

Expectations for Ph.D. Students Receiving Stipends: The School of Medicine provides stipends to and pays tuition and fees for Ph.D. students so they may commit their full-time effort to their doctoral training, including research and other scholarly activities, rather than restrict their training schedules to accommodate unrelated part-time or full-time employment. Thus, the School expects students receiving a stipend to commit 100% of their professional time and effort to their doctoral training.

All VCU, School of Medicine, departmental, program and non-VCU funding (except VCU financial aid) secured by a Ph.D. student for their training must be coordinated through the student's local departmental administrator and/or the Office of Graduate Education in the School of Medicine.

The School generally supports a student's limited volunteer or other unpaid activities that do not detract from the student's commitment to their doctoral training and do not present a conflict of commitment for the student. Students considering a particular volunteer activity should consult with their advisor and their Graduate Program Director regarding the feasibility of progressing satisfactorily in the program while maintaining such a commitment. If a student with stipend support and an outside volunteer commitment fails to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress or complete any other requirement of their doctoral program, the School will review the student's volunteer activities outside the training program to determine whether the student has committed adequate time and effort to meeting the requirements of their doctoral training. Several outcomes of the review are possible such as (i) the School might direct a student to decrease or stop all volunteer activity so the student can commit appropriate effort to their doctoral training and (ii) a student could choose to relinquish support for their stipend, tuition and fees so as to pursue the proposed or other volunteer activities.

The School prohibits any student from receiving payment for any activity that interferes with or duplicates doctoral training effort supported by the stipend. The School understands, however, that a student receiving a stipend may experience an unexpected financial hardship that, if unaddressed, could cause the student financial harm. Additionally, the School understands that a student might expand and enhance their doctoral training from paid opportunities such as serving as a teaching assistant, an intern or tutor. A student may therefore propose to continue receiving a stipend while performing part-time paid work unrelated to their doctoral training on a temporary basis limited to a duration of time that does not unreasonably impede satisfactory academic progress. To propose such an arrangement, a student should first discuss their situation with their advisor and their program director. The advisor and program director will consider information from the student such as the number of paid part-time work hours per week the student envisions, the nature and geographical location of the proposed part-time work assignment, the duration and schedule of the proposed part-time work assignment, the student's past training record, whether the student is currently making satisfactory academic progress, the student's anticipated ability to maintain satisfactory academic progress and meet all training benchmarks with or without the part-time work assignment, and the potential impact of the part-time work assignment on the student's research productivity and time to degree completion. If the advisor and program director consider the student's proposal feasible, they will confer with the Associate Dean for Graduate Education (ADGE) who will discuss the student's proposal with the Graduate Education Executive Committee. The ADGE will respond in writing to the student regarding their proposal. If necessary, the student will be expected to respond to the ADGE within 5 working days of receiving a response. Several outcomes are possible such as (i) the student might be asked to provide additional information, (ii) the student might be allowed to continue earning a stipend while performing part-time paid work outside of their doctoral training for a specified duration of time as codified in a memo of understanding between the student, the advisor, the program and the School, and (iii) the part-time paid outside activity, if undertaken, might be judged to preclude the student from committing full-time to their doctoral training, resulting in the student needing to choose to (a) continue receiving standard support for their stipend, tuition and fees in recognition of their full-time doctoral training efforts without pursuing the part-time activity or (b) relinquish their supported doctoral training position (i.e. relinquish their support for stipend, tuition and fees) so they can pursue the proposed or other paid outside work opportunities.

Approved by the School of Medicine Graduate Programs Committee: 2023.MM.DD