

Report on the Teaching Associate Fee Waiver Program, Fall 2002 to Spring 2004

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Summary

San Jose State University began offering partial and complete waivers of student fees for Teaching Associates in the Fall of 2002 with the passage of the Teaching Associate Fee Waivers (TAFW) policy resolution by the Academic Senate (F01-03) and the signing of the resolution into policy by then President Robert Caret. This report is a review of the impact of the TAFW program during its first two years of operation as called for in the TAFW policy. The implementation of the policy has been reasonably smooth. Chairs of departments that use Teaching Associates and Teaching Associates themselves report many benefits of the TAFW program. The cost of the program has risen as both campus and miscellaneous fees have gone up and as the number of Teaching Associates employed on campus has increased. The fraction of total campus FTEF that Teaching Associates contribute has risen to approximately 3%. The benefits of the program to SJSU include increasing the number of course sections able to be offered, increasing FTES and decreasing time to graduation. The program has also enhanced SJSU graduate programs by improving on-campus employment and career development opportunities for current graduate students and making graduate programs more attractive to prospective students. As the benefits to SJSU's educational program outweigh the waiver's cost, it is recommended that the program be continued with only minor changes.

Recommendations

Given its alignment with university mission, the benefits to the university overall and the benefits to the graduate program in particular, the Teaching Associate Fee Waiver program should be continued with the following minor changes. It would be sufficient to review the program every five years rather than every two as the policy now calls for. Also, the present threshold of 3.0% of Teaching Associate FTEF as a percentage of total campus FTEF at which upon exceeding the program is sent into early re-evaluation should be raised to 4.0% to acknowledge the new annual average number of the Teaching Associate since the establishment of the waiver, and so that the program does not routinely exceed its threshold and require special review. Finally, the current policy requires the percent Teaching Associate FTEF be evaluated every semester. It is recommended that the evaluation be carried out instead only once per year using annualized FTEF figures to conform more closely with standard practices of institutional research at SJSU.

Outline

1. What is the SJSU Teaching Associate Fee Waiver program?
2. The justification for offering fee waivers to Teaching Associates
3. How the fee waiver program has been implemented
4. Early feedback from Chairs (2002 survey)
5. Feedback from Teaching Associates receiving fee waivers (2004 survey)
6. Feedback from Chairs of departments that use Teaching Associates (2004 survey)
7. Feedback from Chairs of departments that use Teaching Associates (2004 survey)
8. Changes in Teaching Associate usage over last four years
9. Compensatory revenue and savings brought by the Teaching Associate Fee Waiver program
10. Projected Future Costs of the Teaching Associate Fee Waiver program

What is the SJSU Teaching Associate Fee Waiver program?

Teaching Associates primarily assist with the teaching of lower-division courses or the laboratory sections of large lower-division courses. In contrast to Graduate Assistants, Teaching Associates may, under a faculty member's supervision, also be the instructor of record (See Academic Senate Policy S99-2). Teaching Associates are evaluated both by the supervising faculty member and by their students using the standard SOTE surveys. The fee waiver program grants waivers to matriculated graduate students who are appointed and paid as Teaching Associates at SJSU, during the semester they teach, of mandatory campus and miscellaneous fees and state university fees equal to the graduate 1.0 to 6.0 units California resident rate if they have a fractional hiring time of 0.1 to 0.2 (one course). Teaching Associates with a fractional hiring time greater than 0.2 (two or more courses) receive a waiver equal to the graduate 6.1 or more units resident rate.

The justification for offering fee waivers to Teaching Associates

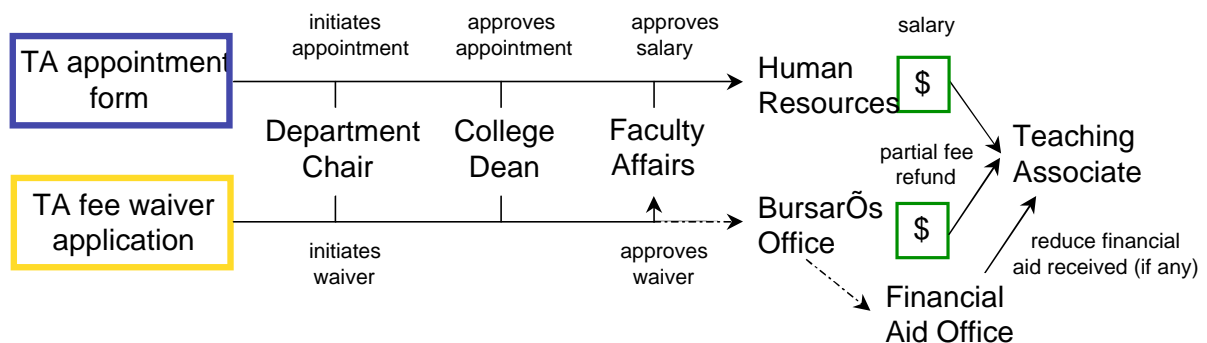
The TAFW program was established as part of SJSU's continuing commitment to achieving excellence in its graduate programs, to aid in SJSU's recruitment and retention of the best graduate students, and in recognition of the important service provided by Teaching Associates at SJSU. Teaching Associates

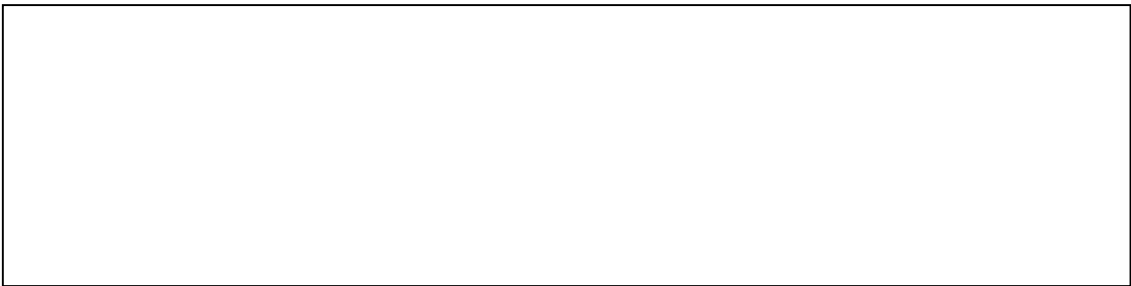
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contribute to the mission of SJSU in several ways. They often provide enthusiastic and academically strong role models who as a group match more closely the age, gender and ethnic distribution of SJSU undergraduates. Teaching is a valuable educational experience for graduate students as many of them aspire to academic careers. Serving as a Teaching Associate may also forge a closer bond between Teaching Associates and SJSU and bring Teaching Associates closer to their chosen academic field. Many SJSU graduate students, however, have few means of obtaining adequate financial assistance on campus and so must seek employment off-campus. Their off-campus work is often unconnected to their academic field or career aspirations, and sometimes precludes graduate students' more active involvement with their academic program on campus. For SJSU graduate programs the high cost of living makes recruiting the best graduate students difficult in the best of circumstances; constrained Department budgets further limit graduate student scholarships and salaries, aggravating an already difficult situation. Fee waivers assist in the recruitment and retention of the highest quality graduate students, strengthening graduate and research programs at SJSU. Finally, other student populations at SJSU receive fee waivers (some exchange students and some student athletes) and Teaching Associates at several other CSU campuses receive fee waivers, setting precedent for the use of fee waiver programs to support campus priorities. The SJSU Academic Senate and former President Caret established the fee waiver for program largely for these reasons.

How the fee waiver program has been implemented

Departments select graduate students to be Teaching Associates by a combination of academic record, faculty recommendation, interview, and classroom observation. Chairs set the salaries that Teaching Associates receive (currently ranging from \$2008 to \$4721 per 3 unit course, with an average of \$3078). These salaries generally come from the Department's discretionary salaries budget but are in some cases paid using funds from external grants. Once a Chair has identified Teaching Associates to hire and set their salary, appointment forms are sent with fee waiver applications via the appropriate Dean's office to the Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA). The OFA checks that the Teaching Associate appointment is within allowable limits (0.4 FTEF for lecture sections; 0.53 FTEF for laboratory sections) and that that salary offered is within the range set by the CSU contract, and records the appointment of the Teaching Associate. The OFA records the name of the Teaching Associate, employee ID, the department employing the Teaching Associate, the fraction of full-time equivalent (FTE) of the appointment, and the date that the fee waiver application was sent to the Bursar's office. The OFA sends the appointment forms ("profiles") to Human Resources to complete the appointment. The Bursar's office notifies the Financial Aid Office of Teaching Associates receiving waivers in case the Teaching Associate is also receiving financial aid; if so, the financial aid package is reduced to reflect the fees waived. As students have already paid their fees by this point in the semester, a check corresponding to the amount of the waiver is sent as a refund to each student mid-semester or as late as the end of the semester.





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