**Report of the Senate Graduate Studies Committee April 2014**

The Senate graduate studies committee focused on two issues this year: 1) inequities in the workload of faculty supervising graduate students outside of their credited course-load as identified by the spring 2013 faculty graduate workload survey, and 2) issues associated with the decreases in graduate student enrollment at the University. While the committee believes that addressing issues of inequity in faculty workloads is of high importance, a more pressing problem facing graduate education at the university is the ability to attract high-quality graduate students. Thus, we are bringing the following motion to the Senate.

The Motion:

Critical to attracting high-quality graduate students is the ability to offer them competitive teaching or graduate assistantship stipends. The current stipends at the University were last increased in 1987. Many factors, including national-level trends in graduate education, affect the University’s graduate numbers. However, it is not surprising that the ability of the University to compete with other institutions in attracting graduate students has declined given the decline in the *effective* stipend rate for these students. Seton Hall’s highest-paid graduate students, PhD-level teaching assistants, make a $10,500 stipend for the academic year and master’s-level teaching assistants make $8480. The average stipend for graduate teaching assistants in the state of New Jersey is $26,595 (2012 Bureau of Labor Statistics data converted to 9-month pay). Seton Hall’s poorest-paid graduate assistants are paid a $5250 stipend for a 20-hour work week for 10 months. Other institutions offer much higher stipends to their master’s level research assistants. Villanova offers an average stipend of $14,680 for 20 hours a week for 9-months; Ohio State University has a minimum research assistantship stipend of $13,000 for the academic year.

The issue of graduate student stipends is not only important to our ability to attract high quality graduate students and maintain high quality graduate programs, it is also an issue of importance to our mission as a Catholic institution. Federal poverty guidelines for a single individual in 2013 were $11,490 (which also do not address the cost of living in the greater NY metropolitan area). Our students and students nationwide are burdened by higher and higher debt loads (<https://chronicle.com/article/Grad-School-Debt-Is-Said-to/145539/> ; <http://chronicle.com/article/To-Improve-Equity-Focus-on/144759/>). This is a particular problem for students working in fields with future salary expectations inadequate for paying off that debt.

In addition to offering inadequate stipends, a comparison with 16 of our peer institutions reveals that Seton Hall ranks 12 out of 16 (4th lowest) in the percent of graduate students receiving assistantships (see Figure 1 below generated from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System data).

**Figure 1.** On average across the 16 peer institutions, 9.31% of graduate students receive assistantships. This average is depicted as the zero point on the y-axis. Bars represent the difference in the funding percentage of each school from the average. Seton Hall funds an average of 4.98% of its graduate and professional students – the 4th lowest funding rate of its peer institutions. Peer institutions are based on the 2013 IPEDS DATA FEEDBACK REPORT for Seton Hall, as obtained at the following link: <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/>.

**Motion: The Senate requests that within the next year the University develop a comprehensive plan for increasing the number of graduate assistantships and for addressing the immediate gap in graduate student stipends with planned cost of living increases built into future-year budgets.**