

External Graduate Assistantships

Department of Counselor Education and College Student Personnel

Thank you for your interest in our external graduate assistantship program at Western Illinois University. This page is designed to provide you more information about this unique program and how it can benefit your institution and provide a rich learning and professional development experience for your students.

What Are They?

External graduate assistants are part-time employees (up to 20 hours per week) who work for you and at the same time, pursue an online master's degree in College Student Affairs – Higher Education Leadership from Western Illinois University. This is a program we have developed and made available to external institutions to provide greater employment and practical experience opportunities for WIU graduate students.

How Does It Work?

It's really quite simple. You identify individuals who you think would be a great part-time graduate assistant for your institution. They can work in any office on your campus, but traditionally they have worked in Admissions, Financial Aid, Athletics, Housing and Dining, and Student Activities. They apply to WIU, and if accepted, your organization fills out a contract with the WIU Graduate School for the assistantship. WIU waives the student's tuition (really!) and your organization's only financial obligation is to provide the graduate assistant's monthly stipend. You choose if you want to hire your graduate assistant for 13 hours per week (currently \$707.50/month) or 20 hours per week (currently \$1060.75/month). Contracts are for 8 months each academic year. It takes most students 2 years to complete the degree.

FAQ

Is my institution eligible to participate?

Colleges from coast to coast are eligible to participate. We're particularly interested in recruiting students working at liberal arts institutions without their own graduate programs. We know it's hard to recruit staff these days, so we hope the opportunity to grow your own staff, while also providing graduate assistants with a tuition-free, high-quality master's degree will be attractive.

Is tuition really waived for graduate assistants?

Yes, students receive a 100% tuition waiver during the academic year and summer school. Students are responsible for paying fees (typically around \$98/credit) and buying books, but that's it. We think it's a pretty great deal.

What are my institution's financial and other obligations to graduate assistants?

Your institution is responsible for the monthly stipend paid to graduate assistants. You are also

responsible for supervising your graduate assistants and helping them have a rewarding academic and employment experience. You can view the contract institutions sign with the WIU Graduate School at:

http://www.wiu.edu/graduate_studies/faculty_and_staff_resources/forms/GAExternal.pdf

What will the graduate assistants study?

Students will pursue a master's degree in College Student Personnel – Higher Education Leadership. WIU has offered this degree for over 50 years, but only recently has it been available fully online. Ours is actually a hybrid program. Student will meet live online with their cohort three Saturdays each semester, with the rest completed on their own time. Graduate assistants typically take 3 classes (9 credits) during fall and spring semesters and 1-2 classes (3-6 credits) during the summer. You can find out more about the curriculum at:

http://www.wiu.edu/coehs/cnedcsp/csp_heltrack.php

When do cohorts begin?

Cohorts begin every fall. Most students need two years to complete the degree. To begin in fall 2023, students should have their applications on file with WIU by June 15.

Where can I get more information about this program?

Contact Dr. Jeff Hancks, Professor and Graduate Coordinator at (309) 762-9481 or by email at JL-Hancks@wiu.edu