

# Financial Assistance

For information other than assistantships, please contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, (540) 568-7820; fax (540) 568-7994

Some departments or schools may require specific deadlines for assistantship applications. Please consult the department or school to which you are applying for an assistantship for their application deadline.

## Assistantships

Students will be awarded assistantships for a maximum of four academic semesters (exclusive of summer session). Students in the Master of Fine Arts degree program and the Doctor of Psychology degree program are not subject to this limitation. Assistantships are limited to nine graduate hours each fall or spring semester, although contracts are usually written for an academic year. This division coincides with standard procedures for awarding of financial aid, half of the total each semester. Students must pay for any additional hours each semester at the tuition rate based on residency status. Under no circumstances will payment from assistantship funds be used for audited coursework or undergraduate hours.

### Criteria

To be eligible for consideration for an assistantship a student must

- be conditionally or unconditionally accepted into a degree program;
- have current acceptable Graduate Record Examination or Graduate Management Admission Test scores on file; and,
- have an official transcript on file indicating completion of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution.

All graduate, research, service and teaching assistants must register each semester for all courses to be covered by the assistantship during the regular registration period(s) and prior to the tuition refund date as outlined in the Schedule of Classes. Students who register for any additional courses after this time will be held personally responsible for additional tuition and fees. As established policy provides, students who drop courses after the tuition refund date will be personally responsible for fees and will receive a grade of "W" for the course. Exceptions will be made only for documented extenuating circumstances and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## Teaching Assistants

A limited number of teaching assistantships are available in departments or schools offering major programs of graduate study. Teaching assistants must have earned at least 18 graduate credit hours in their teaching discipline, be under the direct supervision of an experienced faculty member and receive regular in-service training. They are assigned to an

academic department or school and are expected to instruct six credit hours of course work or an equivalent of six credit hours of a laboratory. Application forms may be obtained from the Graduate School office. Teaching assistants are responsible for room and board expenses. Applicants should have overall undergraduate records approximating a "B" or higher. Teaching assistants carry a course load of nine graduate level credit hours of study and must be enrolled in a degree program.

## Graduate Assistants in Academic Areas

A limited number of graduate assistantships are available in most of the departments and schools offering major programs of graduate study. Graduate assistants are assigned to an academic department or school to assist faculty members in preparing for instruction, grading papers, conducting research, preparing laboratories, performing departmental or school administrative tasks, etc. Application forms may be obtained from the Graduate School office. Graduate assistants are responsible for room and board expenses. Applicants should have overall undergraduate records approximating a "B" or higher. Graduate assistants undertake various departmental or school assignments requiring 15 to 20 hours a week, carry a course load of nine graduate level credit hours of study and must be enrolled in a degree program.

## Graduate Assistants in Nonacademic Areas

Assistants are employed in a nonacademic department or administrative office and their duties will vary according to the needs of their assigned departments. Applicants should have an undergraduate grade point average of "B" or higher. Specific duties will vary, but in general an assistant will aid in the administrative duties of a supervisor 15 to 20 hours per week. An assistant will carry a course load of nine graduate level credit hours of study and must be enrolled in a degree program.

## Graduate Assistants in Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs offers appointments to the staff for those graduate students who are interested in working in a student personnel position. The site of the work will depend on training, experience and interest.

## Federal Financial Assistance Programs

The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, located in Sonner Hall, helps qualified graduate students secure financial aid packages designed to meet their financial needs. Aid for graduate students is primarily limited to loans and work-study.

## **Application Procedures and Deadlines**

All financial aid applicants must undergo a standardized needs analysis by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Because of the time period involved with processing the paperwork, it is essential that applicants file the FAFSA by February 15 to receive priority consideration for the coming school year. Failing to file by the priority deadline can result in delays in receiving aid.

The federal processor uses a student's FAFSA to calculate their Expected Family Contribution (EFC), an estimate of their ability to contribute to their educational expenses for one year. JMU uses the EFC to calculate a student's "need." "Need" is simply a computation of educational expenses (COA) minus EFC.

Students offered financial assistance by JMU will receive a financial aid notice indicating the source(s) and amount(s) of assistance. Aid notices are usually sent to students during the summer. Loan applications are included with the aid notice in case the student wants to apply for a student loan.

### **Federal Stafford Loan**

The Stafford loan (subsidized and unsubsidized) is a long-term, low-interest loan borrowed from a bank, and insured by the federal government. To qualify for a Stafford loan, the student must be:

- a U.S. citizen, national, permanent resident or eligible international student
- enrolled as a degree-seeking student on at least a half-time basis
- maintaining satisfactory academic progress as defined by the institution

The maximum amount that a graduate student may borrow for one academic year cannot exceed \$18,500. This figure may be lower depending on the student's documented cost of attendance.

The interest rate charged on a Stafford loan is variable, but is capped at 8.25 percent. The interest rate for the coming year is determined each July 1. For 1998-99, the interest rate was 6.86 percent. If a student is offered a subsidized loan, the government pays the interest on the loan while the student is enrolled in school on at least a half-time basis and during any other eligible deferment periods. If a student is offered an unsubsidized loan, the student is responsible for the interest from the moment the money is disbursed to the school.

### **Federal Work-Study**

A limited number of graduate students are employed each year through Federal Work-Study. Students are placed in academic or administrative offices and are paid directly twice a month. To be eligible, the student must have financial need, be degree seeking and be making satisfactory academic progress. Applications are available in the Office of Student Employment in Sonner Hall.

## **Institutional Employment**

A limited number of graduate students are also employed through Institutional Employment each year. Very similar to Federal Work-Study, these jobs, however, do not require that the student file the FAFSA or have financial need. Applications for these jobs are available in the Office of Student Employment which is located in The University Services Building, Room 204J.

## **Teacher In-Service Reimbursement**

Virginia school divisions provide some financial assistance for their teaching and/or administrative personnel. Requests for information should be directed to the office of the respective school division superintendent.

## **Army ROTC**

Students enrolled in a graduate program requiring four or more semesters may earn commissions as second lieutenants in the U.S. Army through the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps Program. Students accepted into the advanced program will receive a monthly stipend of \$150.

Additional information about enrollment procedures and qualifications may be obtained from the Department of Military Science, (540) 568-6264 or (800) ROTC-JMU.

## **Donald E. Gardner**

### **Memorial Loan Fund**

The Donald E. Gardner Memorial Loan Fund is a short-term loan program named in memory of Donald E. Gardner, who served as university comptroller for nine years. The program provides students with a resource to meet short-term financial emergencies. These short-term loans, which range from \$200 to \$600, are available to undergraduate and graduate students who meet the following criteria:

- currently enrolled
- degree seeking
- full time or part time (taking at least six hours of course work)
- making satisfactory academic progress
- can repay the loan within 90 days

Tuition must be paid in full prior to applying for the Donald E. Gardner loan. Loan applications and other eligibility information may be obtained in the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

### **Short-Term Loan Fund**

Similar to the Don Gardner loan, the short-term loan was established to assist enrolled students with emergency expenses. The short-term loan has a maximum limit of \$100 and must be repaid within 30 days. Students need not have their tuition paid to apply for a short-term loan.