**Title: Fair and Competitive Stipends for Graduate Teaching Assistants**

Initiative Description, including statement of purpose and anticipated outcomes:

WWU has championed the importance of fair and competitive compensation for faculty, but historically this ideal has not been applied to Graduate TAs. TAs that are paid at the “Standard Rate,” the lowest stipend level, currently receive $3960 for one quarter of full time TA responsibilities, working the equivalent of 20 hours per week. This low stipend level impacts recruitment and retention of students. Departments’ ability to recruit top graduate students is impaired when prospective students are offered substantially higher stipends by competing universities. Many students who attend Western are forced to take on debt to fund their education, or to work additional jobs, which can impair their educational success and their work as TAs, as well as increase their time to degree. We propose a salary rate equivalent to a $21 per hour wage, or $4620 per quarter for full time service. This would provide a small raise to all Graduate TA’s and finally do away with varied rates of pay between programs.

Higher stipends for graduate TAs will improve recruitment and retention of highest quality graduate students, which will have direct and indirect effects of improving undergraduate education. Graduate student debt loads and time to degree will be reduced. The presence of top-quality graduate students also improves WWU’s ability to recruit top-quality faculty. Effective graduate TAs reduce the instructional workload for faculty instructors, freeing up faculty resources for research, scholarly activity, and more focused individual student interactions.

What University units (depts., colleges, etc.) will be involved?
Potentially all departments with a Graduate program could be impacted, including Accounting, Anthropology, Biology, Business Administration, Chemistry, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Computer Science, Educational Leadership, Elementary Education, English, Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Geology, History, Human Services and Rehabilitation, Kinesiology, Mathematics, Music, Psychology, and Secondary Education.

How does the initiative support the University Mission and Strategic Plan?
Graduate student Teaching Assistants (TAs) serve a dual role. While these students are working toward their own education, they are also providing an education and acting as mentors for thousands of undergraduate students in the University. They provide direct writing instruction as instructors in English 101, lead discussion sections in large GUR courses throughout the University, provide supervision and instruction in lab sections of large science classes, and grade thousands of homework assignments and tests in courses across the curriculum.

Are there potential partnerships with external organizations/institutions?
None anticipated

Anticipated new positions needed to implement the initiative:
- Faculty: None
- Staff: None
- Graduate Students (supported): None

Space needs (boldface one; attach note from Space Administration):
- **Existing space is sufficient**
- Existing space will be sufficient after modification
- New space may be required
New equipment or other one-time costs: $100,000/per $1 increase in stipend

Recurring operating costs: $100,000 per $1 increase in stipend

Estimated timeline for implementation: FY16

Potential funding sources (boldface all that apply; attach notes from University Advancement and University Relations)

- State operating budget (decision package)
- New enrollments (tuition-based)
- External Education (fee-based)
- Reallocation
- Federal Support (agency: ______ )
- Grants
- Partnerships (organizations/institutions: ______ )
- Private Funds
- Other (please specify)