

**Teaching Assistants Union  
Tentative Agreement Summary  
June 1, 2015**

Bargaining Team:

- Yngvi Einarsson (Psychology)
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- Stephanie Sicard (Anthropology)
- Kevin Wordelman (Staff)

In Fall 2014 the Teaching Assistants Union set out to win a FAIR contract and at a membership meeting in October we ratified a Statement of Principles to guide our negotiations. We have some good news to report and we are confident that, if TAU members ratify this agreement, we will take significant steps forward.

**FAIR PAY**

- *Cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) tied to inflation*
- *Shrink the summer funding gap*
- *More competitive wages with peer institutions*
- *Affordable housing options*
- *More campus discounts*
- *No more enrollment fees!*

**Article 9** of our proposed contract calls for 7% in base pay increases over the next three years (2%, 2% and 3% respectively) resulting in the following gross pay increases *per semester*:

<b>Classification</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>Total</b>
GA/DGA	\$5,831	\$5,948 (+\$117)	\$6,067 (+\$119)	\$6,249 (+\$182)	(+\$418)
DA (not yet a "candidate")	\$6,985	\$7,055 (+\$70)	\$7,125 (+\$70)	\$7,197 (+\$72)	(+\$212)
DA ("candidate")	\$6,985	\$7,125 (+\$140)	\$7,268 (+\$143)	\$7,486 (+\$218)	(+\$501)

In addition, **Article 10** of the proposed agreement entitles all TAs to a \$325 *per semester* subsidy to defray health care costs. While this benefit is called a "health care subsidy," you will simply receive a check for \$325 (minus taxes) at the beginning of each semester to spend as necessary.

Combined, **Articles 9 and 10** will result in nearly 13% in cumulative pay increases for TAs over the next three years.

While WMU is not willing to waive our enrollment fees at this time, the \$325 per semester represents nearly 75% of the cost of our semester enrollment fees and this is a significant step in the right direction.

All doctoral students will receive a pay increase under the proposed agreement, but those students who attain “doctoral candidacy” in their department will benefit most. Doctoral Associates with candidacy prior to Fall 2015 will receive DA pay in Fall 2015 and beyond. Doctoral Associates without candidacy will earn the lesser DA rate until they attain candidacy. Following Spring 2016, Doctoral Graduate Assistants will be reappointed as Doctoral Associates in the first possible semester after they earn candidacy. If you have questions about “candidacy” or your doctoral status, please call Kevin at (269) 290-8656.

#### **AFFORDABLE HEALTHY LIVING**

- *Fixed cap on health premiums in accordance with the Affordable Care Act*
- *Free year-round Student Recreation Center access*
- *Additional leave for maternity, paternity and personal reasons*

**Article 10** of this proposed contract represents a significant victory for TAU, particularly all of our international members, the result of a long campaign for fair healthcare for TAs in the United States on F1 visas. For years WMU has required that all students on F1 visas purchase the WMU student health insurance, or obtain a “waiver” by purchasing nearly identical coverage on the open market. The “waiver” requirements were burdensome, driving up the costs of health insurance, and this past year, the WMU student health insurance plan cost *\$150 per month*.

We successfully convinced WMU to change this policy to allow international students with F1 visas the same rights as domestic students. As a result, all domestic and international (F1) students will be able to purchase affordable health insurance on the open market and WMU will not require anyone to purchase the WMU student health insurance plan.

All domestic students are eligible for significantly subsidized health insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act, and may be eligible for free health insurance through Medicaid depending on their annual income. While much work remains to determine international student eligibility for government subsidized health insurance through the Affordable Care Act, at a minimum we know that there are international student plans available on the open market that are much more affordable than WMU student health insurance.

This year the WMU plan (after the TAU subsidy) cost roughly \$1,800. By comparison, an F1 international student under age 29 can purchase comparable health insurance through a company like PSI for \$704 per year, a savings of more than \$1,000 in annual health insurance premiums.

We will be working with WMU to educate all graduate students about their most affordable health insurance options.

In **Article 12** we expanded our paid leave time to include “care for the Employee’s newborn child,” spouse, or other “designated eligible individual.”

#### **IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS**

- *More clearly defined workload*
- *One- or Two-Year appointments*
- *Pay for professional development*
- *Increase the number of Full-Time appointments*
- *Greater transparency about department budgets and appointments*

**Article 18** of the proposed agreement defines the full TA workload as “no more than 20 hours per week, on average; approximately 300 hours total in a semester or 150 hours total in a

summer session.” As always, we are responsible to keep track of our own hours and report any workload issues to TAU officers.

**Article 8** of the proposed agreement provides for the possibility of academic year appointments (fall/spring or fall/spring/summer) in addition to traditional semester appointments. Appointment duration will be determined by your department, although we understand that many departments plan to begin offering full academic year appointments this fall.

**Article 8** also provides greater job security in a number of important ways:

- If your department does NOT intend to reappoint you for the following academic year, they must notify you no later than March 31
- Your department must notify the union if they wish to reduce your appointment level (i.e. from a full appointment to a  $\frac{3}{4}$  appointment, etc.) so the union can ensure that “mutual agreement” exists between the department and the TA before the appointment letter is enforceable.
- During an academic year appointment, your appointment cannot be terminated or reduced without “cause” and you have due process rights through the union to ensure fair treatment

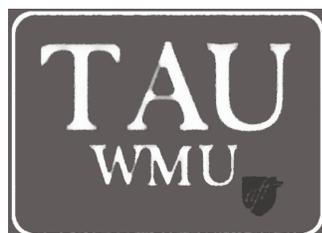
**Article 3** will expand our non-discrimination policy to protect you from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, protected disability, veteran status, height, weight, or marital status.

#### **RESTRUCTURED TUITION AWARDS**

- *Resident status for all teaching assistants*
- *Rollover unused credits*
- *No cost for employment*
- *Graduation Bonus/Tuition Cash Out?*

**Article 11** of the proposed agreement will increase tuition remission awards for TAs with  $\frac{1}{2}$  appointments from 4.5 credit hours to 6 credit hours beginning *Fall 2016*. The reason for the delay is because departmental budgets have already been set for Fall 2015. All other TAs will maintain their current tuition remission award (9 credit hours for full appointments, 6.75 credits for  $\frac{3}{4}$  appointments and 6 credits for  $\frac{2}{3}$  appointments).

We discovered during negotiations that while both parties agree that significant problems exist with our current tuition remission system (like summer funding gaps), we simply did not have the time or the expertise necessary at the table to resolve those issues during contract negotiations. Therefore, both TAU and WMU have committed to continue working on the tuition issue, away from the bargaining table, over the next year, to see if we can find a tuition system that works better for everyone. A new system could, potentially, include spending unused tuition credits to cover enrollment fees, changes in WMU’s residency policy, creating a “hardship” fund, rolling over unused credits, or other ideas. TAU will recruit members to serve on a committee to continue working with WMU administration on this issue.



**TAU STATUS  
FLOW CHART  
FALL 2015**

Are you enrolled in a  
doctoral graduate  
program?

YES

Does your Fall 2015  
appointment letter call  
you a “doctoral  
associate”?

NO

NO

You are a  
“Doctoral  
Graduate  
Assistant”

You are a  
“Graduate  
Assistant”

YES

Will you attain “candidacy” in  
your department prior to Fall  
2015?

NO

YES

You are a  
“Doctoral  
Associate”

You are a “Doctoral  
Associate” who has not  
attained candidacy.

**TAU CONTRACT  
PAY FLOW CHART  
2015-2016**

Were you appointed as a “doctoral associate” in Fall 2014 or Spring 2015?

YES

NO

Have you already attained doctoral “candidacy” in your department?

YES

NO

You are a graduate assistant (GA) or doctoral grad assistant (DGA)

Your pay will be \$7,125 per semester beginning Fall 2015

Your pay will be \$7,055 per semester beginning Fall 2015

Your pay will be \$5,948 per semester beginning Fall 2015

