

From: "Flinn, Rory J." <rjflinn@wpi.edu>  
Date: June 24, 2022 at 12:06:07 PM EDT  
To: dl-graduate-students <dl-allgraduate-students@wpi.edu>  
Cc: "Camesano, Terri" <terric@wpi.edu>

**Subject:** Additional information on Stipend Increases and Health Insurance for Funded Graduate Students

Dear Graduate Students,

We recently sent out a communication on the 2% stipend increase for TAs and Fellows and health insurance plan coverage for funded graduate students. We know that inflation and rising costs are affecting every single person in our community, and we are doing our best to make sure that our graduate students receive fair and adequate support. We strive to recognize and value the contributions that all graduate students make to the WPI community.

Regarding the current stipend levels, we have heard from a few of you in recent days and wanted to take this opportunity to address a few of your concerns.

**RA Stipends:**

It is our intention that RAs receive a stipend level at least at the new TA stipend levels. We are not able to increase these stipends from an institutional level, as these are typically paid from external grants and are determined by the granting agency and the PI. However, we have communicated to departments that RA stipend levels should also increase 2%, in line with TAs, if possible. It should be noted that RA appointments that are submitted for hiring or reappointment with a significantly lower stipend level than a TA are not approved unless other funds are identified to make up the difference. We do commit to work over the next few months though to identify any RAs that do receive a stipend a bit less than the new TA stipend level and will work with these RAs' PIs, departments, and schools to ensure a plan is in place to bring those RA stipends up to an equitable level.

**Size of Stipend Increase and Frequency of Stipend Increases:**

We have heard there is a belief that TA stipend levels have not increased in the past 8 years. To counter this rumor, we are providing a list of the annual (9 month academic year) TA stipend levels over the past 10 years at WPI, see below. For several of the past 10 years there was a 2-3% annual increase in TA stipends. However, due to the pandemic, WPI froze operating budgets for the 2020-2021 academic year, and no budget was available to increase TA stipends. In the 2021-2022 academic year, after hearing from Graduate Students about the burden of paying for the greatly increased premium for student health insurance plan, WPI decided to fully cover funded graduate student health insurance plans. This led to WPI providing an additional \$829 per funded graduate student and inhibited WPI from providing an additional TA stipend increase. WPI continued this commitment for this next year, providing an additional \$365 per funded graduate student for the health plans, while also providing a 2% stipend increase.

**Annual TA Stipend Amount (9 months):**

2022-23: \$24,345 (WPI increased \$ paid for Funded Grad Student Health Insurance Plans by \$365)  
2021-22: \$23,868 (WPI increased \$ paid for Funded Grad Student Health Insurance Plans by \$829)  
2020-21: \$23,868 (WPI froze operating budgets due to pandemic, no salary increases for Faculty/staff)  
2019-20: \$23,868  
2018-19: \$23,175  
2017-18: \$22,500  
2016-17: \$20,750

2015-16: \$18,999

2014-15: \$17,235 (Dean Camesano appointed as Dean of Graduate Studies)

2013-14: \$17,235

**Competitiveness of WPI Graduate Stipends:**

WPI recognizes that a competitive TA stipend level is needed to recruit high quality TAs to our graduate programs. Graduate Studies will be working with Academic Affairs and Talent and Inclusion Offices over the next year to benchmark our TA stipend level compared to peer Universities. If it is found that our stipend level is below most of our peers, a larger upward adjustment will be put in place, followed by the typical annual 2-3% increases.

**Graduate Student Policy Working Group:**

Work from the WPI Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce identified some areas where a lack of policies, or unclear policies, has caused challenges and stress for our graduate students. As a result, Graduate Studies has established a working group to identify high priority areas where new policies would have a positive impact on Graduate Students learning and research environments. The working group will create policies where needed and put them up for review/approval by the appropriate governing body at WPI. The working group was recently formed and has TA and RA representatives, as well as relevant faculty and staff in the group. We are aiming to address the highest priority policy needs in the next few months. If you would be interested in serving on the working group, please contact me at [rjflinn@wpi.edu](mailto:rjflinn@wpi.edu).

Sincerely,  
Rory Flinn

Rory Flinn, Ph.D.  
Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies  
Office of Graduate Studies  
WPI  
Office: 60 Prescott St, Room 207  
Website: [grad.wpi.edu/+gograd](http://grad.wpi.edu/+gograd)  
Phone: 508-831-6360  
Email: [rjflinn@wpi.edu](mailto:rjflinn@wpi.edu)  
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/roryflinn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/roryflinn)