

POLICY ON TUITION COST SHARING FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANTS ON EXTERNALLY FUNDED, SPONSORED RESEARCH

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Background

The significant increases in the research portfolio outlined in the Rensselaer Plan will require that faculty undertake new and sustained efforts in the research arena. These efforts will require an increase in the rate of proposal submission; improvement in the quality of the proposals submitted, which will thereby enhance the success rate; and an increase in the number of large interdisciplinary, multi-investigator proposals, developed and submitted. It will further require that a greater percentage of faculty members participate in sponsored research programs. One way to strongly encourage and motivate these types of activities while at the same time making proposals more competitive is through the implementation of a tuition cost-sharing program.

The implementation of a procedure whereby a portion of the cost of the tuition for Graduate Research Assistants is provided by the Institute on externally funded, sponsored research projects, will result in a number of benefits:

- It will make proposals more competitive by reducing the amount of tuition charged to the proposal
- It may allow more students to be employed on a given contract, thereby allowing more work to be proposed for the same amount of funding
- It can serve as a mechanism to promote interdisciplinary research activities.
- It will provide institutional cost sharing on a much larger number of research proposals, thereby demonstrating a greater Institutional commitment to research, and making proposals more competitive when cost sharing is either formally or informally a sponsor requirement.

Policy

All proposals submitted for competitive, externally-funded, sponsored research programs that pay the full indirect cost rate should incorporate institutional cost sharing in an amount equal to 35% of the required tuition for each fully supported Graduate Student. Tuition cost sharing for programs paying less than full indirect costs will be prorated accordingly. Tuition authorization funds must be used exclusively for tuition support, and in no case will the total amount of tuition cost sharing on any given contract or grant exceed, 35% of the total tuition costs expended.

Policy Implementation

This revised policy becomes effective on March 18, 2002 for all new competitive, externally-funded, sponsored research proposals. It will also be applied to the budgets of incrementally-funded sponsored research programs with budget increments beginning March 18, 2002.

Closure

It is reasonable to expect that the expenditure of these funds will result in both an increase in the number of proposals produced by the faculty and a corresponding increase in the success rate of those proposals. By limiting it to Research Assistants and tying it directly to externally-funded sponsored research awards, it will reward those entities, i.e., faculty, departments, schools, and centers that are directly responsible for the generation and production of successful proposals.

Initially Approved on 1/28/00

Revision Approved

Original signed on 8/7/02

Shirley Ann Jackson, President Date

TUITION COST SHARING GUIDELINES

Definitions

- ❖ A Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) receives both a full minimum stipend and full tuition scholarship. This cost sharing policy deals strictly with the tuition scholarship portion of an appointment. Stipends are not included in this policy.
- ❖ Sponsored Research – as defined by OMB Circular A-21, *“all research and development activities that are sponsored by Federal and non-Federal agencies and organizations. This term includes activities involving the training of individuals in research techniques (commonly called research training) where such activities utilize the same facilities as other research and development activities and where such activities are not included in the instruction function.”*
- ❖ Full Indirect Cost Rates – are the rates (Organized Research and Educational Services) negotiated with the Office of Naval Research. Agency specific rates will be prorated against the full federally negotiated rates.
- ❖ Full Research Assistant Appointment – as defined in the Rensselaer Catalog, a full-time assistant receives both the full minimum stipend and a full tuition scholarship and is responsible for 20 hours of work each week. Effective with the adoption of this policy, research assistants must be full time to receive stipend support.
- ❖ Graduate Assistant (Full-Time Certification) – as defined in the Rensselaer Catalog, a student taking 12 credit hours or more is considered full time. Students taking at least 9 and on teaching assistantship are also certified as full-time with approval by the department chair.
- ❖ Original Implementation Date – new proposals submitted on or after January 1, 2001 and continuations of awards where additional funding is requested with a start date on or after January 1, 2001.
- ❖ Implementation Date for Revised Policy 4/5/02 – new proposals submitted on or after March 18, 2002 and continuations of awards where additional funding is requested with a start date on or after March 18, 2002.

Guidelines

- ❖ If a proposal was submitted without cost sharing, cost sharing will not be added when the award comes in.
- ❖ Tuition cost sharing funds will be provided through a Tuition Cost Sharing Fund, the size of which will be projected by the Office of the Vice President for Research.
- ❖ If the number of credit hours is reduced during the project period, the home department of the Principal Investigator is responsible for providing the cost share difference between the tuition cost share proposed and the actual amount used.
- ❖ Department Heads and the Finance division, through Research Financial Administration (RFA), must approve revision of budgets that include cost sharing.

- ❖ Proposals will be considered interdisciplinary if submitted by PI's from two or more departments only. Department affiliation is based on which department/center pays the majority of the PI's salary.
- ❖ No tuition cost sharing will be provided on industrial membership affiliates or gifts.

Process and Responsibilities

- ❖ PI's submit proposal information and budgets to the Office of Contracts & Grants (OCG).
- ❖ OCG reviews the proposal and determines if the 35% cost sharing will be allowed. OCG calculates the actual percentage to be used based upon the overhead rate and forwards the information to Research Financial Administration (RFA).
- ❖ RFA will set up the fund so that an automatic debit, charging the Cost Sharing Fund and crediting the research fund will occur as charges to the tuition category are made.
- ❖ PIs/ Financial Managers are responsible for monitoring the tuition charges and credits to the fund, and for insuring that the correct amount of cost sharing as required in the award is provided. RFA will monitor activity monthly for compliance.
- ❖ The amount of tuition due to the Institute from a given contract will be automatically encumbered by the Finance division, through RFA.
- ❖ The annual budget for tuition cost sharing will be prepared by RFA from a projection by the Office of the Vice President for Research. RFA will review/monitor expenses from the Tuition Cost Sharing Fund.