



Graduate and Professional Student Senate
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**Graduate and Professional Student Senate
 GPSS Resolution 2021-22T
 Resolution to Establish Equal Opportunity Hiring Practices for Graduate Assistantships**

First Reading by GPSS:	date
Second Reading by GPSS:	date
First Reading by Commission	date
Staff Senate Review:	date
Faculty Senate Review:	date
Undergraduate Student Senate Review:	date
Approved by Commission	date
First Reading by University Council:	date
Approved by University Council:	date
Approval by University President:	date
Approved by Board of Visitors:	date
Effective:	upon approval

WHEREAS, unfunded VT graduate students must “check with their departments to discuss the availability of assistantships and eligibility requirements, and monitor GLC Weekly listserv postings for assistantship openings” (Appendix 1), which means that unfunded graduate students often find themselves in a precarious situation; and

WHEREAS, department faculty members and administrators do not follow a specific, documented policy to advertise and hire Graduate Assistants; and

WHEREAS, unfunded graduate students in departments with inadequate financial resources rely primarily on networking to find an assistantship, which creates a situation in which connections rather than qualifications are the deciding factor in funding; and

WHEREAS, currently equal opportunity hiring practices, as quoted in the next statement, do not apply to most assistantships offered by the university; and

WHEREAS, it is “illegal for an employer to recruit new employees in a way that discriminates against them because of their race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information” (Appendix 2); and

WHEREAS, while discriminatory hiring practices continue within society regardless of federal laws prohibiting it, the absence of a documented policy surrounding the search process for

graduate assistantships puts graduate students at risk of experiencing discrimination in their search for a Graduate Assistantship; and

WHEREAS, VT graduate students searching for funding are at especially high risk of experiencing discrimination in their search for an assistantship, especially those graduate students from marginalized backgrounds who face gender, race, sexual, disability, or other forms of discrimination (Appendix 3); and

WHEREAS, the University of Michigan, a peer institution who has a model policy, maintains “any...student in good standing in a graduate degree program who is eligible for a graduate student instructorship or staff assistantship shall be given the opportunity to apply for all available positions” and “at minimum, appointing units must distribute job postings...to all graduate students who are enrolled in the appointing unit’s graduate degree program” (Appendix 4); and

WHEREAS, the University of Michigan, a peer institution, also mandates, “employee selection procedures will be open and free from bias” (Appendix 4), meaning that graduate student applicants receive protection from discrimination in both the application and interview process; and

WHEREAS, while this policy would not apply to graduate students who are funded by their department or grants, the recommended measures and Michigan model would help protect graduate students who do not have guaranteed funding; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that all department administrators and faculty members with open Graduate Assistant positions (I.E. not the traditional departmental or grant based assistantship) will advertise those positions to all graduate students within their departments, and when applicable, in the GLC Weekly email; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all department administrators and faculty members with open Graduate Assistant positions will conduct unbiased interviews to select a qualified candidate in line with federal policy as well as the best practices outlined in Appendix 4; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Graduate School will be put in charge of writing and maintaining this best practices policy as well as ensuring compliance for this policy change. This policy will be implemented by AY2022-2023 in full or in part.

Appendix 1: Graduate Assistantship Information for Graduate Students

Virginia Tech Graduate School. (2021). Graduate assistantship information for students. Graduate School | Virginia Tech.
<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/types-of-funding/assistantships.html>.

Appendix 2: U.S. Employment Practices and Policies

Outline of prohibited policies and practices in the hiring process, job advertising, recruitment, background checks, job referrals, job assignments and promotions, pay and benefits, discipline and discharge, employment references reasonable accommodations and disability, religion,

training and apprenticeship programs, harassment, terms and conditions of employment, pre-employment inquiries (general), dress code, constructive discharge/forced to resign.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (n.d.). Prohibited employment policies/practices. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <https://www.eeoc.gov/prohibited-employment-policiespractices>.

Appendix 3: Discriminatory Practices in the Graduate Student Hiring Process Literature

Ameri, M., Schur, L., Adya, M., Bentley, F. S., McKay, P., & Kruse, D. (2018). The disability employment puzzle: A field experiment on employer hiring behavior. *ILR Review*, 71(2), 329-364.

Becker, S. O., Fernandes, A., & Weichselbaumer, D. (2019). Discrimination in hiring based on potential and realized fertility: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *Labour Economics*, 59(October 2018), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2019.04.009>

Bisom-Rapp, S., & Sargeant, M. (2014). It's complicated: Age, gender, and lifetime discrimination against working women the united states and the u.k. as examples. *Elder Law Journal*, 22(1), 1-110.

Button, P., & Walker, B. (2020). Employment discrimination against Indigenous peoples in the United States: Evidence from a field experiment. *Labour Economics*, 65, 101851.

Farber, H. S., Silverman, D., & Von Wachter, T. M. (2017). Factors determining callbacks to job applications by the unemployed: An audit study. *Rsf*, 3(3), 168–201. <https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2017.3.3.08>

Han, J. H. (2020). Does Skin Tone Matter? Immigrant Mobility in the U.S. Labor Market. *Demography*, 57(2), 705–726. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-020-00867-7>

Howard, S., & Borgella, A. M. (2020). Are Adewale and Ngochi more employable than Jamal and Lakeisha? The influence of nationality and ethnicity cues on employment-related evaluations of Blacks in the United States. *The Journal of social psychology*, 160(4), 509-519.

Sears, B., & Mallory, C. (2014). Employment discrimination against LGBT people: Existence and impact.

Appendix 4: University of Michigan Graduate Employees Organization

Procedures from University of Michigan regarding the graduate hiring process and job advertising. We take this to be a model practice that Virginia Tech should emulate in their hiring practices for graduate student employees.

The University of Michigan & Graduate Employees' Organization. (2020). Agreement: The Regents of the University of Michigan & The Employees' Organization. GEO-Agreement 2020-2023. <https://hr.umich.edu/sites/default/files/geo-agreement-2020-2023.pdf>.