PhD in Optical Science and Engineering

Financial Support

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Graduate Research Assistantships

**Graduate Teaching Assistantship (TA)**

Admitted, well-qualified PhD applicants are commonly offered a teaching assistantship with a stipend of $23,050 the first year ($9,275 for fall semester, $9,275 for spring semester, $2,250 for Summer I semester, and $2,250 for Summer II semester).

**Graduate Research Assistantship (RA)**

After their first year, most students transition from the teaching assistantship position to a research assistantship position with an optics faculty member who mentors their research and oversees their progress toward their doctoral degree. Research assistants are paid a stipend in amounts comparable to the first-year TA stipend.

**Graduate Assistant Support Plan (GASP)**

Tuition and Health Insurance Coverage

Optical Science and Engineering PhD students who hold teaching or research assistantship positions are awarded the Graduate Assistant Support Plan (GASP) benefit package from the Graduate School. GASP waives the cost of tuition and health insurance for up to 5 years.

**Tell me how the money works! **

For tuition and health insurance, the cost appears as an amount owed in your UNC Charlotte student account each semester. GASP funds are deposited directly into your UNC Charlotte student account each semester and appear as an amount paid. Since the amount owed for tuition and health insurance is the same as the amount paid by GASP, those amounts “zero out.”

Student fees also appear as an amount owed in your UNC Charlotte student account but are not covered by GASP. Students are responsible for paying for their own student fees. However, once a student transitions from the TA to an RA, grant funding often covers the cost of student fees.

The stipend from the graduate assistantship (TA or RA) is separate from GASP. It is not deposited into your UNC Charlotte student account. Rather, it is paid as a salary to the student throughout the semester, typically as a direct deposit into their bank account, for students to spend however they wish. Most students use this money for their living expenses while they are earning their doctoral degree.