

Budget Proposal Narrative

2023 Strategic Budgeting Process

Please carefully review the [Call for Proposals](#) with particular attention to the evaluation criteria before beginning this application. Criteria should be addressed throughout the proposal narrative.

Section 1: Proposal Title and Department Contact

Proposal Title: **Graduate TAs for Expanding Access & Enrollment**

Division: Academic Affairs

College/Unit: Division-wide

Department Contact: David Patrick, Graduate School

Section 2: Proposal Summary and Problem Statement

Check the most relevant box (one selection only).

Priority Program and Service Areas:

- Graduate Programs
- Inclusive Student Success

Identified Structural or Legacy Funding Needs (to be used sparingly and in conjunction with Division VP)

- Core Infrastructure, Safety, and Regulatory Compliance
- Remaining funding needs from partially funded prior request
If checked, please identify original funding request amount and actual funding received in narrative section
- Other [Click here to enter text](#)

Statement of Purpose (One Page or Less):

As Western seeks to grow its footprint in graduate education, a strategy combining targeted investments in new graduate offerings with steps to expand access and enrollment in existing programs helps ensure balanced growth and the best use of the University's academic strengths and resources. Western currently serves 750-1000 students in more than three dozen graduate certificate and degree programs. Among these programs, the factors limiting access and enrollment differ because graduate programs tend to serve distinct populations, compete in different market environments, or are limited by program-dependent instructional resources. However, for a certain set of Western graduate programs in the arts, humanities, social sciences, teacher education, and STEM fields, access and enrollment are currently limited by just one thing: the number of TA positions available to students in those programs. These are programs with capacity to enroll and educate additional students, and which receive an excess of qualified applications, but whose footprint is limited by the number of TAs they have to offer. This proposal seeks to increase by 25 the number of

TA positions available to such programs, about a 10% increase in the number of TA positions university-wide.

The impacts of this proposed investment are expected to be myriad. While 25 TA positions are requested, graduate enrollment will grow by more than 25 students, because not every student necessarily requests or requires a full-year, full-time TA position (for example, students often leverage partial-year TA appointments into a full-year or more of support by combining with a fellowship or grant-funded RA position). Healthy, growing graduate programs enrich the academic life of the institution, drive research and scholarship, and attract top faculty to the University. Graduate students serve as leaders, mentors, and role models, greatly multiplying experiential learning opportunities for undergraduates and the institution's reach within the state and beyond. Graduate education is also a key driver of Washington's knowledge, service, and manufacturing economies, with a graduate-level credential increasingly necessary for even mid-level leadership positions in healthcare, technology, business, education, and other fields.

As part of a balanced strategy combining investments in new offerings, enhanced marketing and recruiting, and support for graduate student retention and success, a targeted allocation of additional TA positions to programs meeting the specific criteria described here can be a relatively low-cost way to stabilize enrollment in some smaller programs, produce additional graduates in high demand fields, and promote inclusive excellence for the University overall.

Summary of Proposed New Investments:

25 full-time TA positions are requested (20 hrs/wk, 9-mo). Each has a nominal cost (stipend + tuition waiver + benefits) of about \$33k for a total request of roughly \$800k/yr. However, the actual net cost is expected to be much lower than the nominal cost because:

- (1) The new positions are targeted for programs where expanded access and enrollment are only feasible with additional TA lines, hence little or no net tuition will be waived because none would have been collected otherwise. Additionally, to the extent that enrollment increases by more than 25 FTE, as is expected, net positive tuition revenue will result, paid either from fellowships, grant-funded RA positions, or from another source leveraged by partial TA awards.
- (2) The new positions are targeted for programs with existing excess capacity and applicant demand, hence the marginal cost of recruiting and educating these additional students will be relatively small.
- (3) TAs provide instruction in undergraduate courses, partially offsetting some instructional costs that will be incurred anyway.

Impact of New Investment on ADEI and Sustainability:

TA positions come with a stipend, tuition waiver and health insurance and are the best tool we have to level the playing field by reducing financial barriers to public graduate education. For many Western graduate students, the financial support received through their TA position is what allows them to pursue their education. Increasing the number of TA positions will place us in a better position to attract and retain a more diverse pool of graduate students. Students of color, first generation students, and under-resourced students are often simply not able to accept admission in our graduate programs due to the lack of TA positions, choosing instead to attend peer institutions in the region that do offer them funding. While TA compensation remains below the cost of attendance leaving significant barriers even for students who do receive a TA, these positions remain the single most important source of support, especially for lower income students and those pursuing credentials leading to careers in lower paying fields. This is because there are fewer federal financial aid options for graduate students and because most Western graduate students devote full-time to pursuing their degrees making outside employment challenging. Combined with efforts to achieve more inclusive and equitable recruitment, retention, and student success proposed in a decision package currently under consideration in the state budget process, these additional TA lines, targeted for programs where they will have the largest impact, is one of the best ways we have to lower access barriers, particularly among populations historically excluded from graduate education and the resulting professional and personal opportunities a Western graduate education provides. Attracting a more diverse pool of graduate students will also have a positive impact on the experience of undergraduate students, as they will likely have more students of color and first-generation TAs and role models supporting them in classes, creating a more inclusive and diverse academic environment.

Section 3: Performance Outcomes and Risk Mitigation

Expected Outcomes and Evaluation of Success:

The new TA positions will be allocated in an annual process for programs to award to prospective admitted students as part of their new student recruitment efforts. Allocations will be based on the criteria above, which include enrollment capacity, consideration of the applicant pool, program-specific market factors, and opportunities to leverage institutional resources with external sources such as grants and fellowships.

Outcomes will be assessed through changes in graduate enrollment including aggregated measures participant demographics, and through the extent to which the program helps achieve broader goals of disciplinary balance, program cohort size and community, and program quality.

Specific [Strategic Plan metrics](#) tied to graduate enrollment and graduate student support that are expected to be advanced by the proposal include (i) graduate conferrals, (ii) graduate degrees per FTE T/TT faculty, (iii) research revenue, and (iv) number of undergraduates with high impact experiences

Impact on Recruitment, Retention, and Satisfaction of Diverse Faculty, Staff, and Administrators:
The proposal does not include faculty, staff or administrator resources. However, its development did follow the seven core Principles and Values articulated in Western's 2021 report on structural equity in budget processes [1].

[1] [Report of the Structural Equity Team Regarding Access, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice in the University's Budget Processes](#), June 15, 2021. (Accessed 2/4/2022)

Anticipated Consequences if Proposal is Not Funded:

Western's graduate enrollment has been steadily declining for over 20 years. This proposal is one of several university initiatives aimed at reversing that trend, which will otherwise most likely continue unless steps are taken to address it.

Section 4: Process and Development

Describe Collaborations and Stakeholder Engagement:

This proposal consolidates under a single umbrella several individual requests for additional TA lines originally put forward as independent proposals submitted in the October budget abstract process. Those proposals are consolidated in this request, which was prepared by the Deans of colleges with graduate programs in collaboration with the Graduate School.

Explain how this proposal will leverage resources or commitments from other sources:

As described above, graduate TA positions are sometimes combined with other sources of support, including external grants, fellowships, and personal resources. As a result of this leveraging, while 25 TA positions are requested, graduate enrollment is expected to increase by more than 25 FTE.

Has your department previously submitted this proposal?

No.

Describe any funding alternatives that have been explored.

N/A

Section 5: Fulfillment of WWU's Strategic Plan's Core Themes and Goals

Please explain how your proposal and the anticipated outcomes will advance the Core Themes and Goals of [WWU's 2018-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and the strategic priorities set for this budget cycle. How does this allocation or withdrawal of funding advance or hinder access to Western, academic excellence, and/or inclusive achievement?

Core Themes

Advancing Inclusive Success

The proposal will expand access to Western's graduate programs to more students from historically underserved populations by reducing financial barriers to attendance, enabling more underrepresented students to enter graduate school and gain a post-baccalaureate credential. This will in turn also have a positive impact on the educational environment for all of our undergraduate students, in particular for those from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Increasing Washington Impact

Providing support for students to enroll and succeed in graduate school at Western will increase the number of graduate-level professionals in the State of Washington, helping address workforce shortages in high-skill fields.

Enhancing Academic Excellence

Graduate programs enhance the academic excellence of the university in many ways, including through research and scholarship, advanced curricula, and by enabling expanded opportunities for high impact undergraduate experiential learning.

Goals

Western will provide a transformational education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and based on innovative scholarship, research, and creative activity.

This proposal will increase access to and expand enrollment in Western's graduate programs, driving university scholarship, research and creative activity and providing more opportunities for high impact undergraduate experiential learning.

Western will advance a deeper understanding of and engagement with place.

Western will foster a caring and supportive environment where all members are respected and treated fairly.

Current graduate students who are students of color or come from underrepresented backgrounds often report a sense of isolation on campus, in part stemming from them often being the only student in their program from an underrepresented background. A higher number of TA positions will allow us to enroll more graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds, in turn improving the learning environment and sense of belonging for all graduate students. Undergraduates will have more students of color and first-generation TAs supporting them in classes, creating a more inclusive learning environment.

Western will pursue justice and equity in its policies, practices, and impacts.

Funding for more TA positions will level the playing field for many students who currently cannot accept admission to Western due to the lack of funding for their graduate students. It will be particularly impactful for first-generation students, students of color, and students from lower income families.

Section 6: Space Planning, Capital, and Maintenance Considerations

Major Equipment of Software Needs

N/A

Space or Infrastructure Upgrades

N/A

Changes to the Use of Existing Space

N/A

Incorporation of Physical Accessibility and Cultural Inclusion

N/A

Proposal Title: Graduate TAs for Expanding Access & Enrollment

Divison: Academic Affairs

Department: Division-wide

Department Contact: David Patrick, Graduate School

	Description	Fiscal Year 2024					Fiscal Year 2025				
		FTE	Salary	Benefits	One-Time Costs	Total	FTE	Salary	Benefits	One-Time Costs	Total
Salary and Benefits											
Faculty Positions		-	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-	-	\$0	-
Professional/Exempt Positions		-	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-	-	\$0	-
Classified Positions		-	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-	-	\$0	-
Student Salaries (Graduate Assistants, Hourly Student, etc)	Graduate Teaching Assistants	25.00	\$400,000	\$28,355	\$0	\$428,355	25.00	400,000	28,355	\$0	428,355
Total Salaries and Benefits		25.00	\$400,000	\$28,355	\$0	\$428,355	25.00	400,000	28,355	\$0	428,355

	Description	Price per		Recurring	One-Time	Total	Price per		Recurring	One-Time	Total
		Units	Unit	Costs	Costs		Units	Unit	Costs	Costs	
Non-Personnel Expenses											
Supplies and Materials						\$0					\$0
Professional Service Contracts						\$0					\$0
Other Goods and Services, Memberships, etc.						\$0					\$0
Travel						\$0					\$0
Other						\$0					\$0
Capital Facility Expenses (New Space or Space Modifications)						\$0					\$0
Total Non-Personnel Expenses				\$0	\$0	\$0			\$0	\$0	\$0

	Description	Include?	Recurring	One-Time	Total	Recurring	One-Time	Total
			Costs	Costs		Costs	Costs	
University Indirect Costs								
Libraries** (Estimated at \$10k per faculty member)	\$10,000 per new faculty member	YES	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Academic Support Services/Student Support Services	3% of Recurring Direct Costs	YES	\$12,851	\$0	\$12,851	\$12,851	\$0	\$12,851
Institutional Support	2% of Recurring Direct Costs	YES	\$8,567	\$0	\$8,567	\$8,567	\$0	\$8,567
Plant Operation and Maintenance	3% of Recurring Direct Costs	YES	\$12,851	\$0	\$12,851	\$12,851	\$0	\$12,851
Graduate TA Waiver	Input amounts for new TA Positions	YES	\$338,600	\$0	\$338,600	\$338,600	\$0	\$338,600
Total Indirect Costs			\$372,868	\$0	\$372,868	\$372,868	\$0	\$372,868

	FTE	Head Count	Recurring Costs	One-Time Costs	Fiscal Year Total	FTE	Head Count	Recurring Costs	One-Time Costs	Fiscal Year Total
Total Proposal, All Direct and Indirect Costs	25.00	25.00	\$801,223	\$0	\$801,223	25.00	25.00	\$801,223	\$0	\$801,223