The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Pay for Graduate Employees

Federal salary data shows the dilemma that many graduate employees face: Do I pay for food this month? Or do I pay my medical bills?

In 2018-2019, the average graduate employee (GA) stipend was about $18,500. (GAs additionally received tuition and fee waivers worth about $7,500.) Research assistants earned slightly more, $19,000, than teaching assistants, $17,000, while graduate associates earned $22,000, on average.

But within disciplines, pay varied widely from a low of $14,042 in library science to a high of $26,968 in health residency programs.

The table below shows the low, high, and average stipend and tuition waiver paid to graduate assistants, by discipline. The data is sorted by average stipend + tuition waiver.

*Sorted by Average Stipend + Tuition Waiver.

Source: ASA Research analysis of Oklahoma State University, Graduate Assistant Stipend Survey, 2019-20.