

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL AID

Graduate students struggle with cost of living

Students say UNC stipends fail to give adequate support

By Abby Pender
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Jamie Blake, a graduate student in the UNC Department of Music from 2014-2022, said there was never money to save during her time in graduate school.

Blake and her husband — also a graduate student on a stipend — had two daughters while they were students. All their money went to living expenses or daycare, she said.

At UNC, the minimum graduate student stipend only covers approximately 68.5 percent of the University's cost of attendance, a recent study by the Graduate and Professional Student Federation found.

Excluding tuition, fees and health insurance, the University estimates that it costs \$24,828 to attend graduate school at UNC this year.

In order to receive a service stipend, graduate students must assist with teaching, research or other academic work within the University. The current stipend for graduate students is \$17,000 for a full academic year — which is \$7,828 less than the overall cost of attendance.

The stipend was \$15,700 in 2014 and was raised to \$17,000 this year.

When her four-month-old daughter needed emergency surgery, Blake said she didn't know what to do.

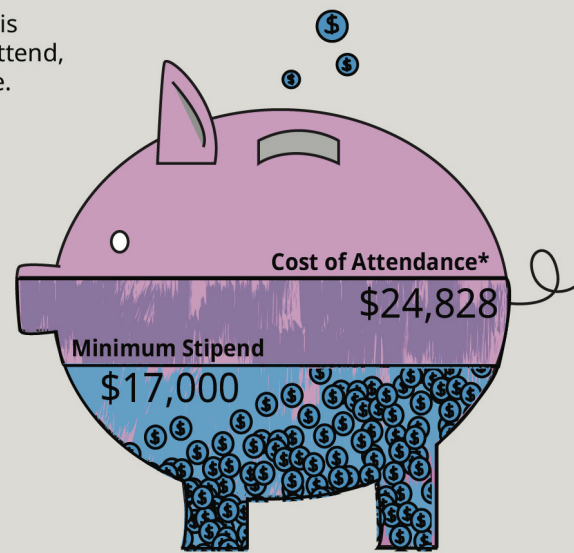
She said that, at the time she was seeking emergency aid, the University asked questions that felt were invasive

Minimum stipend for Graduate students only covers 68.5 percent of costs

UNC's minimum stipend for graduate students is \$17,000 — only part of the \$24,828 it costs to attend, not factoring tuition, fees and health insurance.

Cost Breakdown, In-State	Total
Tuition/Fees/Health Insurance — \$15,150	\$39,978
Housing \$14,028	
Books/Travel/Loan Fees/Personal \$5,560	
Meals \$5,240	

Data from information provided by UNC



*COA does not include tuition, fees, health insurance

DTH DATA VISUALIZATION/SUSIE WEBB

and designed to make one "opt out of finishing the application."

A personal emergency like a health crisis, loss of transportation and housing, or other situations could make a graduate student unable to afford to survive in Chapel Hill another semester, Blake said.

Brendan Chambers, a PhD candidate in the Department of English, said the stipend requires students to either scrape by with the bare minimum or try to make ends meet through adding extra work.

Theodore Nollert, president of the GPSG, has been working to increase

graduate funding for three years.

With the help of Chambers, the two have concluded through internal calculations that UNC ranks seventh out of 15 peer institutions in graduate student payments relative to the cost of attendance to each university.

"The genesis is that it gets more and more expensive to live here," Nollert said. "The stipend isn't keeping up."

Graduate students can either receive a nine-month or 12-month stipend for the academic year.

The 12-month stipend is aided by a National Science Foundation (NSF grant). These grants are much easier to

come by in health science departments, Evelyne Huber, director of Graduate Studies in political science, said. She added that most social sciences and humanities departments are at a particular disadvantage because they receive fewer grants.

Huber said many graduate students work during the summer to supplement their stipend. Summer jobs cost graduate students time for research and could delay their graduation or ability to publish.

The stipend can be especially hard to live off in departments that operate on a nine-month schedule, Chambers said.

Nollert proposed two plausible options for raising the stipend. Either the state government decides to write a larger check to the University, he said, or some other campus population loses funding for the graduate program to receive more money.

"The legislature in Raleigh has systematically reduced the amount of support they give to this University," Huber said.

She also said that the University could raise tuition. In-state tuition has remained at \$7,019 since 2017, and out-of-state tuition was increased by \$680 in February 2022.

"We are living in a world of trade-offs," Huber said.

Nollert said that Nate Knuffman, vice chancellor for finance and operations and chief financial officer, is in the process of preparing an All-Funds budget report.

"Until we have that budget, the best I can do is present the data and say 'we need more,'" Nollert said.

Waiting on this budget, Chambers said another step in his research will be working with the urban planning department to develop an economic impact report. He said this report will demonstrate how graduate students are underpaid, yet generate an enormous amount of value for the state.

Chambers also said he and his colleagues plan to advocate in the North Carolina General Assembly this spring for more University funding to go toward graduate student stipends.

"What you spend on is what you value," Nollert said.

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Q&A

Dean Raul Reis begins first year at journalism school

New Hussman dean talks representation, hiring and community

By Liv Reilly
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As the first month of the Fall 2022 semester comes to an end, DTH University Desk Editor Liv Reilly sat down with Dean Raul Reis to discuss the upcoming year, along with the past and present of the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

The Daily Tar Heel: What are you looking forward to most as a new dean of the Journalism School?

Raul Reis: I don't have huge expectations about anything, but I have very high expectations for myself in terms of coming to the job. This is an amazing school, which has a legacy and has a history. And I really want to live up to the expectations because I know there are a lot of high expectations. So I look forward to serving the students, the school, the faculty, the staff, in a way that lives up to people's expectations and my own expectations.

DTH: The journalism school at UNC is predominantly made up of white students and faculty. Do you have a plan to extend diversity and how to inform these incoming classes of students that the journalism school is a safe place for them?

RR: That's one of the goals of the plan is to have more representation in the school from across a variety including socioeconomic, LGBT+, racial, ethnic, social backgrounds and first generation immigrant communities and international.

So a multitude and variety of points of view (should) be more represented within the school from the perspective



DTH/TAYLOR NOCK

Raul Reis, the new Dean of the Hussman School of Journalism and Media, pictured on September 1, 2022.

of the students, but also related to faculty and the same thing, making an effort. So in the past month and a half, I've had the opportunity of meeting with search committees, ongoing searches to talk about diversity, bringing my experience from previous institutions and what I learned to make searches more diverse in terms of the applicants.

Where we should be looking, how we should be going about publicizing our positions and making sure that people will come into a safe space, and then prepare ourselves to receive people who are different from us — and then make sure that they are happy here.

DTH: Can you give us the Dean Reis vision? What are you looking forward to and what are you planning to do these upcoming years for the school?

RR: There are a lot of conversations that will happen about efficiencies, about new lines in terms of faculty and hiring more people. We're expanding access and enrollment in the school to be able to offer more spots in classes, because we know now that it's a source of frustration when people can't get into classes.

So how do we offer more required classes that the students need to take? And also how do those classes reflect best practices and where the industry is going? So it is a broader discussion, it's not going to happen and finish even in this year, but we want to get started and we have got started.

DTH: Last spring, the public records were released in regards to the documents related to the University's inquiry of emails of Journalism

School faculty. Do you have any plans to address the situation?

RR: One of the things that I want to implement is a process for decision-making that is very transparent and open. So I really believe in building a collaborative environment where people feel heard. If something remotely like that ever happens, I want to be clear about how it happened and how we make sure that it doesn't happen again. How do people feel included in the decisions that are made? And how do we move forward, in a way? By having transparency in the way we make decisions, and by collaborating with trust.

DTH: Nikole Hannah-Jones — this was a big deal in the journalism world. Have you seen any patterns in faculty and staff that you have

seen come from the NHJ settlement or the case in general that you would like to work towards elevating in the near future?

RR: One of the other goals that we have as a school right now is coming together as a community to look into the future. So not only look into the past, but look into the past in the sense of, what can we learn and how do we move on?

And so part of my job right now is to really focus on bringing people together and thinking as a school. How do we show to everybody across the country that we are respectful? That we are committed to all this work that we set out to do and issues of diversity and inclusion? And how do we set a standard for ourselves?

DTH: As a dean of a school whose education focuses almost solely on the First Amendment, how do you plan to address this with our student body and making sure that the news that we report is honest, true and what everyone needs to hear?

RR: I think those are basic principles of journalism, of great journalism. And we want to be, bar none, the best school in the country. So we really have to pay attention to those ethical and professional principles that we have. Later this month, September 21, we will have First Amendment day. And we have an incredible lineup of speakers and panels.

We are bringing a group from the University of South Carolina, so they are coming up with students and faculty from South Carolina. We also want to bring participation from other schools in the state, including HBCUs. And having students and faculty also converge on this campus to talk about the First Amendment.

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