

## **POLICY ON TUITION WAIVERS** **Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

### **Introduction**

The Institute encourages faculty, students, and advancement professionals to seek external funding for research through grants, contracts, fellowships, and gifts. A critical part of the research enterprise envisioned in the Rensselaer Plan involves funding for graduate education. For graduate students supported on grants and contracts, a policy is already in place which ensures that students receive an equitable stipend, and that those agencies, foundations, or corporations funding the research also provide support to cover the cost of education (tuition) and the costs to maintain the research infrastructure (overhead). It is the aim of this policy to establish guidelines for graduate student support for fellowships and gifts.

These guidelines must:

1. Incent faculty and students to seek fellowships and pursue fellowship opportunities,
2. Encourage donors to provide gifts for student support, and
3. Encourage corporate partners to provide 'philanthropy', but ensure that corporate partners engaged in deliverable-based research with Rensselaer adhere to university policies, and provide overhead and tuition monies to fully support the research activity.

### **Current Status**

The Graduate Tuition and Student Support Policy approved in the Spring of 2001 has set the guidelines for students supported on grants and contracts (G&C). They are:

1. Students must receive a stipend for the calendar year that meets or exceeds \$16,000.
2. Full tuition support must be paid by the contract or grant, however the Institute will cost share tuition by 35% for those G&Cs which pay full overhead (54%). G&Cs which pay lower overhead will receive a pro-rated cost share.
3. Students on Rensselaer Fellowships must receive the minimum calendar year stipend of \$16,000, and tuition support to be determined by the Fellowship Review Committee, which this year granted full tuition waivers.
4. Students on fellowships administered by the Schools must receive a minimum calendar year stipend of \$16,000 and tuition support to be determined by the School.

*Note:* this is the only occurrence in the tuition policy in which a student may receive support but is NOT required to be 'made whole'.

### **Additional Actions**

1. As part of our efforts to attract a diverse graduate student population, Rensselaer participates in programs sponsored by GEM and NPSC and has cooperative agreements with some HBCU and HSI institutions. This past year, students identified by these programs and accepted by Rensselaer were offered full tuition waivers and a stipend of \$16,000 for the calendar year. In most cases these students were offered two-year awards. Although a sustainable base for this on a go-forward basis has not been established, this practice will be continued.

2. A fellowship matching program has been announced which will provide additional fellowships for students in Architecture, Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. The program will provide 5 fellowships as a match, following successful efforts by faculty in those disciplines to secure 5 fellowships for their students. In addition, an additional 5 fellowships will be provided to match one-for-one any further fellowships obtained by faculty in these areas.

To provide a smooth transition to the new graduate tuition policy a total of 550 tuition waivers were provided for student support, primarily as supplement to TA positions, but also supporting the above-mentioned Rensselaer fellowships and RA positions incorporated into set-up packages for new faculty.

### **Proposed Policy**

This proposal requests a continuation of the 550 tuition waivers for FY'04. These waivers would be used to promote the goals stated above and their use would be strictly controlled by the priorities listed below. *Under no circumstances will students supported on corporate sponsored research agreements (specific deliverables) be granted tuition waivers. These sponsored agreements must pay tuition according to the Institute's cost-sharing policy.* Emphasis will always be placed upon making students 'whole', therefore tuition waivers under any circumstances will only be offered when a student or faculty generated fellowship provides a stipend which meets or exceeds the minimum stipend and when a donor-generated fellowship meets or exceeds a level recommended by the Vice President for Advancement and approved by the President.

We propose the following hierarchy for application of tuition waivers to student stipends to make students whole.

1. Teaching assistantships (TA) or Institute supported Research Assistant (IRA) positions – the School Deans provide *at least* the minimum stipend for their TAs/IRAs and receive a tuition waiver for that student.
2. GEM & NPSC Fellowships – Rensselaer accepts the tuition money offered by these programs (small), and then provides full tuition waivers (beyond the tuition money granted by these programs) for the students.
3. Federally sponsored Institutional grants (IGERT, AGEP, GAANN) which provide tuition but have caps below our cost-shared level. *The Institute will collect the maximum allowable tuition from the agency* and then supply the remainder through a waiver.
4. Student or faculty initiated fellowships, in fields that historically do not present significant opportunities for externally funded research [humanities, arts, architecture]. *The Institute would collect and apply all available tuition* and then provide a tuition waiver for the remainder for the student.
5. Institute Fellowships – University fellowships awarded by the Institute under the auspices of the Dean of Graduate Education.
6. *Endowed* individual gifts which meet or exceed a level recommended by the Vice President for Advancement and approved by the President. Donors can receive the message that their gift will be magnified by the Institute.
7. Special *student*-initiated (as opposed to faculty-initiated) fellowships, in any field that provide at least the minimum stipend.

The allocation of 550 tuition waivers, to be distributed using the priorities listed above, must provide a mechanism by which the programmatic commitments for the Architecture, Humanities and Social Sciences Fellowship Program, and the 50% funding commitment for RA's transitioning from TA's during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ph.D. work can be made.

The maximum limit of 550 tuition waivers will be allocated, maintained and controlled by the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. These waivers will only be provided for cases where the minimum stipend is provided to the student, except as noted above, and under no circumstances will the total number exceed 550.

Approved: approved on 4/9/03 /    /     
Shirley Ann Jackson, President                      Date