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Purdue wants to attract more graduate students

Purdue University officials hope to attract more graduate students by offering higher teaching and research stipends.

A University Senate report suggests adding more fellowship, research assistant and teaching assistant positions, the Journal & Courier reported on its Web site Monday. The report also calls for freezing graduate staff appointment fees, which have increased from \$332 per semester in 2000 to \$777 per semester in 2008.

Research and teaching assistant stipends were found to be lower at Purdue than other schools, making it difficult to attract top students.

"It's very difficult to get the best students to come to Purdue when there's limited funding to give them assistantships," said Dana Werner, director of Graduate Student Recruitment Services. "They either weren't offered funding, or they were offered more funding at another institution, and Purdue can't compete."

Some graduate students who decided to attend Purdue said they liked the school's reputation and quality of educational programs even if it meant less money available in stipends.

"There were some other universities I was looking at when applying ... that offered a little bit more," said Hugh Young, a graduate student in botany and plant pathology. "But I was looking at the reputation and the mentors here."

Purdue's strategic plan calls for a stronger graduate school, said Provost Randy Woodson.

"Students are attracted to leading programs," Woodson said. "They are savvy about getting a degree from a highly visible, highly prominent university."

Salvador Acuna, president of the Graduate Student Government, noted that stipends for assistantships vary based on field.

"It's tough, especially for students who are in liberal arts," Acuna said. "They have to work a lot more to make the same as a guy in the College of Engineering."

Graduate assistants in the College of Engineering make between \$15,410 and \$20,655 per year, according to the Senate report, while students in the College of Education make less than \$13,000 per year.

Those figures do not take into account student fees more than \$1,900 for domestic students and more than \$2,100 from international students each year.