

Ruszkiewicz

TO: Members of the English Department Senate and Graduate Advising Staff
FROM: David A. Jolliffe, Chair, A.G.S.E. Executive Committee
DATE: December 8, 1982

At its last regular meeting, the English Department Senate voted to support AGSE's efforts to work for salary adjustments for teaching assistants and assistant instructors. The Senate also suggested that we attach a cover letter to our letter to Dean King; the purpose of this cover letter would be to explain the support of the senate and the graduate advisers. Attached to this memo, then, are the cover letter which was written by Dr. Lester Faigley for the senate and the graduate advisers, a revised version of our letter to the dean, and a chart showing graduate students' responses to our questionnaire about their financial status.

We would like the senate and the advisers to consider these materials on a protest/no-protest basis. If you have problems with any of these materials, please let me know by Monday, December 13. We would like to get this letter and the accompanying materials to the dean before the Christmas holidays.

Thanks very much for your time, help, and consideration.

Circulate to all members of Senate and graduate advising staff with ACSE letter attached on a no-protest basis.

Lester Faigley
XI.24.82

To: Robert King, Dean
College of Liberal Arts

From: Department of English Senate and Graduate Advising Staff

Date:

We support in principle the accompanying request of the English Graduate Student Association for a pay raise for teaching assistants and assistant instructors. Graduate students have asked for and received raises in the recent past, but we feel that this request deserves special consideration. In spite of the cost-of-living increases granted during the past two years, the general financial situation of graduate students at this university has continued to deteriorate. The most serious problem that graduate students in Austin face is the high cost of housing. Because the Austin economy is prosperous and demand for housing high, large rent increases are now the rule every time a new lease is signed. In the past students could obtain low-interest loans to finance part of their education, but the sources for these loans have been greatly reduced. Thus many students are now facing the unpleasant alternatives of "moonlighting" in addition to teaching one or two classes and taking nine hours of graduate work or dropping out of school altogether. We hope that you will make every effort to secure substantial pay increases for teaching assistants and assistant instructors.



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Department of English
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December 1, 1982

Robert D. King, Dean
College of Liberal Arts
WMB 201
The University of Texas at Austin

Dear Dean King:

In Spring of 1981, a group of Assistant Instructors from the Economics and English Departments compiled and submitted to you documents indicating between 1975 and 1980 a net drop in the real value of their salaries of 41.4%. Since then, Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors have received two legislatively mandated pay raises which have alleviated some of their financial difficulty. Nonetheless, those documents were troubling not simply for the loss of purchasing power they indicated but also because they reflected a failure of graduate student teachers to keep themselves and the administration adequately informed of their financial circumstances. In an effort to avoid a similar failure, the Association of Graduate Students in English carried out a similar survey of economic conditions this Fall, the results of which are enclosed. Although this information is limited, we wish to call your attention to certain interpretations of the data.

First, the survey clearly indicates that rent is the single highest expense among graduate instructors, but it also shows how heavily that burden falls upon those who cannot rely on a spouse or roommate to share expenses, an unavoidable difficulty for some married students, especially those with young children. For the rest, one could of course argue that living alone is a luxury, but one could also counter that, at a University of crowded libraries and offices, it's more a necessity for anyone wishing to carry out adequate scholarship. Moreover, twenty-two of thirty-eight respondents indicated that their rent had increased in 1982; and the average increase--\$35.77--pretty decisively takes care of the 1982-83 pay raise granted by the Legislature.

Second, these figures indicate the degree to which graduate students are being forced to depend upon other sources of income. Thirty-one of thirty-six respondents are using or have used prior savings to cover educational expenses, and eight have second jobs. Further, loan sources, especially for non-Texas residents who do not have contacts with local banks and are ineligible for Hinson-Hazelwood loans, have essentially disappeared. Graduate or professional education, we realize, requires postponed gratification; but, given the salaries we are now paid, the salaries we can expect

Robert D. King, Dean
December 1, 1982
Page two

should we be fortunate enough to find professional employment, the length of time spent in graduate training, and the absence of outside sources of funding for the Liberal Arts, we feel that a little postponement goes a long way.

Third, this survey indicates that graduate students are not living sybaritic lives. Twenty-two of the respondents are legally in debt for their educations. Our thrift is suggested by the fact that the University Office of Financial Aid estimates graduate student expenses for nine months at \$5700; our averages of basic expenses fall below that figure. Half of the respondents answer that they can support themselves on their current salaries for nine months. But not a single respondent can live on that salary for twelve.

This last response is especially troublesome, for graduate study cannot be suspended for three months of every year. Not only is summer employment difficult to find, but such interruptions disrupt the concentration required to do truly good work. Further, the burden of summers must fall especially hard on graduate students outside the English Department, where fewer summer teaching slots are available. And, if current proposals to convert summer English courses to twelve-week classes are adopted, English graduate students will share that burden.

We are aware that the University regards Assistant Instructorships and Teaching Assistantships as forms of financial aid, but we also know that it doesn't feel like aid when we are responsible for the educations of fifty often recalcitrant freshmen per semester and a nine-hour course load. Nor does the Internal Revenue Service regard AI jobs as scholarship positions; we are clearly required to pay income tax. Finally, morale among us is severely damaged by nearly continual worry about money, especially at the end of Spring, when Summer approaches.

One possible solution to the problems facing TAs and AIs would be to make a more intense effort to aid graduate students in finding summer employment, especially employment on campus, perhaps by setting up some sort of placement service. A second would be simply to raise salaries to a level on which we could live for twelve months, perhaps altering our Memoranda of Appointment to require that we be available for Summer teaching. The Financial Aid Office estimates twelve-month expenses for single graduate students at \$7695. To meet this figure, our present salaries would have to be extended for July, August, and September. Such increases should not be impossible for a University with Texas's resources. Yale and Berkeley, as the 1981 figures indicate, were paying significantly higher salaries over a year and a half ago, and Louisiana State, with its automatic tuition waivers figured in, was paying several hundred dollars per long session more than Texas during that same year.

Such a solution would, we realize, require money and, possibly, legislative approval. Yet, it constitutes less an extension of new benefits

Robert D. King, Dean
December 1, 1982
Page three

than a restoration of salaries to their old levels. Extending monthly salaries through the summer would represent a "raise" of 33.3%, but still would not restore our real incomes to their pre-1975 levels. While others, we know, have also suffered losses to inflation, we believe that the originally higher absolute values of their salaries have lessened its impact. Indeed, we feel that a major reason this issue of summer incomes has not surfaced earlier is that salaries were traditionally large enough to preclude it.

Further, we would point out that the University Committee on the Rights and Responsibilities of Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors recommended in Spring of 1981 that tuition and fees be waived for AIs and TAs and that the minimum salaries for AIs be raised to \$720 per month and for TAs to \$600. Since that time, in spite of a slowed inflation rate, rents, utility rates, and telephone rates have continued to climb; but neither recommendation has been followed. While those steps would not raise us to Financial Aid Office minimums, they would at least indicate concern, good faith, and an initial step toward alleviating difficult financial pressures.

38 What is your current job title?

25--9

AI--29

38 How many semesters have you been a

25--2.1

AI--3.97

35 What is your salary for a nine-month apppt?

25--\$4792.67

AI--\$5885.27

37 What is the total monthly rent for your apartment or house?

1 income--250.31
all--288.96

2 incomes--360.31

22 If your rent has increased since Jan., 1982, how much?

\$35.77

36 Please estimate your monthly expense for groceries.

\$145.96

37 Please estimate your monthly utility expense.

\$79.05

If you are in debt, please indicate how much.

\$1--1,000--6
1,001--2,000--5
2,001--3,000--2
3,001--4,000--3
over 4,000--6

38 Do you have a second job?

yes--8

no--30

38 Do you get another form of financial aid?

8

30

36 Do you use or have you used savings to cover school expenses?

31

5

15 Do you depend on your spouse's income?

9

6

36 Do you have another source of income?

7

29

36 Can you support yourself on your salary over nine months?

18

18

36 If you do not receive a summer appointment, could you support yourself on your salary over twelve months?

38

Sum of average expenses above over nine months: \$4266.88
Univeristy estimates of graduate student expenses: \$5700
Expenses as percentage of average monthly salary: 25--496.52

over twelve months: \$5691.84
AI--78.6
\$7695