

Resolution to Increase Support for all PhD Students at SMU

The Committee on Research and Graduate Education

Meeting of the Faculty Senate, Wednesday, November 4, 2015

(This proposal was presented to the Faculty Senate on May 6th for its review.)

Whereas, the OE2C project is based on the vision that “SMU has an unrivaled opportunity to continue its ascent as a leading institution for research and creative achievement” (OE2C Vision Statement) and the mission of the project is to “enable SMU to fulfill its Strategic Plan” (OE2C Mission Statement), and

Whereas, the primary goals of the Centennial Strategic Plan are to “enhance the academic quality and reputation of the university” (Goal 1) and to ensure that SMU should be a “a top 50 university”, and

Whereas, the Centennial Strategic Plan objectives include “expansion of funded research support”, “support of programs resulting in increases in research productivity and creative achievement”, “enhancement of undergraduate research”, and “recruitment and appointment of distinguished faculty in the senior ranks and gifted scholars/researchers/creative artists in the junior ranks”, and

Whereas the goals of the Strategic Plan include increasing “the average size of doctoral fellowships” and “the number of graduate students completing their doctoral degrees,” and

Whereas, placement, research work and professional achievements of PhD students would help to build the global academic reputation of the university that determines its ranking, and

Whereas, a larger and better qualified pool of PhD students would play a crucial role in supporting high quality undergraduate education and undergraduate research, in providing assistance for faculty research, in attracting research grants, in recruiting and retaining high quality faculty, and in improving national rankings, and

Whereas, SMU has many strong PhD programs with tremendous potential for future growth in quality and national ranking that can only be realized through a major increase in resources available for funding PhD studies, and

Whereas many of SMU’s PhD programs provide stipends and benefits that are not competitive with peer and aspirational universities and are thereby hampered in attracting top students, admitting as many students as they need, and moving them through the program quickly, and

Whereas, attaining the goals of the Centennial Strategic Plan makes it incumbent upon the university to increase the quality of PhD students by offering competitive stipends, and to increase the number of PhD students with the goal of graduating 100 PhD s every year by 2022, and

Whereas the University, through OE2C, has shown its strong commitment to shift expenditures from administrative to academic purposes, and particularly to the support of PhD students, and

Whereas, the sustained annual savings from the OE2C project are estimated to be at least 25 million dollars, now therefore

Be it resolved, that the Faculty Senate requests the administration to

- (i) Ensure that as savings from the OE2C project are realized, a significant portion is dedicated to fellowships and assistantship stipends for PhD students so as to sustain an increase in the total funds available for this purpose by an amount of six million dollars per year.
- (ii) Provide full waivers for all tuition and fees for all PhD students in the University.
- (iii) Revise the health care benefit policies so that PhD students can purchase affordable and competitive health insurance.