Appendix B – AA SBPC New Funding Request
Graduate Teaching Assistantship Allocation Model
April 19, 2017

Graduate programs are an essential and vital component to URI’s mission as the flagship learning centered research university of Rhode Island and to our role and commitment to provide advanced education to a diversity of audiences and constituents. The second goal of URI’s 2016-2021 Academic Strategic Plan calls for “increasing the magnitude, prominence, and impact of URI’s research, scholarship, and creative work.” (URI Academic Strategic Plan 2016-2021, p. 3) One of the best ways to fulfill this goal is to promote excellence in graduate education. Providing funding to highly qualified students is essential to making URI graduate programs competitive. Teaching Assistantships are one of the key ways to fund graduate education.

At present, the University of Rhode Island provides financial support for 350 Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA’s) at an annual cost of ~$16 million. Based on some unknown distribution algorithm from many years ago (>25 years ago), GTA’s were distributed to colleges and departments and those allocations have remained largely unchanged, despite changes in enrollment, program demand, the advent of new programs, and many other factors associated with a dynamic public research university. In fact, there is no obvious or consistent association between the allocation of GTA’s to departments/colleges and any quantitative or qualitative measures. As such, the current allocation of ~$16 million in GTA support has no strategic foundation. From a sense of responsible management and vitality for the entire institution and its graduate programs, this must change.

At recent Graduate School Summits, there was discussion of a desire on the part of some to seek an increase in the number of GTA’s. However, and even more importantly, there was substantial discussion of the need for clear and sound criteria to guide the allocation of GTA’s, both as they exist now and in the future. Indeed, the University Manual calls for a strategic redistribution on a rotating 3-year basis, which has been ignored for many years. While it may be possible to make a case for an additional investment in GTA’s based on undergraduate enrollment increases, such an investment cannot be seriously considered or warranted until a systematic set of criteria are established to guide the allocation of GTA’s on a regular basis.

To address this critical issue, during spring 2015 the Provost and the Dean of the Graduate School appointed and charged a Graduate Teaching Assistantship Task Force comprising faculty from across the university. The Task Force examined historical information, collected data from individual graduate programs, reviewed GTA allocation practices from other comparable institutions (as provided by Hanover Research), shared findings and solicited ideas at the 2015 Graduate Summit, the Council of Deans, and a Department Chairs Forum in spring 2016. The Task Force submitted their final report, which included a firm recommendation that the current allocation based solely on historical practices be changed and that a set of measures or metrics be developed to guide the allocation of GTA’s moving forward. The Provost Office, along with the Graduate School and a few deans, worked from the Report of the Teaching Assistantship
Task Force (appended) to develop a URI process for GTA allocation that includes a set of Fundamental Principles and Criteria that will guide the allocation of GTA’s in the future.

**Fundamental Principles Regarding GTA Distribution**

1. Graduate Teaching Assistantships represent a significant investment in graduate education and also support for undergraduate teaching and serve to facilitate vibrant graduate and research programs critical to URI’s mission as a flagship research university;

2. All GTA’s MUST participate in some form of meaningful and valued undergraduate instruction, such as laboratory instruction, leading recitations, serving as an instructor of record, leading help/tutorial sessions, formal advising, etc.; or, for a limited number of advanced PhD students, graduate instruction.

3. GTA’s are meant to serve as a mechanism to augment and support full-time faculty teaching and not as a replacement for full-time faculty instruction;

4. GTA’s are awarded to graduate students to assist in recruiting and enrolling top notch graduate students as well as to contribute to advancing undergraduate instruction; GTA’s are not assigned to individual faculty, but to programs, although most graduate students will have a faculty mentor;

5. GTA’s will be assigned teaching roles consistent with their academic expertise and skill set as well as programmatic teaching needs; GTA assignments may be in courses outside the department or college in which they are enrolled; in this latter case, the FTE will be allocated to the department in which the teaching occurs

6. GTA’s will be counted as part of the teaching FTE of the department and college in which the GTA is assigned a teaching role; following national protocols (e.g., the Delaware Study), a full-time GTA (the typical 20 hour per week GTA will count as a 0.5 teaching FTE used in calculating departmental FTE and student to faculty ratios;

7. All aspects of undergraduate instruction should be built upon “best pedagogical practices” and strive to incorporate new innovative technologies. Programs are responsible to ensure GTA’s are prepared for their instructional role, reviewed annually, and that allocation of GTA’s does not stifle instructional innovation.

8. Where appropriate and competitive, splitting GTA’s can expand graduate student funding opportunities and enrollment --- a ½ time GTA (10 hour per week teaching assignment) would receive 50% of the standard stipend (~$8000 per AY) and a 50% or 10 credit per year tuition scholarship (valued at $6550 for RI residents);
9. Where possible and desirable, pairing a 1/2 time GTA (10 hour per week) with a ½ time Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) will leverage both GTA resources and grant-funded research assistantship resources to expand graduate enrollment and a balanced workload for graduate students (e.g., this may work well with students supported by training grants);

10. A pool of GTA’s should be retained centrally for use as an incentive to stimulate and support the development of new contemporary and innovative graduate programs that address current day societal needs and to enhance diversity in our graduate programs and in the delivery of the curriculum.

11. GTA’s are awarded to a graduate student for one year subject to renewal based on a satisfactory performance, progress toward completion, and continued availability of funds; GTA’s will be awarded for a maximum of two academic years (4 semesters) for Master’s students and three academic years (6 semesters) for doctoral students (beyond the Master’s).

Process for GTA Allocation at College and University Levels

1. All existing GTA’s are to be withdrawn from departments and centralized at the College level; deans would oversee the allocation among programs within their colleges using the criteria in the section below.

2. Over three consecutive years, approximately half (a total of 176) of the existing GTA’s in each College will be incrementally contributed to a central pool; this will be done in equal annual increments over the three years and in a manner that will ensure the stability of graduate students currently funded as GTA’s;

3. Upon the recommendation of the SBPC and approval of the President, 20 new GTA’s would be funded by the Office of the Provost in each of years 1, 2, and 3 above to add a total of 60 new GTA’s to the central pool noted above to create a central pool of 236 GTA’s to be allocated consistent with criteria outlined below that will guide allocation of GTA’s; the 60 new GTA’s represents a new institutional investment of ~$2.7m.

4. New GTA allocations from the central pool, beyond those remaining in the colleges, will be allocated based on the criteria outlined below in the next section as part of the strategic budget process in academic affairs.

5. Half of the central pool (118 GTA’s) will be allocated as base GTA funds to the Colleges to be revisited from strategic and programmatic perspectives every 5 years. The other half will remain in the centralized pool to be awarded annually on a multi-year rotating basis in response to college needs and alignment with the criteria below that guide the allocation of GTA’s. The latter half will remain in the central pool and NOT be committed as base to any one college.

6. All GTA’s will be awarded to graduate students to satisfy undergraduate teaching assistant needs, and in support of both graduate student recruitment/retention, and graduate enrollment goals.
7. The central pool of GTA’s will be managed by the Graduate School; recommendations regarding the allocation of GTA’s from the central pool will be based on alignment with the criteria below and will be made by a Steering Committee. The Provost will form the Steering Committee, which will include the Dean of the Graduate School, the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, two faculty appointed by the Provost, and (administrative position to be named). The Steering Committee will make recommendations to the Provost, who will officially review those recommendations and make GTA allocations to Colleges.

Criteria to Guide the Allocation of GTA’s at URI

1. Documented Teaching Assistant Teaching Demand – indicative metrics
   - document the number of sections that require GTA’s and rationale for use of instructional TA’s to deliver the curriculum, including those that may be assigned to other departments that need teaching assistance
   - Average student credit hour production and course load per full-time tenure-track, clinical, and lecturer faculty members, respectively
   - Proposed % teaching effort for GTA’s requested

2. Graduate Program Quality – indicative metrics
   - Academic profile (GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, undergraduate major and institution, etc.) of admitted graduate students
   - Graduate student time to completion (annual average per department over 5-year period)
   - Graduate student retention and graduation rate – including annual degrees awarded per enrolled student
   - Record of faculty engagement in research, scholarship, and/or creative work, e.g., faculty publications, performances, external funding as appropriate to discipline, etc....

3. GTA’s as Leverage for Graduate Program Growth and Success -- indicative evidence
   - Need for GTA’s to sustain and expand enrollment in the graduate program
   - Potential to expand graduate enrollment and graduate student funding opportunities by strategically splitting GTA’s as appropriate and competitive
   - Potential to expand graduate enrollment by splitting GTA’s and GRA’s and combining in a manner that creates an appropriate teaching – research balance for students.
   - Program graduate enrollment trend over most recent three years, including data on diversity
4. Program Outcomes and Impact – largely qualitative evidence

- Professional pathways, opportunities, and demands for graduates of the program – provide alumni data from past 5 years
- Graduate program impact on the economy, society, and/or quality of life for citizens
- Evidence of positively branding the university or contributing to institutional prestige
- Evidence that the graduate program is contemporary, innovative, and in alignment with the university Academic Strategic Plan and commitment to diversity and inclusion