

Maxwell Research Policies

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The Maxwell Dean's Office encourages faculty to apply for external funding, particularly grants and contracts that (1) further a faculty member's research agenda and enhance students' educational experiences and (2) lead to scholarly publications for faculty and students or to thesis or dissertation research for students.

Research Leaves

See [Policy and Procedures on Research Leaves for Maxwell School Faculty](#).

Faculty Course Buyouts

Faculty members sometimes receive grants or fellowships that cover a substantial part of, but not all of, a semester or year's salary. Below are guidelines that govern how the Dean's Office responds to requests to be relieved of teaching in exchange for grant funds of these types. Requests for buyouts should be prepared by the faculty member and department chair and forward by the department chair to Associate Dean Andrew London. These requests must be received by March 15 for the fall term and by October 15 for the spring term.

Each department should have a fair and consistent process for reviewing and handling course buyouts in consideration of balancing department needs with individual needs. In consultation with the Dean's Office, the department chair has the authority to approve or deny buyouts based on overall departmental needs, including continuity of course offerings. Course buyouts should not adversely affect the operations and functions of the department.

The price of a buyout of one course is 12.5 percent of a faculty member's 8.5-month salary plus fringe benefits, the sum of which is billed to a grant. For large grants, additional course releases may be appropriate. The second increment of release time costs an addition 15 percent of base salary plus fringe benefits; a third costs an additional 20 percent of base salary plus fringe benefits. Given the educational mission of the Maxwell School, buyout arrangements for four courses in an academic year rarely will be granted.

Consistent with the University's effort-reporting policy, the Maxwell School uses the actual salary and compensation of a faculty member who seeks to bill teaching and research time to the grant. However, in cases where the granting agency imposes a salary cap limiting the amount of salary and fringe benefits that can be charged to the grant, the Maxwell School will abide by the salary cap. To be explicit, faculty with salaries below the granting agency's cap will be charged for release time at the appropriate percentage of actual salary plus allowable fringe benefit charges. Faculty with salaries above a granting agency's cap will be charged for release time at the appropriate percentage of the granting agency's salary cap plus allowable fringe benefit charges.

Please keep in mind as well the following conditions:

- A faculty member buying out of a course is expected to participate fully in service and administrative duties; the buyout is strictly for teaching and must not be construed as approval for a full-time appointment to research. The policy outlined in this document is for *partial* release from coursework while a person is in residence at the University and fulfilling all other duties, except for the course.
- If a faculty member's course load is not symmetric (i.e., not constant across semesters), a course buyout cannot be done for the semester in which the course load is lighter. For example, if a faculty member teaches one course in one semester and two courses in the other, a one-course buyout must be for the semester in which the higher load is taught.
- A course buyout cannot be used in conjunction with an appointment to research leave, educational leave, administrative leave, or leave without pay.

Fringe Benefits and Facilities and Administrative Costs

In addition to salary and/or wages, [fringe benefits](#) should be charged to all sponsors in direct proportion to an individual's effort devoted to a sponsored project; see [the University's current negotiated rates](#).

The term *facilities and administrative (F&A) costs* is the official term that universities use for recovery of costs associated with facilities and administrative services that are devoted to sponsored research activity. Terms such as "overhead," "indirect costs," and "administration costs" are often used interchangeably to describe F&A costs. Funds provided by outside sponsors of research, instruction, public service, or other services must include an appropriate amount to offset F&A costs incurred by the University; see [the University's current negotiated rates](#).

Under certain circumstances, the University will accept a reduced F&A rate; for instance, if the outside sponsor's limitation is available as published documentation in a public domain and applicable to all awardees, the lower rate is the applicable rate. Otherwise, utilization of a reduced rate or a full waiver of F&A requires approval by the divisional chair or director, the Dean's Office, and the University's Office of Research. [PIs should seek prior approval early in the budget development process before assuming cost share of F&A. Documentation on the IRR at the time of submission is not sufficient.](#)

To ensure that proposers develop budgets with appropriate rates, the SU Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) requires that the campus community use the [OSP Budget Template](#). Use of the OSP Budget Template greatly reduces common arithmetic errors often encountered with other budget tools.

Graduate Student Compensation

Salaries and Wages

For the 2021-22 academic year (AY), rates for a full AY (fall and spring) 20-hour graduate assistant (GA) are \$22,000 for PhD students and \$17,000 for MA students, with 24 credit hours of tuition. For a 10-hour GA for the full academic year or a 20-hour GA for one semester, calculate rates and credit hours by half. For a 10-hour GA for one semester, calculate rates and credit hours by one-fourth. To budget for out-years, increase rates by 3%.

For hourly graduate students, units are advised to have equity in their pay structures for student employees performing similar duties and having similar semesters of experience. See [Managing and Supervising Student Employees](#) for minimum and maximum hourly rates and hours per week.

In addition to salary and/or wages, [fringe benefits](#) should be charged to all sponsors in direct proportion to an individual's effort devoted to a sponsored project; see [the University's current negotiated rates](#).

Tuition

Budgeting tuition in some or all project years depends on whether you anticipate keeping the same graduate student for the length of the project and/or where the student is in their program. For instance, if the project responsibilities you envision for the GA require an advanced graduate student (ABD), there is no need to budget tuition given that the student is no longer taking coursework. Of course, it is just as likely as not to not know at the proposal stage who the GA will be, should the project be funded. So, you might consider whether you want the flexibility to hire a student that needs tuition covered, just in case. In the event that you end up hiring a student who is not taking coursework, at least on most federal grants, you can move those tuition funds to another direct-cost category such as hourly student work, travel, or publication costs.

Unless a sponsor prohibits tuition as an allowable cost on the grant, and especially if the sponsor does not limit the amount of direct costs, the grant should bear the full cost of tuition. However, it is not uncommon across campus for a school or college to provide up to half of tuition costs (12 credit hours) on grants [with full indirect cost recovery](#) (i.e., the sponsor does not disallow or cap the University's federally negotiated F&A rate). In other words, the Dean's Office recognizes that tuition is expensive and can sometimes consume too much of the budget and, as such, expects to provide some tuition in some cases.

PIs should seek prior approval from Andrew London early in the budget development process before assuming cost share of tuition. Documentation on the IRR at the time of submission is not sufficient.

Letters of Support and Institutional Contributions

It is important to discuss a project with administrators early in the proposal development process to ensure that the project is in concert with the mission of the department/unit and that internal support for project activities will be available. Matching funds, release time, and other institutional commitments (cash and in-kind contributions, space or infrastructure, etc.) must be secured from the appropriate administrators well in advance of the application deadline. PIs should seek prior approval early in the budget development process before assuming institutional commitments. Documentation on the IRR at the time of submission is not sufficient.

For campus-level letters of support and/or institutional commitments, the [Office of Proposal Support Services](#) facilitates review and signature by the appropriate senior administrator (e.g., Vice President for Research, Provost); however, applicants should first discuss their project and application plans with their divisional chair or director and the Dean's Office.