

## Graduate Assistant-Research (GAR) Incentive Program, Texas A&M School of Public Health

Approved by Dean Shawn Gibbs: **5/15/2025**

This guidance is to be **effective for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 only (September 1, 2025-August 31, 2026)**. The guidance below will be monitored, reviewed, and updated by May 15 annually in conjunction with other considerations by the SPH Dean's Office, including the overall impact of the program on SPH operations, its effectiveness in supporting graduate students and funded research.

All full-time faculty with an ad-loc in SPH, regardless of track, are eligible to accrue incentives described in this guidance

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The Texas A&M University (TAMU) School of Public Health (SPH) is committed to the education, research, and service mission of the University. SPH will provide the following incentives to SPH faculty to recognize support for doctoral students in the SPH DrPH or SPH PhD programs:

1. Regardless of financial support, SPH faculty who productively mentor SPH-based doctoral students towards receipt of independent research awards (e.g., dissertation fellowships, national paper awards, and other prestigious honors) should be recognized for that support. SPH will fund a fixed award to faculty PI incentive accounts for the SPH faculty advisor, mentor, and/or supervisor if their SPH-based doctoral student receives the following milestones of excellence:
  - a federally funded dissertation fellowship grant (that covers tuition and stipend) with the student as the PI (\$7.5K),
  - national paper award in which the student is the lead author and primary investigator (\$1K),
  - national or other externally competitive dissertation award (\$2K),
  - another externally awarded prestigious honor approved by the Dean's Office that recognizes outstanding doctoral student achievement (\$1K).<sup>1</sup>

If a student has co-Chairs or multiple SPH faculty mentors, the award will be shared equally by the designated faculty unless there is another agreement for distribution signed by the relevant faculty in advance of the award. Co-chairs and co-mentors are strongly encouraged to discuss incentive distribution early in the fellowship or award submission process to ensure that any eventual distribution reflects the contribution of each individual to the student's success.

2. SPH values the commitment of SPH faculty/PI's who engage in mentoring and supporting SPH doctoral students and recognizes that provision of NIH-level stipends and tuition support for a full 12 months are important mechanisms to recruit and retain excellent students. SPH offers the following incentives to the project supervisor (faculty PI) for each semester covered when an SPH-based doctoral GAR receives the NIH-level stipend, all student tuition and fees for 9-credit hours (fall or spring) or 6 hours in summer through extramural research funds for all 12 months of a fiscal year:
  - SPH will provide a cost share to cover half of the student fees and tuition.
  - SPH will fund a fixed award (\$1K) to the PI incentive account for faculty supervisor(s)<sup>2</sup> to utilize at their discretion for the betterment of the student or project (e.g., travel, research, publication costs, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Advisors should discuss the eligibility for incentive payments with the Associate Dean for Research and/or Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in advance of award selection to determine eligibility for an incentive.

SPH faculty are encouraged to consider the following as they engage in mentoring, advising, and employing SPH-based doctoral students:

1. Project PI's are best able to determine their own project and staffing needs. Not all faculty/research projects require 12 months of doctoral GAR support to be successful, while others will benefit tremendously from this staffing structure. Sometimes funding GARs for a researcher project is more costly and less flexible than funding non-students as research staff. Explicit choices by SPH faculty to support SPH-based doctoral GARS is being recognized through the incentives outlined above.
2. Timing of incentive payments will normally occur by December following the fiscal year during with the incentive is earned. Timing of these payments may vary depending on availability of funds.
3. These incentives pertain only to SPH faculty who supervise or mentor doctoral students enrolled in SPH doctoral degree programs.
4. Not all projects can offer NIH-level stipends or 12 months of GAR funding, but may nonetheless offer other benefits that support doctoral students, such as flexibility, relevant research experience, training in research methods, publication experience, and professional development opportunities.
5. The SPH Office of Research can help PI's identify the budget impacts of GAR staffing and stipend options to support decision making for projects during the proposal submission and pre-award budget phase.