MEMORANDUM

TO: UNC Charlotte Campus Research Community

FROM: Rick Tankersley, PhD, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development

SUBJECT: Update to Research Administration Policy 50.5

DATE: 7/12/2021

For the past several months, Research and Economic Development has been working with campus stakeholders to update the policy governing how tuition and other forms of compensation for graduate assistants (GAs) are charged to sponsored awards (Policy 50.5). To be allowable costs, tuition and other forms of compensation for GAs must meet the following conditions:

1. The individual is conducting activities necessary to the award;

2. Tuition remission and other support are provided in accordance with the established policy of the department/program and consistently provided in a like manner to students in return for similar activities conducted under sponsored awards as well as other activities; and

3. During the academic period, the student is enrolled in an advanced degree program at the university and the activities of the student in relation to the award are related to the degree program;

4. The tuition or other payments are reasonable compensation for the work performed and are conditioned explicitly upon the performance of necessary work; and

5. The program/department’s practice is to similarly compensate students under sponsored awards as well as other activities.

A recent review of campus practices indicated that compensation packages provided to graduate assistants, including teaching assistants (TAs) and research assistants (RAs) enrolled in the same graduate program often vary, making it unlikely that conditions #2 and #5 are being met. Moreover, the current version of Policy 50.5 requires that sponsored awards cover costs such as fees that are not typically provided to similar GAs supported on institutional or State funds. These forms of compensation are not allowable costs unless they are generally provided to comparable students (e.g.,
students enrolled in the same graduate program) supported on GAs, regardless of the source of the funds.

The attached revision of Policy 50.5 aims to establish consistent compensation packages for GAs within individual programs and aligns our university policy with the requirements for Federal awards outlined in the Uniform Guidance.

Although the policy will go into effect on July 15, 2021, we have worked with the college leadership to develop a phased approach (see below) that minimizes the impact on existing awards and provides time for programs to establish standard compensation packages for GAs. I have also attached an FAQ that addresses some of the most common questions we received over the past 18 months as we worked to update the policy. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need additional assistance.

**Implementation of Revision of Policy 50.5**

**Phase I: Onboarding of Early Adopters (2021-22 Academic Year)**

The Associate Deans in the Colleges have identified 21 doctoral programs and 9 master’s programs that currently provide standard compensation packages to graduate assistants and are therefore already aligned with the updated policy. During the 2021-22 academic year, PIs wishing to support students enrolled in these graduate programs may charge up to 100% of the compensation package to an award. PIs wishing to support a student in a program that is not on the “early adopter list” may charge stipend or wages to the award during the 2021-22 academic year, but will not be permitted to charge other forms of compensation, such as tuition, fees, or health insurance. During this period, stipend levels can still be set by the program and may vary by funding source.

Additional details include:

- The compensation charged to the award cannot exceed what is described in the standard package. Compensation less than the standard amount should be accompanied by a comparable decrease in effort.

- Details of the compensation packages and the associated policies governing student eligibility should be communicated to Grants and Contracts Administration (GCA) prior to the submission of a Student Educational Award Form. Any changes to standard compensation packages must be reviewed and approved by Academic Affairs and reported to GCA for publication on the RED website.

- When preparing proposals with start dates after July 15, 2021, PIs wishing to support students enrolled in programs with standard compensation packages must include all components of the package that are permitted by the sponsor, including stipend, tuition, and health insurance.

- PIs with existing awards that include GA support should work with their grants administrators to re-budget costs that are no longer included in the standard compensation package or are no longer allowable.
Phase II: Full Implementation of Policy 50.5 (2022-2023 Academic Year)

Policy 50.5 will be fully implemented at the start of the 2022-2023 academic year. Only students enrolled in programs with approved standard compensation packages will be eligible to be supported on GAs from sponsored awards. PIs may charge up to 100 percent of the standard compensation package to an award and all components of the package that are permitted by the sponsor must be included in any request. Programs without standard compensation packages will no longer be allowed to charge any costs associated with GAs to an award.

Additional details include:

- As outlined above, funds allocated for items, such as fees, that are not included in a standard compensation package may be re-budgeted to cover other allowable costs (with sponsor approval).

- Budgets for new projects with start dates after July 15, 2022 that include GA support should include costs associated with the current or anticipated standard compensation package.