

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
January 24, 2024**

Members in Attendance: Alan Itkin, Elfi Kraka, Anna Lovatt, Volkan Otugen, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, Anthony Petrosino, Robin Poston, Dinesh Rajan, Gretchen Smith

Members Not in Attendance: Ali Beskok, Kate Carté, Akihito Kamata, Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy

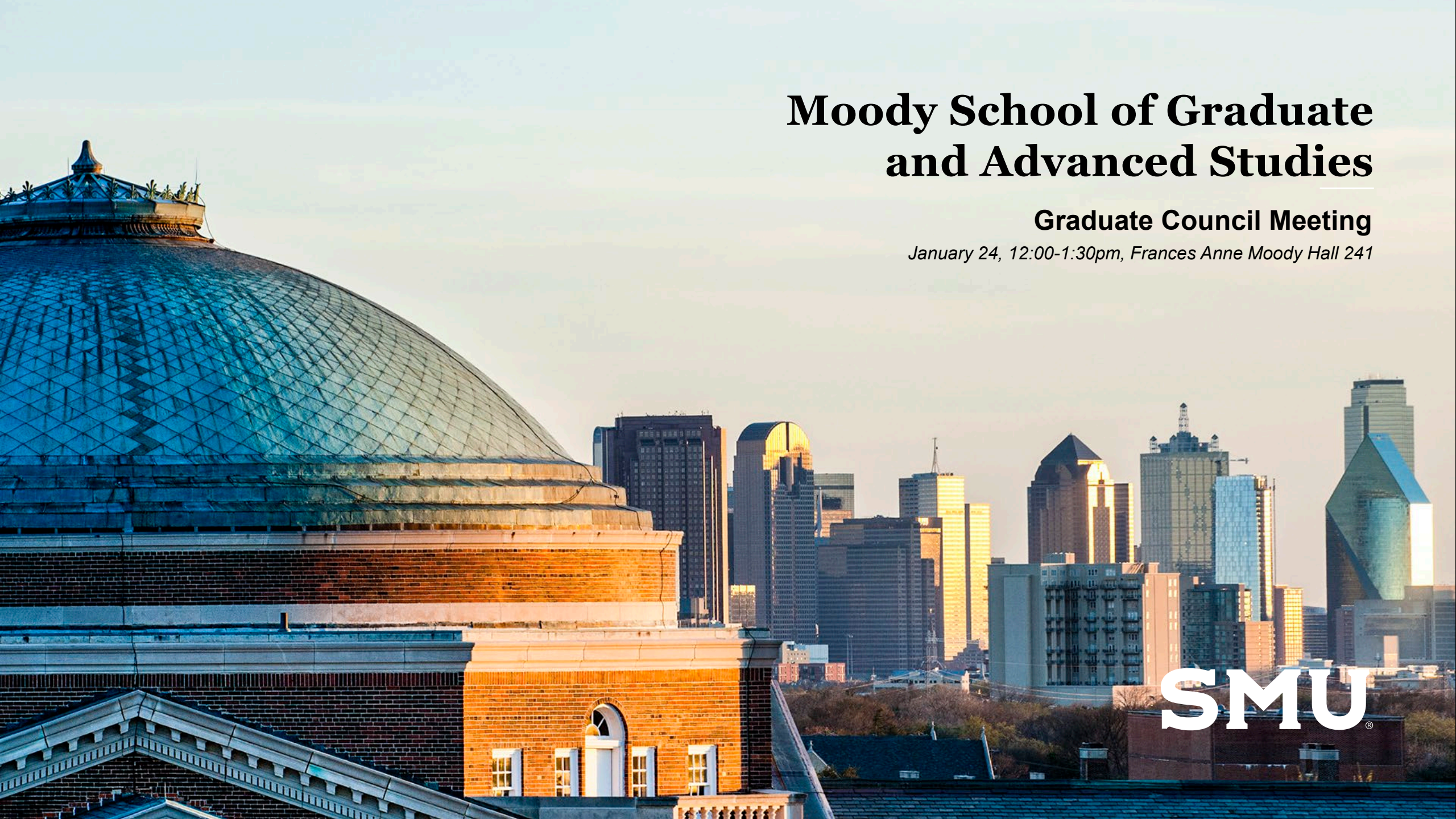
Business:

- **Minutes of the December 13 Meeting:** Dr. Itkin confirmed that a quorum was present and asked if there were any comments or concerns on the December 13 minutes. The council agreed that there were no comments, and they approved the minutes.
- **Parental Leave Policies (slide 5):** Dr. Itkin explained that this morning there was a parental leave committee meeting, where they addressed concerns that the Academic Affairs Forum raised. The first suggestion from the Academic Affairs Forum was to look at what peer and aspirant colleges are doing in this space. The second issue raised was the question of whether the students using this policy need to be fully funded students. The committee went through the policy and clarified these points. The Academic Affairs Forum also asked the committee to remove foster care from the policy, but the committee decided to keep it in the policy to maintain consistency with staff and faculty policies. Dr. Itkin noted that the committee increased the amount of time students need to give their departments and the Moody School notice of using the policy from 4 weeks to 6 weeks. The question of who would be paying for these leaves arose, and Dr. Poston reminded the council that the Moody School would be the last resort for funding. Dr. Poston also noted that there needs to be language about course work and that students should work with their advisors and instructors to make a plan that's suitable for them. The council discussed, and Dr. Kraka suggested broadening the language from just "course work" to "academic obligations." The council agreed. Dr. Rajan raised the question about the English Department already having a policy in place, which is more generous than Moody's, and he questioned that if two policies exist, which one stands? Dr. Poston stated that she hoped that there would eventually be one umbrella policy. Dr. Poston decided that the council needs to bring the departments into this conversation, a goal she wants to complete by the end of this semester. Dr. Itkin stated that he would distribute the policy after this meeting, the council would vote on it, and if approved, then Dr. Poston and Dr. Itkin will socialize it with the departments. Dr. Poston further noted that directors of graduate studies and deans will also need to see the policy. The council agreed that each member would share the policy with their deans and Dr. Poston and Dr. Itkin are going to set meetings with the directors of graduate studies, as well as present the policy to the senate.

- **Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal:** Dr. Itkin explained to the council that Moody has been working on these fellowships for a few years but has not yet come to a consensus about how these faculty fellowships should be implemented. The fellowship money has been set aside in the foundation's gift and it is meant to incentivize a strong culture of mentorship. Dr. Itkin noted that with the new R1 criteria, the fellowships can also help to support the goal of increasing research expenditures (slide 7). Dr. Itkin proposed to award one fellowship to a faculty member in each school, and Guildhall, a year. The award will be a research fund of \$5,000 to use either on the faculty member's research, or their graduate students' research. Dr. Poston asked if this would be for both master's and Ph.D. mentoring. Dr. Itkin responded that while we are more Ph.D. focused, we need to include master's if we are going to include Cox. Dr. Itkin then reviewed the application materials (slide 7). Dr. Rajan stated that the award needed to be more prestigious for the time that the application would take. Dr. Poston responded that we could award four awards a year at \$10,000 and insist that the award be spent on the faculty member's students' research, academic, or professionalization needs, and the council discussed and agreed. If this is the case, Dr. Pavlakis said the students' voices should be in the application in the form of a letter. Dr. Poston agreed and noted that the council needs to streamline the application packet. Dr. Petrosino asked if the council could rename the award so that it has "mentorship" in the name. Dr. Lovatt presented the name "Moody Outstanding Mentor Award," and the council agreed to adopt the name.
- **Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals:** Dr. Itkin reminded the council that last year, the council established a policy for graduate grade appeals (slide 9) and stated that students also need a process to appeal a program's decision to dismiss or suspend them for reasons related to program requirements like qualifying exams, research progress, etc. Dr. Poston said that she will chair the taskforce and she will also look at policies from our peer and aspirant schools. Dr. Kraka clarified that this process would be for academics, and not criminality. Dr. Petrosino, Dr. Otugen, Dr. Kraka, and Dr. Smith agreed to be on the taskforce committee.
- **University Ph.D., Mustang, and Moody Graduate Fellowship Selection Process:** Dr. Itkin reviewed the fellowship selection process and presented two questions to the council (slide 15): Now that departmental stipends have risen, how do we want to handle the University Ph.D. topping up awards? How should we handle review of fellowships? The council debated various funding levels and what might be appropriate. Dr. Poston asked Dr. Itkin to talk to Karen Lupo and get her thoughts on this question.
- **Doctoral Hooding:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.
- **Annual Progress Reports:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.
- **Research and Innovation Week 2024:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.
- **Provost Faculty Fellow Assistantship Project Updates:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.

- **Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships:** There was not adequate time to discuss this agenda item.

Meeting adjourned.



Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Graduate Council Meeting

January 24, 12:00-1:30pm, Frances Anne Moody Hall 241

SMU[®]

Meeting Agenda

1. Minutes of the September 13 Meeting
2. Parental Leave Policies
3. Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal
4. Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals
5. University PhD, Mustang, and Moody Graduate Fellowship Selection Process
6. Doctoral Hooding
7. Annual Progress Reports
8. Research and Innovation Week 2024
9. Provost Faculty Fellow Assistantship Project Updates
10. Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships
11. Other Items

Minutes of the December 13 Meeting



<https://smu.box.com/s/keqj3ljmwb1l123sf2ikail4air1pzly>

Parental Leave Policy



Parental Leave Policy

- » The working group revised the draft policy with input from the Graduate Council and Academic Affairs Forum (thank you Anna, Dinesh, Kate, and Alexandra)
- » The current policy and other documents are available here:
<https://smu.box.com/s/al7aazpe6m5ggbc44smfpbjtpmo46aem>
- » If the Graduate Council is in favor of the policy, it will go back to the Academic Affairs Forum next

Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal



Moody Faculty Fellowships

- » We have developed a new proposal for Moody Faculty Fellowships that meets the objectives of the gift and supports the University's R1 goal by increasing research expenditures:
 - » 8 Moody Faculty Fellowships will be awarded each year– one in each school/college + Guildhall
 - » Moody Faculty Fellows will receive a \$5,000 research fund to cover research-related expenses for the Fellow– or for graduate students or postdocs under their supervision– that must be used within the fellowship year
 - » Moody Faculty Fellows will be selected for their outstanding mentorship
 - » The nomination packet will include: 1) a statement of mentoring experience and philosophy, 2) a letter of support from a former mentee, 3) a letter of support from the department chair, 4) the nominee's CV
 - » Moody Faculty Fellows will be expected to share best practices in mentoring at the Graduate Student Success Day and at other venues

Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals



Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals

- » Last year, the Graduate Council (led by a taskforce) developed a policy for graduate grade appeals that was approved by EPC
 - » Grade appeal policy: <https://catalog.smu.edu/content.php?catoid=64&navoid=6260>
- » However, students sometimes appeal a program's decision to dismiss or suspend them for reasons related to other program requirements (qualifying exams, research progress, etc.)
- » No formal policy exists for these sorts of appeals
- » A new policy needs to be developed
- » The grade appeal process can serve as a model for the new suspension/dismissal appeal process
- » We are standing up a taskforce to develop this policy

Fellowship Selection Process



Fellowship Selection Process

- » The Moody School provides three kinds of fellowships to accepted PhD applicants:
 - » **University PhD Fellowships** are “topping up” awards that provide funding in addition to that offered by the department. They are intended to entice promising applicants to study at SMU by making financial offers competitive with top programs. Awards are renewable for up to a total of five years, contingent upon acceptable progress towards the degree.
 - » **Mustang Fellowships** provide stipends of \$31,000 for up to five years for PhD students who are US citizens or permanent residents and who, through their own unique experiences, promise to introduce their chosen fields to new backgrounds, perspectives and ideas. PhD program applicants are invited to submit themselves for consideration for this fellowship through a brief essay in their application. The nomination form for this fellowship will ask you for your evaluation of how the nominee stands to contribute to enriching and broadening scholarship in the field.
 - » **Moody Graduate Fellowships** are offered to PhD applicants who show exceptional promise for academic success. They provide stipends of \$31,000 for up to five years.

Fellowship Selection Process

- » Each department can nominate up to three accepted applicants for fellowships:
 - » One nominee for the Moody Graduate Fellowship
 - » One nominee for the Mustang Fellowship
 - » Three nominees for the University PhD Fellowship
- » Nominations will be due February 9
- » Nominations are reviewed by a committee including the elected members of the Graduate Council. Substitutions are allowed, if needed.
- » Nominees will be added to committee members' queues in Slate and can be reviewed there.

Fellowship Selection Process

University Ph.D. and Moody Graduate Fellowships
Scoring Guidelines

Score	1	3	5
Test Scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRE scores are above the departmental average for the applicable category (verbal/quantitative). GRE scores for the non-dominant category are respectable. TOEFL scores, if applicable, are above 100. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRE scores are around the departmental average for the applicable category (verbal/quantitative). GRE scores for the non-dominant category are unremarkable. TOEFL scores, if applicable, are above 86. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRE scores are below the departmental average for the applicable category (verbal/quantitative). GRE scores for the non-dominant category are very low. TOEFL scores, if applicable, are 85 or below.
Undergraduate/ Other Graduate Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate GPA is above 3.5 overall, with a strong performance in the major (if the same as the graduate program). Undergraduate institution has a strong program in the field. Graduate school GPA, if any, is very strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate GPA is above 3.2 overall, with a respectable performance in the major (if the same as the graduate program). Undergraduate institution has a solid, if not outstanding, program in the field. Graduate school GPA, if any, is above average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate GPA is at or below 3.0 overall, with an unremarkable performance in the major (if the same as the graduate program). Undergraduate institution is unremarkable in the field. Graduate school GPA, if any, is average.
Background/ Direction in Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student shows a strong background in the graduate field of study through undergraduate work, professional experience, or additional coursework preparing them for study. The personal statement shows a good grasp of their area of focus and clearly indicates why SMU is a good fit for them. Student has research experience or a clear sense of future research areas of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student has some background in the graduate field of study through undergraduate work, professional experience, or additional coursework preparing them for study. The personal statement describes their area of focus and can link their work with SMU's program offerings. Student has limited research experience or some sense of future research areas of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student has little to no experience in the graduate field of study through undergraduate work, professional experience, or additional coursework preparing them for study. The personal statement has vague statements indicating an interest in the field with little concrete direction. Student has no research experience or no sense of future research areas of focus.
Internal/External Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations are effusive and offer concrete examples of the student's strengths and achievements. The SMU department clearly articulates why the student is outstanding in the field and will be a good fit for the department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations are positive and offer some indications of the student's strengths and achievements. The SMU department clearly articulates why the student is a strong candidate for the department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations are vague and offer little concrete reasons of support. The SMU department does not articulate why the student is a strong candidate for the department.

Fellowship Selection Process

Mustang Fellowship Scoring Guidelines

Score	1	3	5
Broadening the Discipline (this field carries weight equivalent to the other fields combined)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's essay makes a very strong case that they would contribute to opening the discipline up to new perspectives The department's nomination clearly describes how the applicant's background is underrepresented in their discipline The student's application strongly demonstrates commitment to enhancing the diversity of their discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's essay makes a reasonable case that they would make some contribution to opening the discipline up to new perspectives The department's nomination indicates that the applicant's background is somewhat underrepresented in the discipline The student's application includes some indication of commitment to enhancing the diversity of their discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student's essay does not make a credible case that they would contribute to opening the discipline up to new perspectives The department's nomination does not clearly indicate how the applicant's background is underrepresented in the discipline The student's application does not include any indication of commitment to enhancing the diversity of their discipline
Test Scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRE scores are above the departmental average for the applicable category (verbal/quantitative). GRE scores for the non-dominant category are respectable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRE scores are around the departmental average for the applicable category (verbal/quantitative). GRE scores for the non-dominant category are unremarkable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRE scores are below the departmental average for the applicable category (verbal/quantitative). GRE scores for the non-dominant category are very low.
Undergraduate/ Other Graduate Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate GPA is above 3.5 overall, with a strong performance in the major (if the same as the graduate program). Undergraduate institution has a strong program in the field. Graduate school GPA, if any, is very strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate GPA is above 3.2 overall, with a respectable performance in the major (if the same as the graduate program). Undergraduate institution has a solid, if not outstanding, program in the field. Graduate school GPA, if any, is above average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate GPA is at or below 3.0 overall, with an unremarkable performance in the major (if the same as the graduate program). Undergraduate institution is unremarkable in the field. Graduate school GPA, if any, is average.
Background/ Direction in Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student shows a strong background in the graduate field of study through undergraduate work, professional experience, or additional coursework preparing them for study. The personal statement shows a good grasp of their area of focus and clearly indicates why SMU is a good fit for them. Student has research experience or a clear sense of future research areas of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student has some background in the graduate field of study through undergraduate work, professional experience, or additional coursework preparing them for study. The personal statement describes their area of focus and can link their work with SMU's program offerings. Student has limited research experience or some sense of future research areas of focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student has little to no experience in the graduate field of study through undergraduate work, professional experience, or additional coursework preparing them for study. The personal statement has vague statements indicating an interest in the field with little concrete direction. Student has no research experience or no sense of future research areas of focus.
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Fellowship Selection Process

» Two questions:

1. Now that departmental stipends have risen, how do we want to handle the University PhD Fellowship topping up awards?
 - a. Cap total support at \$31,000/yr?
 - b. Cap total support at a higher level (say \$35,000)?
 - c. Not cap total support, provide topping up awards up to \$10,000 regardless of base stipend amount?
2. How should we handle review of fellowships?
 - a. Have all committee members review all of the nominations?
 - b. Have a subset of committee members review each nomination (say 5 committees review each one)?
 - c. If we rely on a subset, how do we establish inter-rater reliability?

Doctoral Hooding



Doctoral Hooding

- » Currently, Ph.D., D.Eng., Ed.D., and D.L.S. recipients are honored at the Moody School dinner the evening before the all-University Commencement, and then they are hooded by their advisor on stage at the all-University commencement ceremony.
- » Some faculty in the Perkins School of Theology have requested that D.Min. and D.S.M. students (up to 12 per year) also be hooded at the all-University commencement. However, other Perkins School faculty seem to be opposed to this.
- » Whatever the preference of the Perkins School faculty regarding their doctorates, there are still open questions with regards to doctoral hooding:
 - » Should we offer a separate hooding ceremony, run by the Moody School, on the evening before the all-University commencement?
 - » The Moody School hooding would replace both the dinner and the advisor hooding at Commencement
 - » Short statements from the student and advisor could be read on their behalf when the student is hooded
 - » A reception would be held afterwards
 - » One student could be selected to give a short valedictory speech at the hooding

Annual Progress Reports for PhD Students



Annual Progress Reports for Moody School Students

- The question has come up, “what are SMU’s requirements with regards to annual review of PhD students?”
- A few cases have come up where it would have been helpful to have annual progress report documentation in the Moody School
- MFA students are also assessed annually. Should a policy apply to them as well?
- Current graduate catalog policy:

Assessment of Ph.D. Students

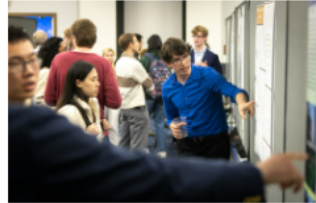
Ph.D. students are evaluated regularly—at least once every academic year—to ensure that they are receiving the appropriate mentorship necessary for success in their program. Evaluations also determine whether students are meeting degree requirements, adhering to appropriate standards for conduct, and fulfilling the responsibilities of their assistantships. Students may be placed on probation, suspended, or dismissed if they are failing to meet standards in any of these areas. In the case of probation or suspension, clear conditions as well as a timeline for clearance of the probation or reinstatement in the program will be established and communicated to the student by their program. In all cases, Ph.D. students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA, and are placed on probation for one regular term if they fall below this level. If, at the end of that term, their cumulative GPA is not up to 3.0, they may be removed from their program at the discretion of their school’s dean’s office.

Research & Innovation Week 2024



Research & Innovation Week 2024

Research & Innovation Week 2024 Events



Undergraduate Poster Session

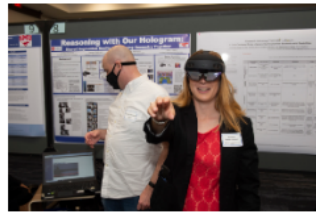
Date: Tuesday April 02, 2024

Poster presentations by SMU undergraduates will take place in the Moody Hall atrium from **2-5 p.m.**

Contact Information:

asneal@smu.edu

[Learn more about this event](#)



Graduate Poster Session

Date: Wednesday April 03, 2024

Poster presentations by SMU graduate students and postdocs will take place in Frances Anne Moody Hall.

Session 1 (Dedman College programs): **9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Session 2 (All other programs and postdoctoral scholars): **2-5 p.m.**

Contact Information:

aitkin@smu.edu

[Learn more about this event](#)



Keynote Talk

Date: Thursday April 04, 2024

Dr. Keivan Stassun, Director of the Frist Center for Autism & Innovation, and Stevenson Professor of Physics & Astronomy at Vanderbilt University will give a talk titled, "The (Neuro-) Diversity Revolution: Tapping the Human Diversity of Mind to Accelerate Scientific Discovery."

This talk will take place in the Moody Hall Auditorium from **5-6 p.m.**

Reception and refreshments to follow.

Contact Information:

aitkin@smu.edu

[Learn more about this event](#)

Research & Innovation Week 2024

- » Events will take place April 1-5
- » Ways that you can help:
 - » Encourage students to participate in the poster sessions
 - » Encourage faculty to serve as judges for the poster sessions
 - » Encourage colleagues to come out for the keynote
 - » Suggest departmental events that can be promoted as part of Research & Innovation Week

Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Project



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

» Two Surveys:

- » Survey of PhD students on their assistantships

- » Survey of DGSs/Department Chairs for PhD and MFA programs

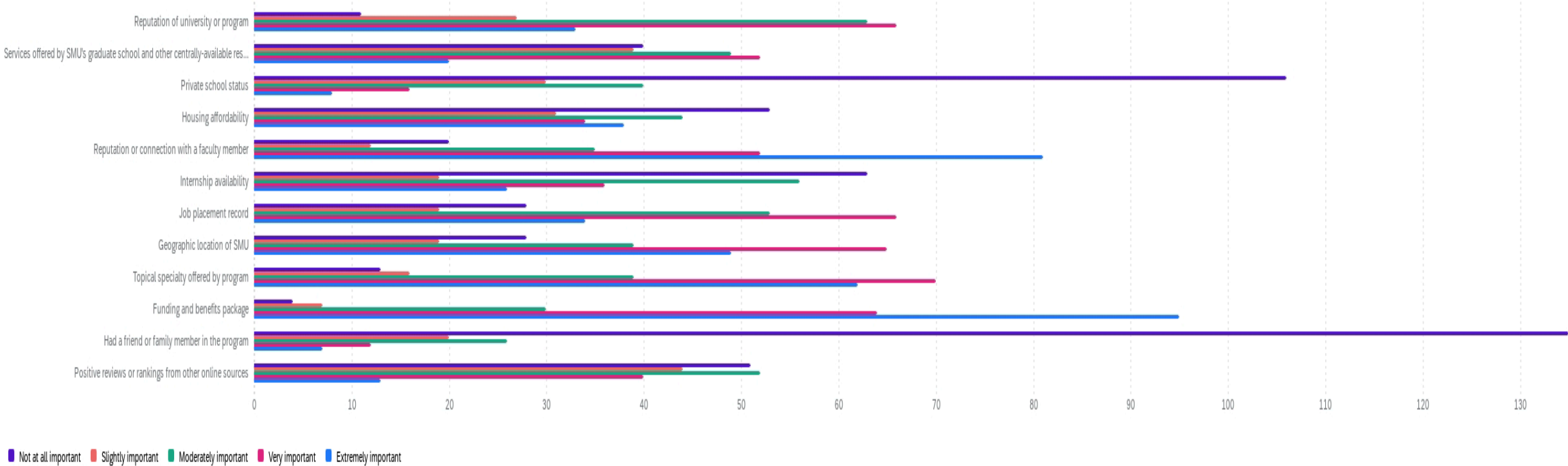
- » The survey of PhD students had 219 responses— about a 40% response rate, with good representation across schools, year in program, living situation, international vs. domestic, etc.

- » The survey of DGSs/Department Chairs had 27 responses

Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the student survey:

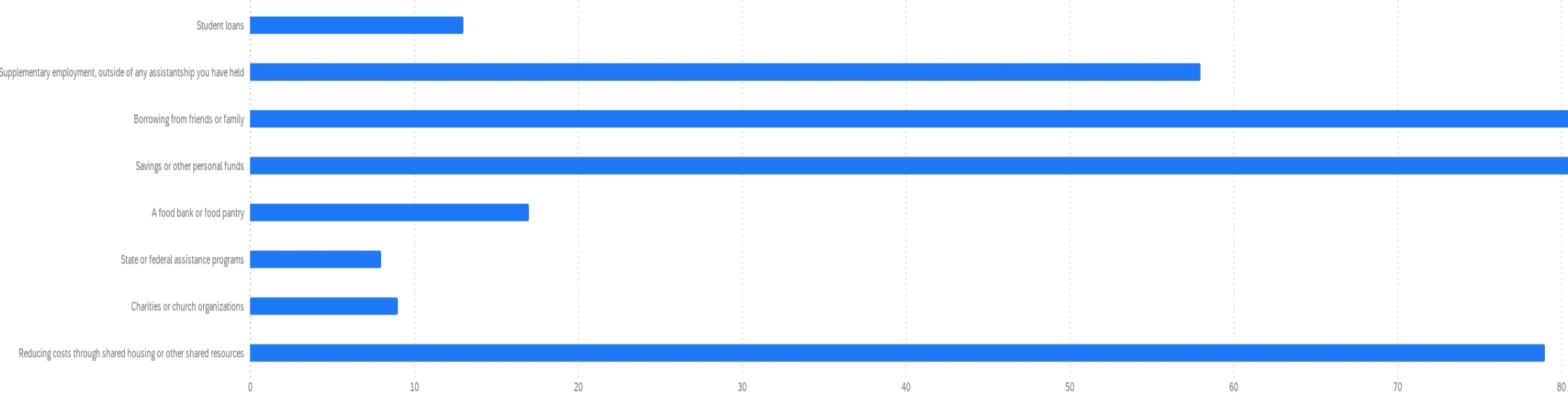
How important were each of the following factors in influencing your decision to select SMU for your graduate studies: 200 (1)



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the student survey:

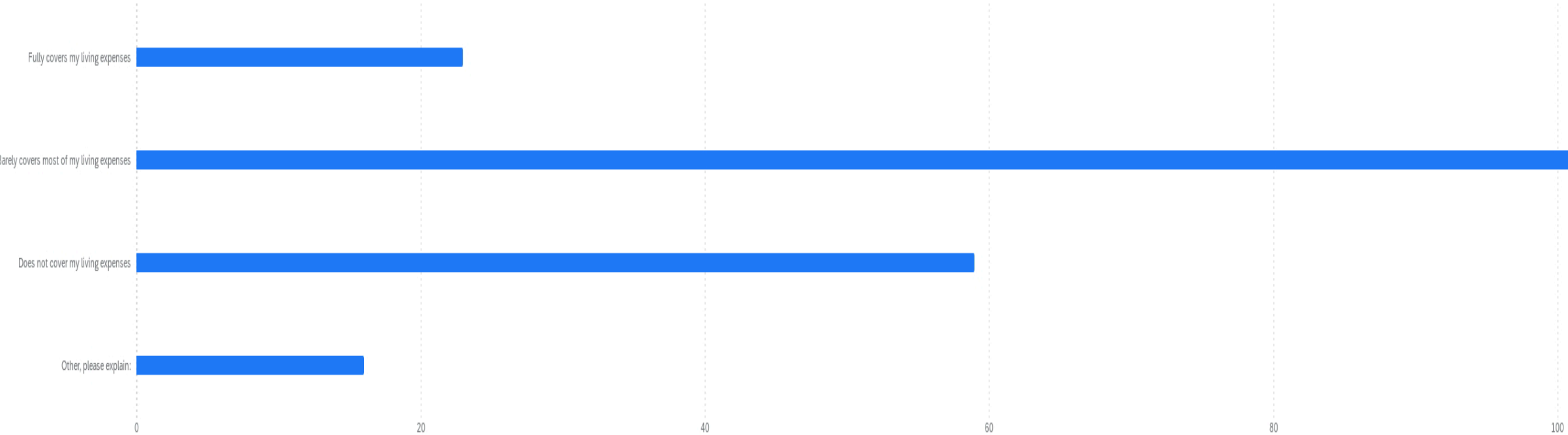
Have you supplemented your income as a PhD student through any of the following means? Please select all that apply: 184



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the student survey:

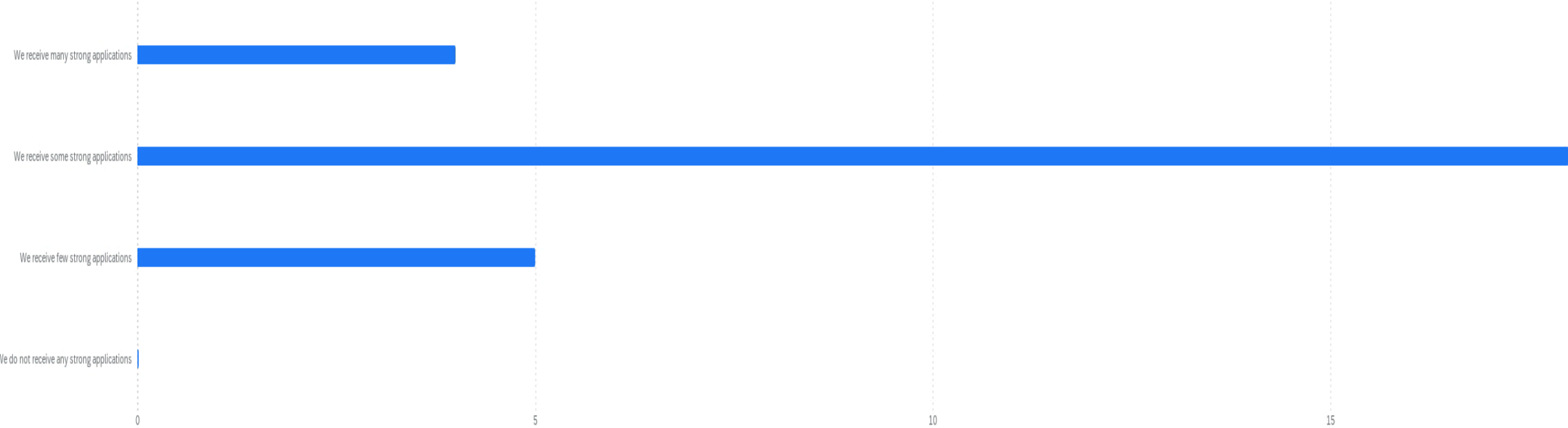
How well does your assistantship/stipend/fellowship cover your living expenses (i.e. housing, food, transportation)? 200 ⓘ



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the program director/department chair survey:

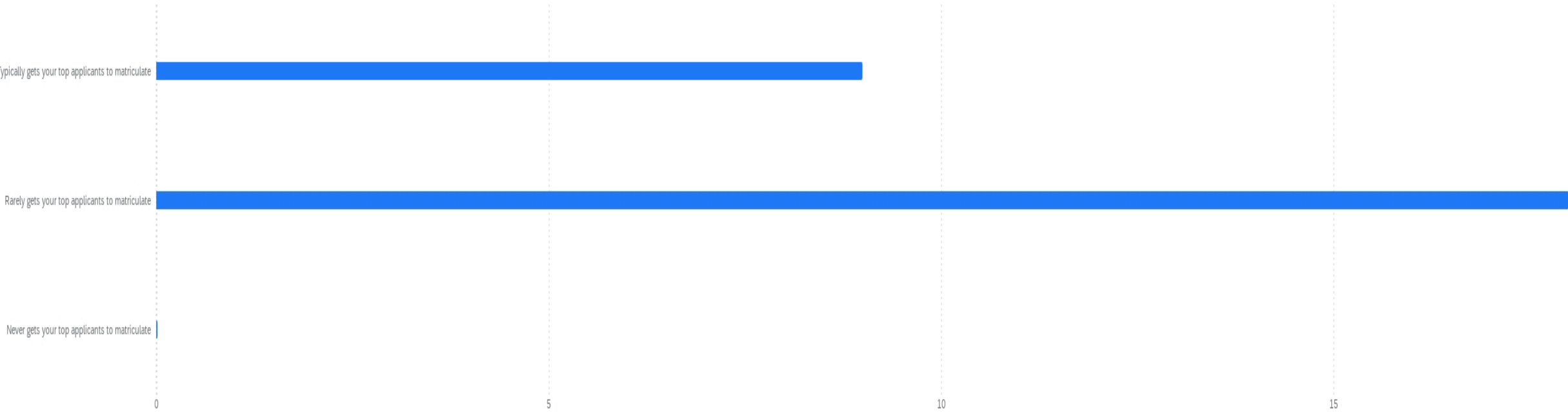
In thinking about your graduate applications over the past few years, which of the following best describes your experience: 27 (1)



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the program director/department chair survey:

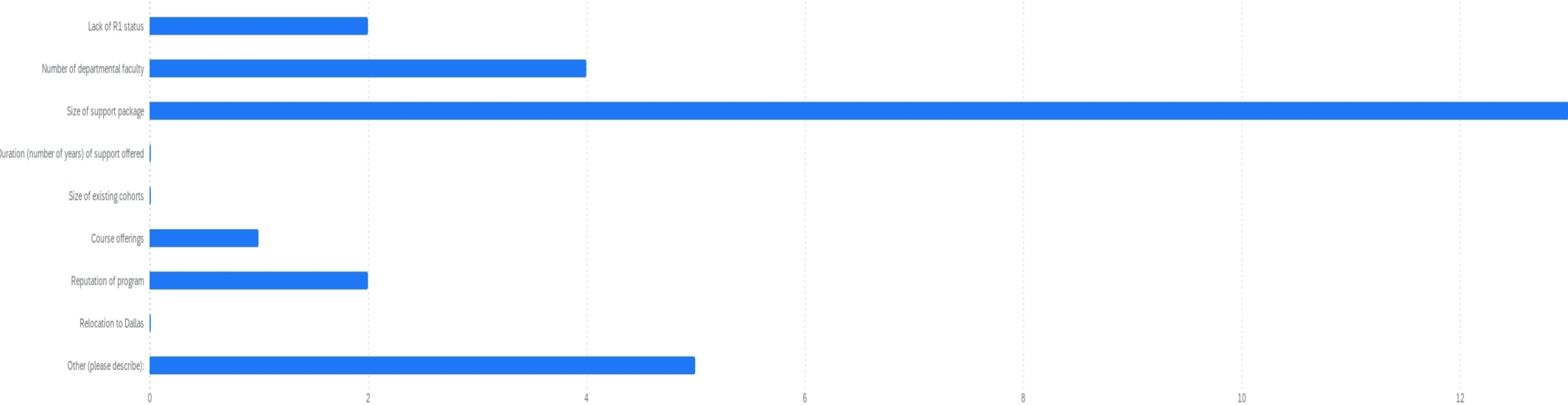
In thinking about your graduate admissions yield over the past few years, would you say that your program: 27 ⓘ



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the program director/department chair survey:

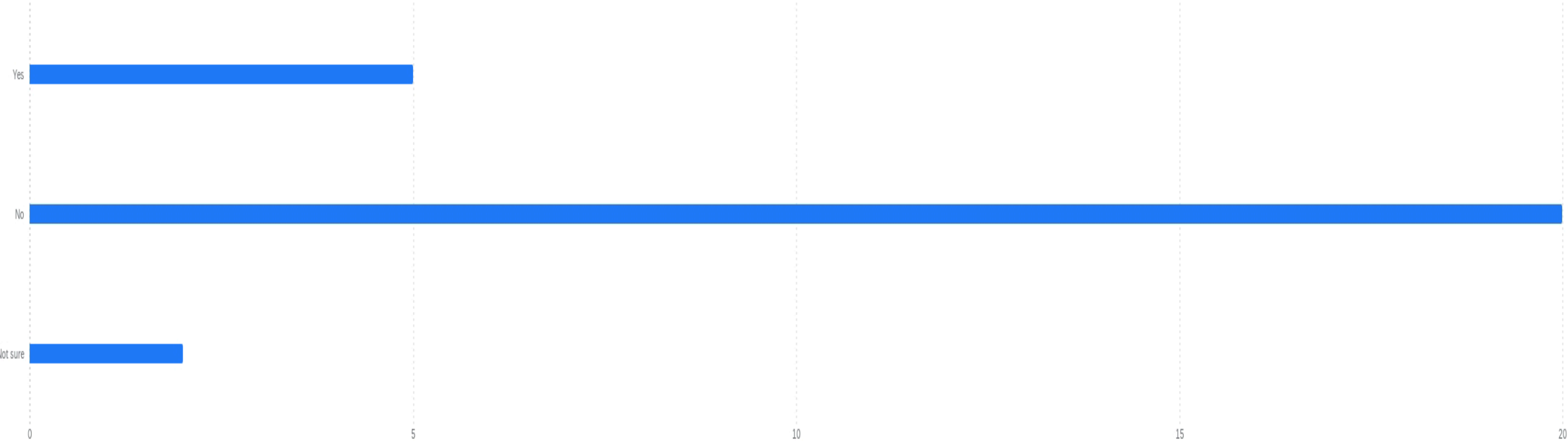
In your experience, what is the most significant impediment to recruiting your top applicants each year? 27 ①



Provost's Faculty Fellow Assistantship Report

From the program director/department chair survey:

Does your department currently have enough graduate students who are eligible for TA or instructor assignments to cover undergraduate teaching needs? 27 ⓘ



Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships



Federal Work Study and Graduate Assistantships

- » We are working with Financial Aid, Payroll, and other offices to explore this possibility
- » Federal work study would provide $\frac{3}{4}$ of a student's stipend, up to \$6,000 in total (so the federal work study contribution would be \$4,500)
- » This could be done for domestic students who demonstrate need by completing the FAFSA
- » Using these federal work study funds as part of the support for eligible students would free up funds that could be used to increase support for all graduate students in the school/program
- » The Office of Financial Aid would prefer to pilot this with students in a few programs starting Fall 2024
- » There are still some issues to be worked out, but this is done at other universities, like U Memphis

Other Items



Thank you!

