make the final decision in increasing our stipend, we ask that you advocate for us and take this issue to the provost and dean.

We thank you for the consideration of our opinions and we look forward to your response.

Best,
EEB graduate students

¹ Florida, Richard. 2014. Cost of Living is All About Housing. *City Lab: The Atlantic Monthly Group*. <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2014/07/cost-of-living-is-really-all-about-housing/373128/>

² DePietro, Andrew. 2017. 10 US Cities Where it's Becoming More Expensive to Live Comfortably. *Business Insider*. <http://www.businessinsider.com/us-cities-where-cost-of-living-is-rising-the-fastest-2017-6/?IR=T#10-new-orleans-1>

³ Wallace, Nick. 2015. Top 10 Cities with the Largest Rent Increases. *Smart Asset*. <https://smartasset.com/mortgage/top-10-cities-largest-rent-increases>

⁴ Glasmeier, Amy. 2017. Living Wage Calculator for Orleans Parish, LA. *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*. <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/22071>

Department	Annual income	Paid over the summer?	TA duties	Years of funding
Neuro	\$28,000	yes	Every semester, though senior students tend to get paid by PI grants	5
Chemistry	\$24,500 + 5,000 (summer)	yes (in addition)	Every semester unless PI puts you on RA	7
Physics	\$19,400	Yes (in addition)	Every semester	5-6
Cell and Molec	\$28,000	Yes	Every semester, though senior students tend to get paid by PI grants	5-6
Chem Eng.	\$27,100, \$28,100 after prospectus	Yes	First year, then go on fellowship or RA	5-6
EENS	\$24,000 (masters?)	Yes (in addition)	Every semester	

Table 1. Current Ph.D. stipends in other departments in the School of Science and Engineering at Tulane University. Information was collected through direct communication with a graduate student representative from each department.

Institution	Annual TA Stipend (1)	Cost of Living Index (2)	Rent Index (3)	COL Index (4)
Tulane	\$20,800	80.13	41.07	153
Carnegie mellon	\$29,400	82.96	39.28	152
Vanderbilt	\$29,500	76.43	46.63	151
Emory	\$30,000	76.09	44.2	158
Rice	\$25,500	75.41	44.18	151
Duke	\$21,580	72.69	35.04	NA
Washington Uni. at St. Louis	\$30,000	NA	NA	141
Wake Forest	\$23,268	NA	NA	140

Table 2.

1. Annual TA stipends were found on EEB (or similar department) websites.
2. Numeo.com Cost of Living Index is a relative indicator of consumer goods price, including groceries, restaurants, transportation and utilities. Cost of Living Index doesn't include accommodation expenses such as rent or mortgage. If a city has a Cost of Living Index of 120, it means Numbeo estimates it is 20% more expensive than New York (excluding rent).
3. Numeo.com Rent Index is estimation of prices of renting apartments in the city compared to New York City. If Rent index is 80, Numbeo estimates that price for renting in that city is 80% of price in New York.
4. Expatistan.com Cost of Living Index is calculated by assigning a value of 100 to a central reference city (that happens to be Prague). Once the reference point has been established, the Price Index value of every other city in the database is calculated by comparing their cost of living to the cost of living in Prague. Therefore, if a city has a Price Index of 134, that means that living there is 34% more expensive than living in Prague.