

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
March 27, 2024**

Members in Attendance: Ali Beskok, Alan Itkin, Akihito Kamata, Anna Lovatt, Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy, Volkan Otugen, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, Anthony Petrosino, Dinesh Rajan

Members Not in Attendance: Kate Carté, Elfi Kraka, Robin Poston, Gretchen Smith

Business:

- **Provost's Faculty Fellow Report (with Karen Lupo):** Dr. Lupo explained that the purpose of her study was to evaluate the nature, sustainability, and impact of graduate assistantship packages across SMU's campus, with the goal of generating recommendations for developing best practices. She presented three challenges: 1. declining enrollments from foreign students, 2. increased unionization of graduate students across the US, and 3. increased collective bargaining has raised assistantship stipend levels and enhanced other amenities around the country (**see slide 6**). Dr. Lupo explained her methods and sources (**slide 7**) and added that she did not include Moody fellowships in her study, but only departmental stipend funding. The study found that SMU stipends are overall lower than other universities (**slide 8-11**). Dr. Lupo shared her recommendations with the council: 1. Centrally establish minimum stipend levels that are regularly reevaluated and adjusted to keep up with the cost of living and inflation, 2. Increase the level of summer support for assistantships to cover existing income gaps, 3. Provide housing assistance in the form of supplemental funding or subsidized on-campus housing, 4. Explore providing subsidies to graduate students with families and dependents, 5. Explore offering supplementary support to help first-year graduate students transition into their graduate careers (**Slide 12**). The council discussed Dr. Lupo's findings and Dr. Itkin raised the issue that many programs are cannibalizing their graduate student placement lines to raise stipends, which creates smaller cohorts. Prof. Molanphy stated that he wished MFA's were represented in the study and Dr. Lupo responded that she has an appendix on MFA's that she can provide. Dr. Itkin will add the appendix to Box for the council to review. Professor Molanphy would also like the information about our university not providing health insurance to MFA's to be included. Dr. Kamata is interested in the summer support and would like it to be uniformly provided across the schools. Dr. McDonald suggested that the council think about graduate funding in regard to the "academic year" and not just "summer" and to pay out stipends over 12 months. She also suggested that the council look at loan debt that students have and asked if we can pull that data. Dr. McDonald suggested sharing this report with the deans and Dr. Itkin responded that the council should first consider endorsing the report. Dr. Petrosino asked what portion of the IgniteSmu campaign is allocated toward graduate education. Dr. Itkin said he would discuss with Dean Poston if this is a question to raise with DEA, also noting that advocating for PhD education within fundraising is something to develop further. Dr. Lupo left and Dr. Itkin opened the discussion to further

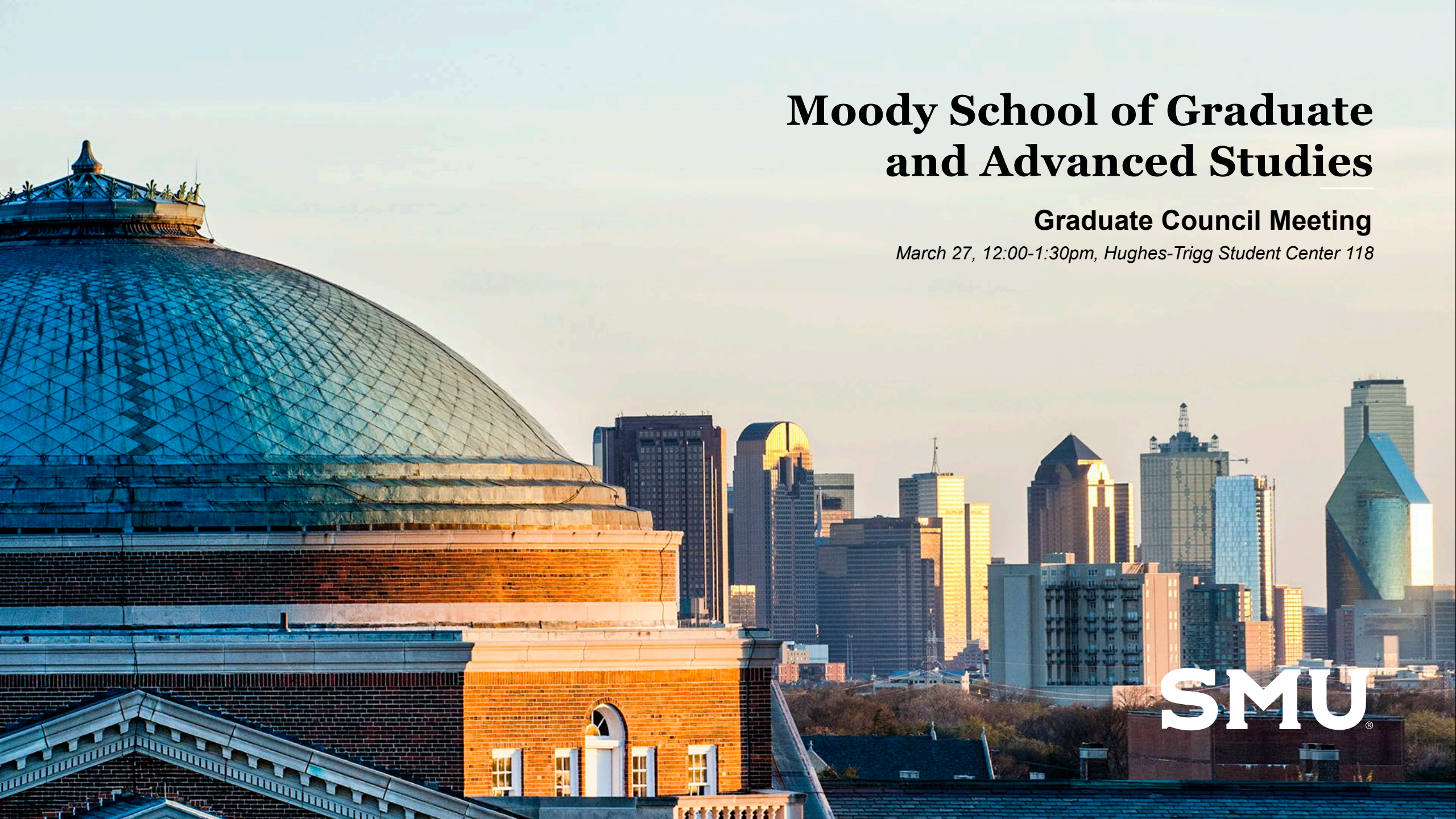
questions. Dr. Kamata would like to look more into graduate student housing and Dr. Itkin assured the council that this was a priority of Dr. Poston's, and that Moody continues to explore different options.

- **Minutes of the February meeting:** Dr. Itkin announced that the recording of the last meeting failed, and Dr. Kiser was not present to take the minutes. He added that if we need to make any changes, then we could do that now. Nonetheless, the council approved the minutes and Dr. McDonald abstained, as she was not present for the February meeting.
- **Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals:** Since Dr. Poston, the chair of the Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals taskforce was not present, Dr. Itkin walked the council through the summary of the taskforce's last meeting (**Slide 13**). Dr. Itkin explained that the context for this policy is that sometimes graduate students are dismissed from their programs for several reasons, not just low grades. Currently, the Moody School does not have a de facto appeal process in place. This policy will also protect faculty if a student comes back and asks for an appeal, years after he/she is dismissed. Dr. Itkin noted that the policy model comes from Notre Dame. The Council discussed the policy. Dr. McDonald said that the Dean's Office should have talked to the student several times, before such an appeal is made. Dr. McDonald also expressed concerns about these documents being given to faculty committees, as they should be kept confidential, particularly to protect untenured faculty. In response, Dr. Itkin noted that if a complaint is processing through the IAE office, then the Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals process will be paused. Dr. Otugen claimed that the policy should not touch the deeper issues about a student coming back after years and asking for a degree. Dr. Molanphy and Dr. Itkin agreed to change the word "sanction" on page 2 to language that is more appropriate. Dr. McDonald suggested that the council look at the grade appeal policy, and Dr. Itkin said he would review it because this policy should be in alignment with the existing grade appeal process.
- **Doctoral Hooding (Slide 15):** Dr. Itkin announced that instead of the dinner that we currently do, we will replace it with a hooding ceremony and a reception in Moody Hall, starting with our December 2024 graduates. This event will replace the hooding at the all-University Commencement ceremony. The next step is for Dr. Poston to give a recommendation for Provost Lobo to discuss this with President Turner. Dr. Itkin stated that this is in line with what many graduate schools do for their graduates. Dr. Itkin asked if there were questions and there were none from the council.
- **Parental Leave Policy:** Dr. Itkin presented the most updated version of the policy. He explained that since the council has received input and has socialized the policy across campus, that the policy is ready to be shared with the President's Executive Council to receive their input and approval. Dr. Itkin explained that the most recent revisions were: 1. clarifying the title of the policy so that it is obvious that the policy refers to only *fully funded* graduate students, 2. adding headings on the sections to make them clearer, and 3. clarifying that the students are encouraged to submit the leave request as soon as possible. Dr. Itkin stated that the council has heard a lot about the burden that this policy may put on individual faculty advisors. In response, Moody is trying to make clear in the policy that they will not abandon faculty. If there is a grant

funding the student, and the grant won't fund the leave, then the Moody School will help. The department can also request additional funding from Moody. The original source of the student's funding should continue to fund the student during their leave, but in cases where this is not possible, and where funding is not available from the faculty advisor, department, or school/college dean's office, the department may request support from the Moody School to fund the student partially or fully during the leave. Dr. McDonald stated that her concern is about faculty who have grants, as you can't both pay the student on leave and hire someone to cover that role. She would like to know what org number will cover this and she suggested that there should be a form when students submit this request that includes where the money comes from. She added that both Moody and the student's department should sign off on this form. Dr. Itkin also added to the discussion that health insurance is done by semester by semester, so if a student has health insurance at the beginning of the semester, they will have it the whole time, even if they take leave in the middle of the semester, which answers a question that Dr. Kraka had previously asked. Dr. McDonald noted that medical leave and parental leave need to be included in Dr. Lupo's report, and Dr. Itkin said he would communicate this to her. The committee then agreed that they need to develop a communications plan to introduce this policy to faculty.

- **Research and Innovation Week 2024:** Dr. Itkin showed the council the events flyer and explained that this is the largest year for RIW in terms of registrants and events. He asked the council to come out and support our graduate students and to attend the keynote talk. He also reminded them that they had been invited to the inclusive admissions discussion. Dr. McDonald suggested incentivizing RIW to students—if a student gets a travel grant from Moody or plans to apply, they need to present. It should be an expectation of anyone who receives a fellowship from the Moody School.
- **Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards:** Dr. Itkin announced the winners and stated that we received fewer nominations than in past years. Prof Molanphy suggested moving the award to the fall, but to make the nomination process in the spring and throughout the summer. The council will continue to discuss this issue.
- **Technology Survey Report:** Dr. Itkin stated that OIT sent this survey to graduate students. He then summarized the findings to the council and stated that there is not a pressing need to give graduate students laptops, but there are some ideas of what could be helpful. Dr. Itkin would like to discuss this further in the next meeting. Dr. Molanphy stated that the definition of technology by OIT needs to be broader.

Meeting adjourned.



Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Graduate Council Meeting

March 27, 12:00-1:30pm, Hughes-Trigg Student Center 118

SMU[®]

Meeting Agenda

1. Minutes of the February 14 Meeting
2. Provost's Faculty Fellow Report (with Karen Lupo)
3. Parental Leave Policy
4. Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals
5. Doctoral Hooding
6. Research and Innovation Week 2024
7. Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards
8. Technology Survey Report
9. Other Items

Minutes of the February 14 Meeting



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Provost's Faculty Fellow Report



Graduate Assistantships at SMU

A Report from the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies



Graduate Assistantship Report

Purpose: to evaluate the nature, sustainability, and impact of graduate assistantship packages across SMU's campus, with the goal of generating recommendations for developing best practices.

Graduate students represent high-value assets in supporting, promoting and creating scholarship, research and creative activities.

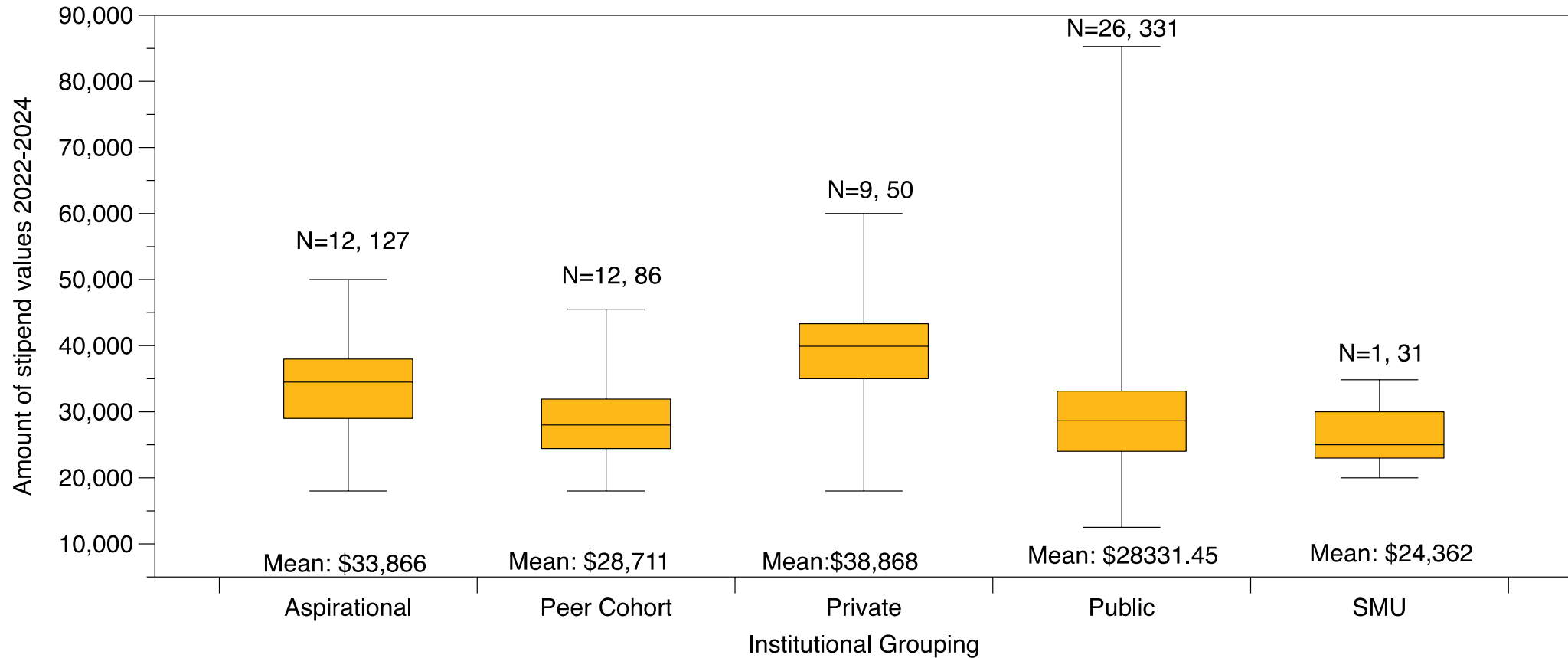
Challenges from national trends:

- Declining enrollments from foreign students
- Increased unionization of graduate students across the US
- Increased collective bargaining has raised assistantship stipend levels and enhanced other amenities around the country

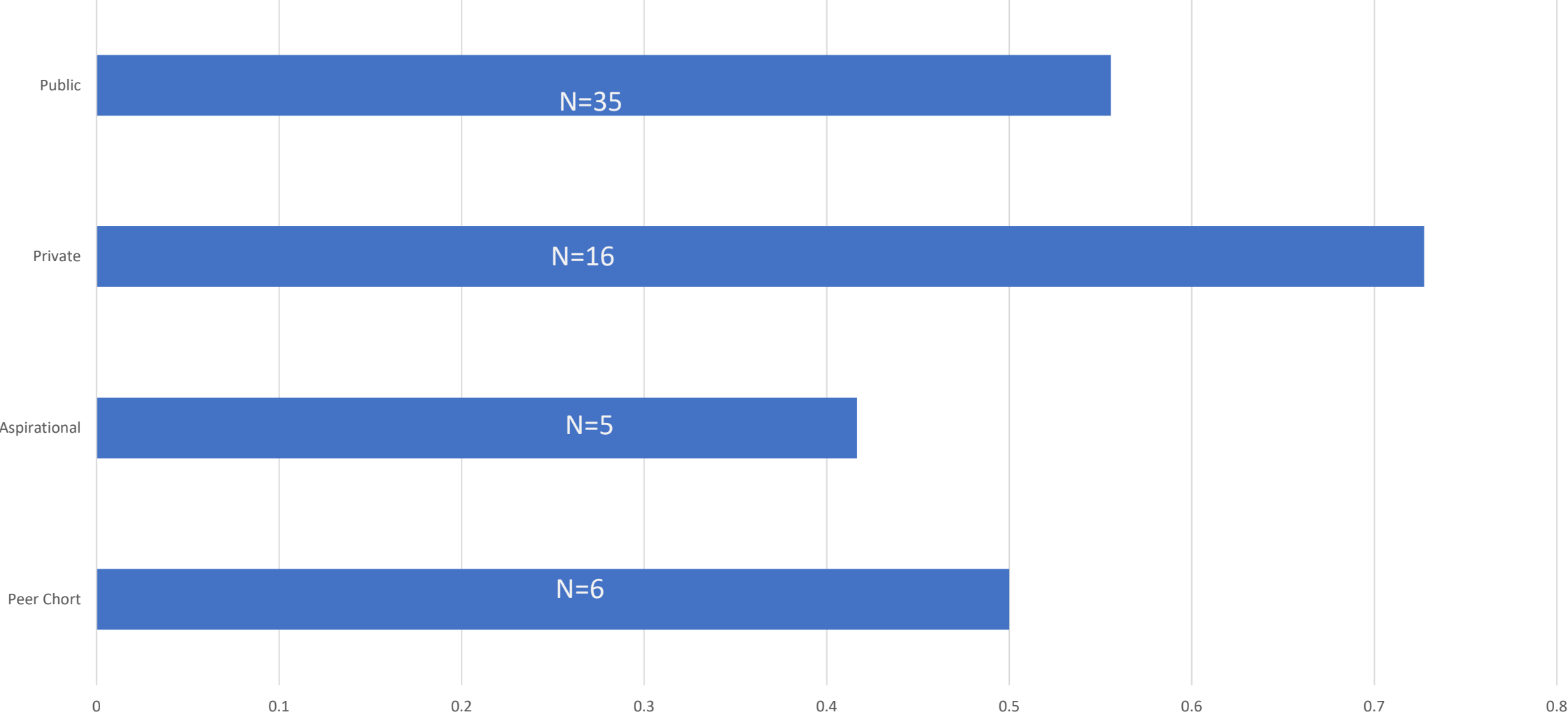
Sources of information used in the report

- Stipend levels: university websites, publically available third party sites (<https://www.phdstipends.com>)
- Survey about graduate assistantship experiences: graduate students
- Survey about impact of graduate assistships as experienced by departments: DGS, Dept. Chairs

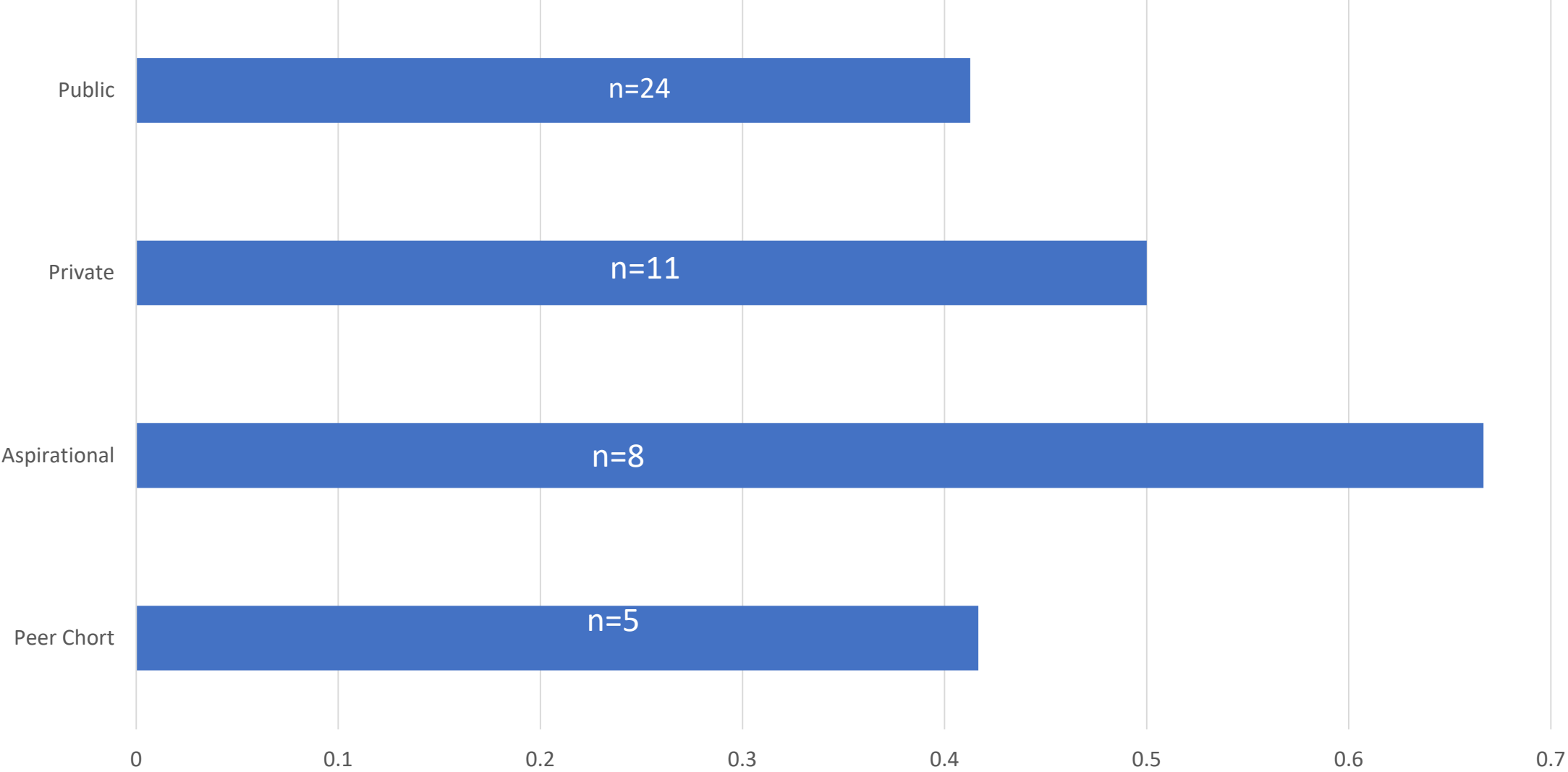
SMU in comparison to other institutions



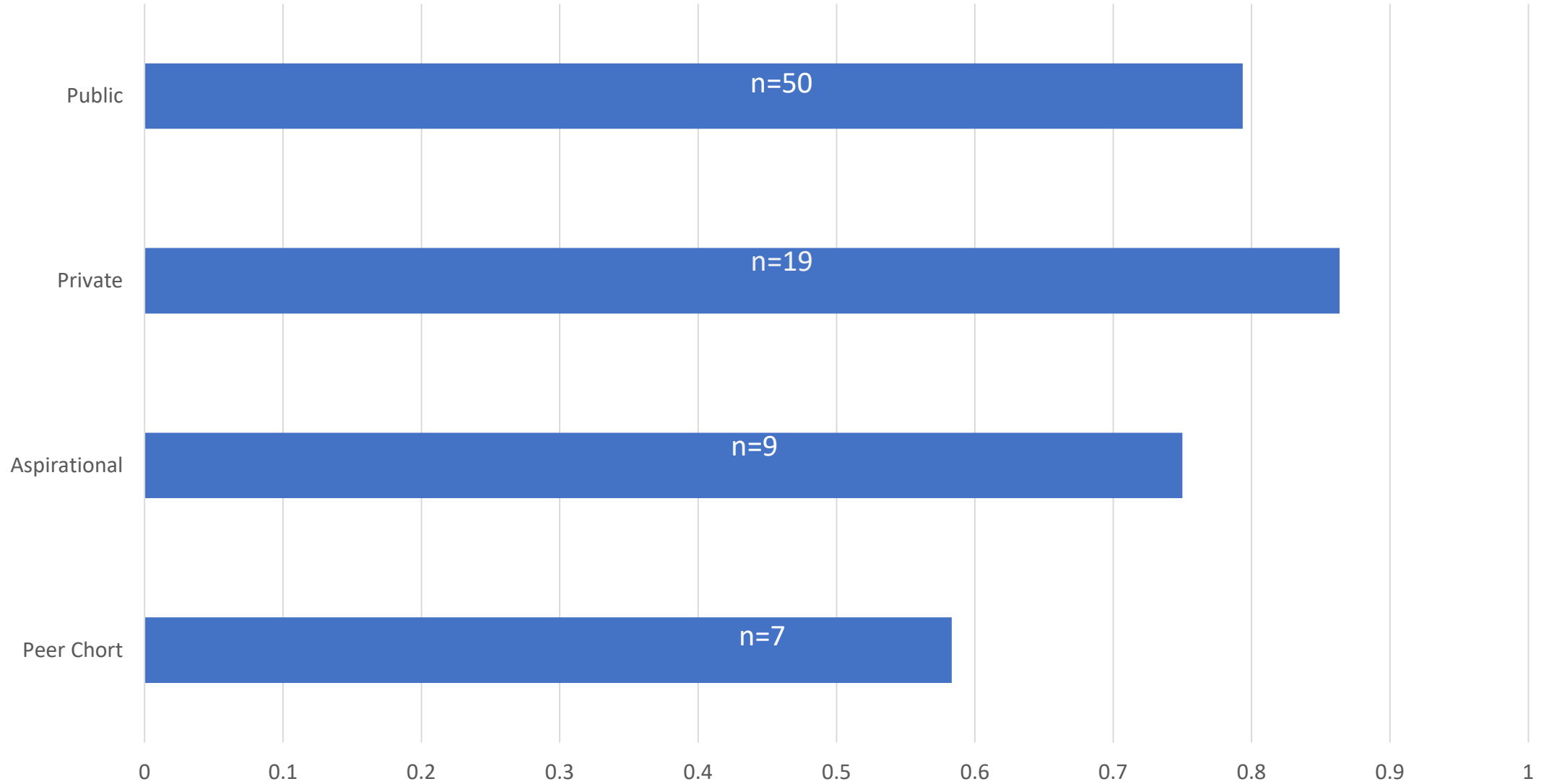
Proportion of universities with established minimum or basic levels of stipends at the university or college level



Proportion of Universities Offering Ph.D. Summer Funding



Proportion of Universities that Offer Graduate Housing Assistance



Recommendations

- **Centrally establish minimum stipend levels that are regularly reevaluated and adjusted to keep up with the cost of living (COL) and inflation.**
- **Increase the level of summer support for assistantships to cover existing income gaps .**
- **Provide housing assistance in the form of supplemental funding or subsidized on-campus housing.**
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- **Explore providing subsidies to graduate students with families and dependents.**
- **Explore offering supplementary support to help first-year graduate students transition into their graduate careers.**

Appeals of Suspensions and Dismissals



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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.
- » We are planning to offer a doctoral hooding ceremony the Friday before the December 2024 University Commencement, pending President Turner's approval.
- » This event would replace the dinner and the hooding at the all-University Commencement ceremony.
- » Some possibilities for the ceremony:
 - » Short statements from the student and advisor could appear in the program and on a screen
 - » A reception would be held afterwards
 - » The event could start with remarks from a speaker
 - » One student could be selected to give a short valedictory speech
 - » The fall event could be held in the Moody Hall Auditorium, but the spring event would need to be held elsewhere, perhaps on the lawn under a tent

Parental Leave Policy



Parental Leave Policy

- » The current policy and other documents are available here:
<https://smu.box.com/s/9gvvgg6uxt9x7okuryq2ha391obro4mtr>
- » Current status:
 - » Graduate Council approved the policy unanimously (12-0)
 - » Moody School program representatives have provided additional input
 - » Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee has provided additional input
 - » Students have provided additional input
 - » Revised version (minor edits) have been shared with the Graduate Council
- » Next steps:
 - » Share policy with President's Executive Council
 - » Additional revisions made as needed

Moody Faculty Fellowship Proposal



Moody Faculty Fellowships

- » We have revised the proposal for Moody Faculty Fellowship funds with input received at the last Graduate Council meeting:
 - » Four Moody Outstanding Mentor Awards will be awarded each year, selected for their outstanding mentorship of graduate students and/or postdoctoral scholars
 - » Moody Outstanding Mentors will receive a \$10,000 fund to cover research-related expenses for graduate students and postdocs under their mentorship that must be used within the fellowship year
 - » Each department will be able to nominate one faculty member each year
 - » The nomination packet will include: 1) a statement of mentoring experience and philosophy, 2) a letter of support from a former or current mentee, 3) a letter of support from the department chair, 4) the nominee's CV, 5) a short statement of how they plan to spend the \$10,000 fund
 - » Moody Outstanding Mentors will be expected to share best practices in mentoring at the Graduate Student Success Day and at other venues
 - » Faculty members will only be able to win a Moody Outstanding Mentor Award once? Once every five years?

Research & Innovation Week 2024



Research & Innovation Week 2024



MONDAY, APRIL 1

KICK-OFF EVENT AND CENTERS AND INSTITUTES PANEL 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

The Office of Research & Innovation will kick-off the week with panels that feature our very own centers and institutes and the research projects they are developing.

TUESDAY, APRIL 2

UNDERGRADUATE POSTER SESSION 2-5 p.m.

Poster presentations by SMU undergraduates in Moody Hall

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

GRADUATE POSTER SESSION

*Session 1, Dedman College programs
9 a.m.-12 p.m.*

*Session 2, all other programs and postdoctoral scholars
2-5 p.m.*

Poster presentations by SMU graduate students and postdocs in Moody Hall

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

LUNCH & LEARN WITH THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Learn from Mary Travis and her compliance team about what you need to do before your project or grant is approved and funded.

KEYNOTE TALK

THE (NEURO-) DIVERSITY REVOLUTION: TAPPING THE HUMAN DIVERSITY OF MIND TO ACCELERATE SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY
5-6 p.m.

Speaker: Keivan Stassun, Ph.D.
Stevenson Chair in Physics & Astronomy, Vanderbilt University
Founder and Director, Frist Center for Autism & Innovation

Reception and refreshments to follow.

FRIDAY, APRIL 5

INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP: LICENSING RESEARCH 8:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

Attend a series of discussions that include an investor panel, our patent attorney, and faculty inventors to learn how to license your research.

CONVERSATIONS WITH DR. SANDI CHAPMAN AND DR. LORI COOK

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Join Dr. Lori Cook and Dr. Sandi Chapman for a talk and discussion titled, "Boosting Brain Health: Simple Steps to Promote Clarity, Connectedness, & Emotional Balance."

MFA QUALIFYING EXHIBITION: "TO FEEL, TO MEND, TO BE"

2-5 p.m.

A showcase of the Division of Art's Interdisciplinary Program, featuring works that range from ceramics and installations to paintings.



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SMU Moody

SMU Office of Research
and Innovation

SMU Office of
Engaged Learning

SMU

Research & Innovation Week 2024

- » Events will take place April 1-5
- » Ways that you can help:
 - » Share events with colleagues and encourage them to come out
 - » Encourage colleagues to come out for the keynote

Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards



Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards

» This year's three winners are:

» **Kendall Dinniene**, Ph.D. student in the Department of English at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, was recognized for her stellar performance as a course instructor and teaching assistant for multiple classes and for her devotion to the craft of teaching through work in the English department and the Center for Teaching Excellence.

» **Marie Schramper**, Ph.D. student in the Religious Studies Graduate Program at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, was recognized for her exemplary support of faculty instruction as a teaching assistant for multiple classes and for her dedication to students both in and outside the classroom.

» **Timothy Seiter**, Ph.D. student in the Department of History at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, was recognized for his creativity in developing innovative class assignments as a teaching assistant and his ability to craft compelling and informative lectures as a class instructor.

» We received fewer nominations than in past years

» Proposal: move award selection to the fall next year

Technology Survey Report



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Other Items



Thank you!

