

# The Use of Externally Funded Graduate Assistantships by College and University Recreation and Leisure Studies Programs

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## Abstract

*Historically, colleges and universities have funded graduate assistantships with institutional resources. However, in today's economic environment the ability to internally fund graduate students is becoming difficult. One possible strategy to countering this difficulty is the externally funded graduate assistantship. The purpose of this study was to explore the use of externally funded assistantships within college and university recreation, park resources and leisure services programs. The present research determined that graduate programs in the field are utilizing externally funded assistantships, that externally funded assistantships provide additional benefits beyond internally funded assistantships, and that most graduate programs providing externally funded assistantships recommend their use to other graduate programs.*

**Keywords:** assistantships, externally funded assistantships, graduate education, student-aid

## Introduction

Facing persistent tuition increases, cutbacks in financial aid, and shrinking institutional budgets, the recruitment of students into recreation, park resources, and leisure services graduate programs is becoming more challenging. One of the most difficult challenges many graduate programs face is increasing graduate enrollments while financial constraints reduce the ability to provide students financial assistance. Further, this challenge is faced during an era in which undergraduate enrollments have declined (Stumbo, Carter, & Kim, 2004), faculty positions remain unfilled due to a dearth in doctoral graduates (National Recreation and Park Association [NRPA], 2004), and current graduate program enrollment levels appear to low to replace our aging professorate (Bialeschki & Dorward, 1998; Compton, Austin, & Yang, 2001; Jarvis, 2002).

Making graduate recruitment even more difficult is the economics of graduate education. The average annual cost, including tuition and fees, books and supplies, and living expenses, to pursue a master's degree at a public institution of higher education is approximately \$19,200, to pursue a doctoral degree \$22,600. Costs are even higher within private institutions, \$29,800 and \$33,600 respectively (Choy & Geis, 2002a). It is therefore not surprising that 82 percent of full-time, full-year, graduate students rely on some form of financial assistance to cover graduate education expenses (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2000). While some graduate funding may come from private sources such as personal savings or public sources such as student grant and loan programs, most graduate students expect to receive financial assistance for graduate study from the college or university in which they are enrolled (Peters, 1992). Often, colleges and universities provide financial assistance to students through assistantships (Bittar, Price, & Telljohann, 2004).

Offering assistantships benefit academic institutions through increasing graduate enrollment, and in the case of public institutions, increasing governmental subsidies. However, they can be relatively expensive to provide. For example, in a common assistantship contract a student receives a stipend for services expected to be provided throughout the academic year as either a teaching or research assistant. The average stipend received by a full-time, full-year student on graduate assistantship is \$9,800 (Choy & Geis, 2002b). Often, graduate assistantships provide additional financial support, including but not limited to: tuition discounts or waivers, and health or life insurance (Choy & Geis, 2002b). When considering the level of average stipend payments awarded, it should be understood that this amount does not reflect the entire dollar value of most graduate assistantships. For example, a graduate student receiving an assistantship including a full tuition waiver would actually be receiving an economic package of between \$29,000 to \$43,400 according to average stipend awards and tuition costs (Choy & Geis, 2002a, 2002b). The true value of the economic benefits of most graduate assistantships is also reflected by the fact that half of all doctorate recipients in 2003 completed their degree with no educational indebtedness (National Opinion Research Center [NORC], 2005).

There is general agreement among administrators that the graduate assistantship is a key resource for recruiting graduate students (Boroviak, 1990; East & Shoun, 1990; Peters, 1992). For many colleges and universities experiencing financial cutbacks however, the ability to provide graduate assistantships is becoming difficult. In an effort to counter these financial cutbacks, many institutions are partnering with community agencies and other organizations to provide support to prospective and current graduate students through external assistantships.

Unlike internally funded assistantship structures, which require a college or university to absorb the entire cost of an assistantship, externally funded assistantships rely on funding from a source outside the institution. Primarily there are two types of externally funded assistantships, assistantships that are funded through service and

research grants, and assistantships that are contracted with community agencies, both of which generally provide stipends and tuition deferments. Typically, external assistantships that are funded through service or research grants operate in similar fashion to internally funded assistantships. That is, students receive a stipend for employment-related services provided within the academic institution. In contrast, assistantships that are contracted with community agencies operate as a unique partnership between the contracting agency and the graduate student's host college or university. Within this unique partnership the sponsoring agency agrees to cover the cost of the stipend in return for 17 to 20 hours of graduate student employment service per week.

According to East and Shoun (1990) and others (Ehrenburg, Rees, & Brewer, 1993a, 1993b; Ehrenberg & Marvos, 1995; Bittar, et al., 2004; Sheridan and Pyke, 1994), externally funded assistantships provide additional benefits to colleges and universities, students, and employers, which are not available through traditional internally funded assistantships.

Externally funded graduate assistantships benefit colleges and universities by increasing graduate assistantship numbers (East & Shoun, 1990) and increasing graduate student enrollment (Bittar et al., 2004). This is because an increase in the acquisition of external funding to support graduate students generally does not induce colleges or universities to proportionately reduce internal funding (Ehrenburg, et al., 1993a, 1993b), and because externally funded assistantships often result in shorter times-to-degree completion (Ehrenberg & Marvos, 1995; Sheridan and Pyke, 1994). Further, because the external assistantship structure requires payment of the assistantship stipend by the sponsoring agency, increased graduate assistantship numbers and graduate student enrollment can be achieved with little increase in institutional expenditures (East & Shoun, 1990).

East and Shoun (1990) indicate that students receive many benefits from community contracted assistantships, including "real world" work experience and increased employability. According to Reynolds and O'Marrow (1985), opportunities for work-related experiences increase professional development by contributing to a student's ability to identify with the profession they are preparing to enter, contributing to self-awareness, and contributing to the facilitation of integrating knowledge and skills acquired in course study. Further, opportunities for professional development outside the classroom have been shown to have a positive impact on retention, career preparation, and graduate educational quality (Cheatham & Phelps, 1995; Miller, Brueggemann, Blue, & Shepard, 1997).

Agencies also benefit from sponsoring externally funded assistantships. Through an external graduate assistant partnership agencies are provided the opportunity to recruit skilled labor while simultaneously reducing labor costs. This is because the average stipend paid to sponsor an assistantship is generally less than the average salary paid to part-time employees. Typically, stipends are paid to, and dis-

tributed by, the host college or university, eliminating the need for the agency to pay any employment-related fringe benefits (East & Shoun, 1990). External assistantships also turn over on a regular basis, providing agencies opportunities to create or fill employment positions without permanent staffing commitments (East & Shoun, 1990).

Based on the reported values and benefits of externally funded assistantships, the purpose of this study was to explore the use of externally funded assistantships within college and university recreation and leisure studies programs. Specifically, this study was done to provide the field of recreation, park resources, and leisure services with a better understanding of its utilization of externally funded assistantships, and to identify the characteristics associated with those assistantships. While the use of externally funded assistantships within the field of recreation, park resources, and leisure services has been examined (East & Shoun, 1990), the issue has received little attention over the last decade, and what little attention it has received has focused on benefits and not characteristics and use.

## Methods

### *Subjects*

Eighty-five institutions purporting to have graduate programs in recreation, park resources, and leisure services were identified from NRPA on-line institutional directories in the fall of 2003. At the time of subject identification, these institutions represented the total population of institutions purporting graduate programs to the NRPA. All institutions identified were solicited to participate in the study. To facilitate mailing of the measurement instrument the recreation, park resources, and leisure services graduate program coordinator was identified at each institution. Identification of graduate program coordinators was done using NRPA on-line graduate institutional directories and individual institution/department web pages. Out of the 85 institutions/program coordinators solicited to participate in the study, seven returned letters indicating their institution no longer had a graduate program in recreation, park resources, or leisure services. From the remaining 78 institutions/program coordinators, 45 completed measurement instruments were received, yielding a 58% response rate. Five measurement instruments were removed from the study due to unusable data, yielding a 51% (n=40) useable response rate. The sample represented both public and private, masters and doctoral, degree-granting institutions, maintaining 974 graduate enrollments. Table 1 presents respondents' institutional demographics.

TABLE 1

*Demographics of Respondents' Institution*

	N	%
Institution Type (N=40)		
Public	37	92.5
Private	3	7.5
Institution Location (N=39)		
Rural	15	38.5
Suburban	8	20.5
Urban	16	41.0
Degree Programs (N=40)		
Masters	30	75.0
Masters & Doctorate	9	22.5
Doctorate Only	1	2.5
Masters Enrollment (N=36)		
1-10	11	30.5
12-25	9	25.0
30-50	14	38.9
55-80	2	5.6
Doctoral Enrollments (N=10)		
1-3	3	30.0
4-6	3	30.0
7-9	2	20.0
30-32	2	20.0
FTE Faculty (N=40)		
1-3	5	12.5
4-6	20	50.0
7-9	6	15.0
12-14	9	22.5

*Instrument Development*

A comprehensive review of literature conducted by the authors on internal and external assistantships within and outside the field of recreation (e.g., Boroviak, 1990; Choy & Geis, 2002a, 2002b; East & Shoun, 1990; Ehrenburg et al., 1993a, 1993b) and a survey questionnaire used by Bittar, et al. (2004) that examined externally funded assistantship use in health education guided the development of survey instrument used in the study. The two-page, 14-item, instrument consisted of four items requesting graduate program demographic information and ten items requesting information on internal/external assistantship characteristics, value, and use. While no validity coefficients were established, content validity was sought. Content validity of the

survey instrument was established through a review of the instrument by survey research experts. The two-page instrument required 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

All respondents were requested to indicate (1) if their department awarded graduate assistantships and, if applicable, how many and on what degree level [question 1]; (2) if their department could appropriately use additional assistantships for teaching and research [question 2]; and (3) if any of their department's assistantships were externally funded [question 3]. Respondents whose department utilized externally funded assistantships were requested to list the type of agency (e.g. federal, state, county, or local government, nonprofit, commercial) funding their assistantship(s) and subsequently indicate the (a) degree level (i.e., masters, doctoral), (b) type of funding (i.e., tuition, stipend, other), (c) assistantship duration (i.e., 9 or 12 months), and (d) number of graduate assistants funded for each listed agency [question 3A]. In addition, respondents utilizing externally funded assistantships were also requested to indicate: (1) if external assistantship(s) funding levels were "equal to," "less than," or "greater than" internal assistantship funding levels [question 4]; (2) whether their external assistantships were initiated by the university, agency, or both [question 5]; and (3) if they perceived the quality of their external assistantship(s) to be "much better," "better," "equal," or "less than" internal assistantship quality [question 6]. Finally, respondents whose departments utilized externally funded assistantships were requested to indicate: (1) any significant negative experiences students have had associated with an external assistantship [question 7], (2) if their externally funded graduate assistant(s) typically worked for the university, the funding agency, or both [question 8]; and (3) if they would recommend the use of externally funded assistantships to other recreation, park resources, and leisure services departments [question 9].

Respondents whose department did not utilize externally funded assistantships were requested to provide information on whether or not externally funded assistantships had been provided in the past, and if so, why they no longer were provided, or if not, why they have not been provided [questions 3B and 10]. Response options provided to indicate reasons why externally funded assistantships were no longer provided or never provided included: (a) too much trouble to administer, (b) agency no longer has the funds, (c) department/college/university no longer contracts external assistantships, (d) no need for more assistantships, (e) local agencies not interested in supporting assistantships, (f) negative previous experiences with externally funded assistantships, (g) hassles with obtaining externally funded assistantships outweighs the benefits, (h) unfamiliar with externally funded assistantships, and (g) other (please specify).

Lastly, respondents were requested to provide demographic information. Demographic information included institution type (i.e., public, private) [question 11], institution location (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) [question 12], levels of degree programs offered (i.e., bachelor, master, doctorate) and number of students enrolled

in each degree level [question 13], and number of full-time equivalent faculty [question 14].

### *Procedure*

Program coordinators were solicited to participate in the study spring of 2004. Similar to survey research recommendations suggested by Dillman (1978), an initial and follow-up mailing was instituted to maximize response rate. Both solicitations included: a personalized cover letter indicating participant identification procedures, confidentiality procedures, and information pertaining to the study's purpose; a copy of the survey questionnaire; and a coded self-addressed, pre-stamped, envelope for survey questionnaire return.

### *Statistical Design*

Measurement instruments were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). All data reported in this article were analyzed and reported as grouped data using descriptive measures (e.g. frequencies, percentages, ranges) and measures of central tendency (e.g. means, standard deviations). Not all institutions/program coordinators responded to all applicable measurement instrument items, resulting in some points of missing data. Therefore, the total number of respondents per item is noted within the study results.

## **Results**

Results are reported in five sections. Section one reports current use levels of assistantships, the number of and degree levels currently funded, and opportunity for additional assistantship use. Section two reports current use levels of externally funded assistantships including: (a) types of agencies funding assistantships, (b) degree levels funded, (c) types of funding provided, (d) assistantship durations, and (e) initiation trends. Section three reports individual funding agency characteristics including: (a) the number of assistantships funded, (b) perceptions of external assistantship funding levels compared to internal assistantships across all agencies, and (c) perceptions of external assistantship quality compared to internally funded assistantships across all agencies. Section four reports perceived external assistantship experiences and section five reasons for nonuse of externally funded assistantships.

### *Assistantship Use*

Thirty-seven (92.5%) of the 40 responding institutions reported providing graduate assistantships. Of those institutions reporting assistantship use, twenty-eight (76%) provided masters level assistantships, eight (22%) provided both masters and doctorate level assistantships, and one (3%) provided doctoral only assistantships. Institutions providing masters level assistantships (n=36) reported providing a range

of 1 to 17 assistantships, totaling 154 ( $M=4.28$ ,  $SD=3.85$ ), with a plurality of institutions (44.4%) reporting 1 to 2 assistantship positions. At the doctoral level, institutions providing assistantships ( $n=9$ ) reported providing a range of 1 to 15 assistantships, totaling 49 ( $M=5.44$ ,  $SD=4.57$ ), with a plurality of institutions (44.4%) reporting 3 to 4 assistantship positions. Thirty-six (90%) of the institutions participating in the study indicated they could use additional assistantships for involvement in teaching and research. The number of reported additional assistantships that could be used for teaching or research ranged from 0 to 15, totaling 165 ( $M=4.46$ ,  $SD=3.24$ ), with a plurality of institutions (43.2%) indicating the ability to accommodate 2 to 4 additional assistantship positions.

### *Externally Funded Assistantship Use*

Twenty-one (52.5%) of the 40 responding institutions indicated having externally funded assistantships. Results indicated that graduate assistantships were being funded by all levels of government (i.e., federal, state, county, local), the nonprofit, and commercial sector. The total number of external assistantships across the sample ranged from 1 to 14, totaling 78 ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=3.26$ ), with a plurality of institutions (47.4%) reporting 1 to 2 external assistantship positions. Overall, externally funded assistantships accounted for 38.4% of all assistantships provided across the sample.

Out of the twenty institutions reporting the degree levels funded by external assistantships fifteen (75.0%) reported using external assistantships to fund masters degrees and five (25.0%) to fund both master's and doctorate degrees. Out of the nineteen institutions reporting on type(s) of funding provided ten (56.8%) reported their external assistantships provided both stipends and tuition waivers, seven (36.8%) reported their assistantships provided stipends only, and two (10.5%) reported "other" funding structures. Out of the eighteen institutions reporting on assistantship duration ten (55.6%) reported their external assistantships provided 9-month funding only, four (22.2%) 12-month funding only, two (11.1%) 9-month and 12-month funding, one (5.6%) 3-month funding only and one (5.6%) 18-month funding. Out of twenty-eight institutions indicating external assistantship use or past external assistantship use fourteen (50.0%) indicated their department initiated the procurement of external funding, ten (35.7%) indicated the procurement of external funding to be a joint effort between their department and an external agency, and four (14.3%) indicated the establishment of their department's externally assistantship(s) were the result of external agency initiatives. Further, out of the twenty-one institutions reporting to have existing externally funded assistantships, thirteen (61.9%) reported that their externally funded graduate assistant(s) work for the university/department, five (23.8%) reported that their externally funded graduate assistant(s) work for the funding agency, and three (14.3%) reported that their externally funded graduate assistant(s) work for both the university/department and the agency.



### *Funding Agency Characteristics*

Results indicated that out of the total number of external assistantships (n=78) provided across the sample, federal government agencies supported thirty-eight (48.7%) assistantship positions, followed by nonprofit agencies with fourteen (17.9%), local government agencies with nine (11.5%), state government agencies with eight (10.3%), commercial agencies with 6 (7.7%), and county government agencies with 3 (3.8%). Table 2 presents funding levels and perceived educational quality of reported externally funded assistantships.

TABLE 2

#### *A Comparison of Funding Levels & Perceived Quality of Student Experience between Externally Funded & Internally Funded Assistantships*

	N	%
<i>Funding Level</i>		
Provides Greater funding than an internal assistantship	10	12.8
Provides Equal funding to an internal assistantship	66	84.6
Provides Less funding than an internal assistantship	2	2.6
<i>Perceived Quality</i>		
Provides a Much Better educational experience than an internal assistantship	5	6.4
Provides a Better educational experience than an internal assistantship	31	39.8
Provides an Equal educational experience to an internal assistantship	39	50.0
Provides Less educational experience than an internal assistantship	3	3.8
N=78		

### *External Assistantship Experiences*

Out of twenty-eight institutions reporting on negative experiences of students in relation to externally funded assistantships, six (21.4%) indicated their students had negative experiences, eighteen (64.3%) indicated no negative student experiences, and four (14.3%) indicated they were not sure if students had any negative experiences. Despite the indication of negative experiences associated with externally funded assistantships, out of the twenty-one institutions currently providing externally funded assistantships, twenty (95.2%) indicated they would recommend the use of externally funded assistantships to other recreation, park resources, and leisure services departments. Table 3 presents negative student experiences related to externally funded assistantships,

TABLE 3

*Negative Student Experiences*

	N	%
<i>Negative Experience Categories</i>		
External assistantship stipend less than internal assistantship stipend	1	16.7
Time commitment expected by contracting agency to demanding	3	50.0
Agency calendar did not match the institution's academic calendar	4	66.7
Assistantship work schedule interfered with institution's class schedule	1	16.7
*Other	3	50.0
*Note: Other negative experiences reported included expenses to support employment and expected results not validated by research.		
Note: Percentages due not equal 100 due to ability to select multiple responses.		
N=6		

*Nonuse of Externally Funded Assistantships.*

Nineteen institutions reporting no longer providing or never providing externally funded assistantships. Common reasons cited for not providing externally funded assistantships were lack of agency interest and hassles in administering. Table 4 presents reported reasons for the nonuse of externally funded assistantships.

TABLE 4

*Reasons for Nonuse of Externally Funded Assistantships*

	N	%
<i>Nonuse Categories</i>		
Too much trouble to administer	2	10.5
Agency can no longer fund	4	21.1
No department, college, or university support (e.g. tuition waivers)	3	15.8
No more assistantships needed	1	5.3
Local agencies not interested in supporting assistantships	5	26.3
Negative previous experiences with externally funded assistantships	1	15.8
Hassles of obtaining external assistantship outweighs the benefits	4	21.1
Unfamiliar with externally funded graduate assistantships	2	10.5
*Other	9	47.4
*Note: Other reasons for nonuse reported included faculty disinterested in obtaining, failure to secure external funding, faculty turnover, increased faculty workloads, and to difficult to administer.		
Note: Percentages due not equal 100 due to ability to select multiple responses.		
N=19		

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that most graduate programs in recreation, park resources, and leisure services provide both internal and external graduate assistantships. However, when comparing reported graduate enrollments with reported assistantship numbers, results indicate that the field of recreation, park resources, and leisure services is currently only funding a relatively small percentage of its graduate students, particularly at the master's level. This dearth in graduate assistantships may be one cause contributing to the field's dearth in doctoral graduates and the expressed need to increase graduate enrollments to replace the field's aging professorate (Bialeschki & Dorward, 1998; Compton, Austin, & Yang, 2001; Jarvis, 2002; NRPA, 2004). Examining current and future employment opportunities in the field, Longsdorf (2004) found the field should expect to experience moderate turnover in administrative positions. Others have expressed similar findings (NRPA, 2002; Jarvis 2002; Roberts, Outley, & Estes, 2002). These findings suggest that increasing graduate enrollments will not only serve to stabilize academe, but also to stabilize the field's workforce, since administrative positions typically require job candidates to possess graduate degrees. Overall, results from this study indicate that more graduate assistantships are needed within the field, and that externally funded assistantships are a viable mechanism for increasing graduate student enrollment.

Beyond the ability to increase graduate enrollments, this study indicates that externally funded assistantships provide financial alternatives to colleges and universities that provide graduate students financial assistance. In the case of contracting external assistantships with community agencies, colleges and universities can reduce financial obligations associated with funding assistantship stipends, since within this type of external assistantship structure sponsoring agencies cover stipend costs.

Considering student benefits associated with externally funded assistantships, this research indicates that externally funded assistantships provide additional student benefits, including "real world" work experience (East & Shoun, 1990), increased professional development (O'Marrow, 1985), and increased graduate education quality (Cheatham & Phelps, 1995; Miller, Brueggemann, Blue, & Shepard, 1997).

## *Implications*

Based on the current study, the following recommendations for contracting graduate assistantships with community agencies are made. When attempting to establish external graduate assistant partnerships, academic programs should consider contacting federal government and nonprofit agencies. These two types of agencies were reported as providing a majority of the funding used to support graduate student study in field. Academic programs seeking external assistantship funding should actively seek to initiate the procurement of external funding and expect "to sell" to the external agency the professional and financial benefits that can be

received by sponsoring a graduate assistantship. Often this process can be initiated by establishing an on-site meeting with the agency at either the college or university or by going to the agency. According to East and Shoun (1990) during this initial meeting academic program representatives should be prepared to show the prospective agency a sample external graduate assistant contract (see Figure 1).

**INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO FOR THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AND THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

This Agreement is made by and between the University of Toledo, hereinafter referred to as "UT", and the Boy Scouts of America, hereinafter referred to as "SPONSOR", a private institution.

WHEREAS SPONSOR has agreed to accept the services of a maximum of three (3) graduate student interns from the College of Health and Human Services in connection with internship experiences; and

WHEREAS UT through its College of Health and Human Services has qualified graduate students prepared for internships, and has qualified professional faculty members to advise, direct and instruct such students;

THEREFORE, it is agreed that UT and SPONSOR will support three graduate internships at SPONSOR's various locations. The selection of graduate students for internships at The Boy Scouts of America will be mutually approved by SPONSOR and UT officials. All qualified graduate students will hold regular admission status in the UT Graduate School and will be progressing toward an advanced degree.

SCOPE OF EMPLOYMENT: SPONSOR will be responsible for providing a variety of tasks for the interns. These tasks will enhance the graduate student's overall educational experiences by involvement in work projects of a professional nature. Interns will be directly responsible to the SPONSOR director or his/her designee for the particular nature and evaluation of the quality of their work. A faculty member of the UT College of Health and Human Services/Department of Public Health and Rehabilitative Services will serve as advisor to the student, and will assure that all graduate assignments are designed to promote the student's professional growth. Interns will assume work assignments not to exceed twenty (20) hours per week.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: SPONSOR agrees that intern will work for an entire academic year period commencing on August 27, 2001 and terminating May 5, 2002. SPONSOR agrees that it will support an additional internship for the summer period at the prevailing UT stipend rate. Such continued support may be accomplished by a written modification to this agreement. Exact hours per day, vacation periods and time associated issues under this agreement will be determined and scheduled by mutual agreement of the interns and SPONSOR. This scheduling will facilitate attendance of interns at UT classes throughout the period of the agreement. Any required personal liability insurance is the responsibility of the intern.

AGENCY CONTRACT PRICE: The sum paid to UT by SPONSOR under this agreement shall be the following: For both Masters level graduate interns the total amount will be \$XXXX of which will be paid as stipend and \$XXX in applicable fringe benefits at the rate of XX% of the stipend. This amount will be paid in accordance with the regular Graduate School process for supporting graduate assistants.

PAYMENT METHOD: Payment by SPONSOR is due upon the receipt of an invoice from UT which shall be mailed to SPONSOR on the first day of each academic term covered under this agreement. Invoices shall be sent to: XXXX, Boy Scouts of America, Toledo, OH 43697-1337. All reimbursement checks shall be made payable to the University of Toledo and shall be sent to: XXXX, University of Toledo, Toledo, OH 43606

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**INSTITUTIONAL CONTRACT PRICE:** UT will provide a waiver of up to a maximum of twelve (12) credit hours per term for each intern for graduate course work during the period of the contract.

**STUDENT FEES:** Selected/accepting intern will be responsible for all educational expenses not contributed by UT and all work related expenses not reimbursed by SPONSOR.

**NOTICES AND TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT:** Any notices affecting the terms of this agreement must be submitted in writing, to the following: UT - XXXX, The University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio 43606; Sponsor -XXXX, Boy Scouts of America, Toledo, OH 43697-1337. Either party may terminate this agreement in its entirety by giving the other party thirty (30) days written notice. In the event the agreement is terminated, an uncancellable commitment will remain in effect for SPONSOR to continue to financially support the interns until the end of the academic term in which termination took place. **IN WITNESS THEREOF,** the parties have executed this contract as of the date of the signature of the UT authorized institutional representative.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Accepted on Behalf of UT

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Accepted on Behalf of Sponsor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Figure 1. Sample: Externally Funded Assistantship Contract

Further, Groves and Longsdorf (in-press) indicate that academic program representatives should be prepared to negotiate the scope of employment, period of work performance, agency costs, payment methods, institutional costs, student fees, and a termination agreement within an external assistantship contract (see Figure 2). Detailing these areas in an external assistantship contract would likely reduce the types of negative experiences that were indicated by study respondents. Finally, it is recommend that administrators of graduate programs attempt to procure as many graduate assistantships as possible, particularly doctoral assistantships, to ensure that the profession does not face an even greater dearth in the number of available doctoral candidates that will be needed to replace our aging professorate.

Agreement Clause:

The Agreement Clause states that the contract for the externally funded assistantship is being entered into by the agency and the host college or university and defines what both parties are accepting in the agreement. This section of the contract should delineate the number of graduate assistants the agency will sponsor, the number of graduate students the college or university expects to provide, and delineate the procedures for graduate student selection.

Scope of Employment:

The Scope of Employment indicates the job responsibilities of the graduate assistant and delineates the positions administrative structure. Included in this section of the contract is the maximum weekly time commitment to the agency, and identification of the college or university representative who will advise the student. Typically, graduate assistants can work a maximum of 20 hour a week.

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Period of Performance:	The Period of Performance delineates the availability of the graduate student for employment. This section of the contract should state the beginning and end date of the contract. Typically, graduate assistants are expected to be provided all holidays and breaks per the college or university's academic calendar.
Agency Contract Price:	The Agency Contract Price delineates the total sum to be paid to the host college or university by the agency.
Payment Method:	The Payment Method section should delineate all procedures for how the stipend and any other additional fees will be dispersed to the host college or university.
Institutional Contract Price:	The Institutional Contract Price section delineates the financial award provided the graduate assistant by the host college or university (e.g., tuition discount or waiver).
Student Fees:	The Student Fees Section delineates for the graduate assistant all required fees associated with acceptance of the assistantship (e.g., general fees, educational materials, lab fees, parking, transportation, and lodging).
Termination Agreement:	The Notice and Termination of Agreement delineates the procedures required to terminate a graduate assistant. Included in this section should also be the agreed upon procedures for how stipend payments will be handled in the event that a graduate assistant is terminated.

Figure 2: Sections of an Externally Funded Assistantship Contract

### Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. One is the low useable response rate (51%) for the study despite the use of a two-wave mailing procedure and other sound survey-research methods (e.g., inclusion of a personally addressed and signed cover letter, inclusion of a pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope for instrument return). As a result, threats to external validity likely exist. A second limitation is that the survey questionnaire was self-administered, thus potential threats to internal validity may exist if respondents provided desirable rather than accurate data. Finally, a third limitation of the study was the primary use of closed-format content items on the survey questionnaire. As a result, response categories used to collect data related to external assistantship use levels, negative experiences, or reasons for nonuse were limited to response selections determined by the authors.

### Conclusions

Despite limitations, this research has implications to stakeholders within the field of recreation, park resources, and leisure services. Given recent declines in undergraduate enrollment, low graduate enrollment levels, and the need to replace an

aging professorate and practitioner workforce, finding ways to recruit more individuals into graduate study can no longer be the sole responsibility of the field's professional preparation programs. The development and implementation of strategies to increase graduate enrollments (e.g., contracting graduate assistantships with community agencies) is a critical issue for the field. Academic programs offering graduate degrees need to become proactive in identifying agencies within their community that could potential fund a graduate assistantship. Likewise, community agencies providing leisure-related services should consider funding graduate assistantships to fill their specialized part-time employment needs. While this study reports the value and characteristics of externally funded assistantships in recreation, park resources, and leisure services education, continued research addressing external assistantships within the field is needed. For example, future research could include studies identifying successful strategies for securing externally funded assistantships or successful strategies for overcoming barriers to their use.

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