



University Housing Services  
**Benchmarking Responsibilities and Remuneration for Residential  
Life Graduate Assistants in California**  
Assessment Report

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**Choose One:** Needs Assessment

**Date of Assessment Implementation:** January 2019

**Date of Report:** June 2019

**Purpose of Assessment**

University Housing Services created a new volunteer-based senior student leadership opportunity for prospective Cal Poly Pomona undergraduate and graduate students, as well as for graduate students studying at other institutions looking to gain leadership experience working in housing and residential life. This Residence Life Intern (RLI) position just finished its pilot year in the 2018-2019 academic year, beginning with a recruitment season from January 2018 through July 2018, training in August 2018, and the position lasting until June of 2019.

This assessment specifically was initiated because during the recruitment process in the spring and early summer of 2018, at least 3 of our top candidates from our selection and interview process (for the 6 position we were hoping to fill) who were offered the Residence Life Intern position declined their offer to pursue an opportunity with another institution or department. Anecdotal evidence from the candidates indicated that a big reason that they declined working with UHS at CPP was due to the UHS position having a lower salary and compensation, as well as fewer opportunities for professional development. As we are attempting to build an internship opportunity that provides our student leaders with not only a competitive remuneration package but also deeply impactful and valuable learning opportunities, this seemed like a useful area to devote time to see what our housing and residence life professional peers and colleagues at neighboring institutions were practicing when it came to utilizing and compensating their graduate assistants and senior student leaders.

**Division Learning Outcome**

( Choose a Learning Outcome ): Model Leaders – Lifelong Learning

**Targeted Learning Outcome**

University Housing Services created the Residence Life Intern position in order to be able to provide an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to gain hands-on, practical experience in leadership and student services work. For student affairs practitioners, these graduate-level assistantships are often a first opportunity to put theory to practice and to connect the learning about student theory and development in the classroom to a practical experience in which student leaders can explore and shape their practice, as well as reflect on their practice in order to become better student services professionals in the future. Cal Poly Pomona has a lot to offer as an institution and a lot of opportunities for graduate assistants to gain this experience, so ensuring that we can provide

these experiences, coupled with a competitive compensation package, is vital to the success of this program.

## **Assessment Methodology**

I contacted twenty (20) other higher education institutions in California to gather information via email and phone interviews and to interview directors and professional housing staff members about their work with graduate and senior-student level staff members at their institution. Of the twenty institutions, I received fifteen (15) responses. Of the fifteen responses, two institutions (CSU Los Angeles and UC Irvine) did not have any type of equivalent position to compare it to, so there is no data for their institutions. Two other institutions (UC Davis and UC Riverside, employed almost exclusively undergraduate students rather than targeting their senior-student leadership position towards graduate students, so their information, while noted, is not included in the final comparison data.

## **Results**

An analysis of the job descriptions indicates that while there are many different variations of job responsibilities for graduate assistants across various institutions, the basic structure of job responsibilities often came down to a few key opportunities: front desk management, programming, student advising, conduct, and student staff management or supervision. In terms of compensation and remuneration for graduate assistant work, results show that most institutions offer full coverage for housing, as the positions are required, live-in position. Most also offer some kind of meal plan. Three institutions (Cal Poly SLO, CSU Chico, and CSUN) have no live-on requirement, and thus the positions are only paid hourly. Another two institutions (USC and HNU) offer tuition credit instead of a wage or stipend. Of the institutions that offer a wage or stipend, the average wage per week (adjusted for Pomona cost-of-living) is \$235.00 .

## **Conclusion**

The results indicate that the RLI position at CPP is unique in some distinct ways. Of the institutions and departments interviewed, CPP is only one of three programs examined that accepts applicants from outside of their home institution. The job responsibilities and opportunities we currently offer our graduate students (community development, programming, management of a front desk operation, overseeing undergraduate student leaders, conduct, programming) is already in line with practices from most of the school offered. Despite this, our current compensation and stipend is less than half of the average of the school interviewed, which does support the anecdotal evidence provided by past candidates for the RLI position.

## **Implications for Practice**

The collected job descriptions and information from various institutions, both from other CSU schools as well as well-known institutions who work with student affairs graduate students in California and local universities near CPP, will be valuable in examining practices at other institutions as opportunities for further expansion of the RLI program here at CPP.

## **Closing the Loop**

- Summer 2019: Share job descriptions and data spreadsheet with University Housing Services Senior Coordinator overseeing Residence Life Intern selection and recruitment processes.
- Summer 2019: Evaluate budget for 2020-2021 to determine if modifications can be made to remuneration package for RLI position.
- Fall 2019: Evaluate 2019-2020 position description to revise job responsibilities with learning outcomes, based on learning opportunities for our program.
- Spring 2019: Incorporate learning outcomes into marketing for RLI position recruitment.

