



## **Graduate Student Appointment Manual 2025-2026**

This manual provides salary and tuition information needed to appoint graduate students for the academic year 2025-2026.

### Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
    - Graduate Student Assistants
    - Definitions
  - 2. Job Codes for Graduate Student Assistants**
  - 3. Graduate School Policies on Appointments**
    - Eligibility
    - Appointment Procedures
    - Appointment Periods
    - Exceptions
    - Conflict Resolution
    - Unprofessional Conduct and/or Subpar Employment Performance ..
    - Employee Termination
  - 4. TA & GPTI Appointments**
  - 5. RA/GA Appointments**
  - 6. Hourly Appointments**
  - 7. Tuition Remission Information**
  - 8. Fellowship Guidance**
  - 9. Student Retirement**
  - 10. Mandatory Reporting**
  - 11. Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Policy**
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## Graduate Student Assistants

Graduate Assistantships provide supervised opportunities for graduate students to gain experience in teaching or research while receiving wages. The university views graduate students serving in assistantships primarily as students. The goal of any assistantship is to aid the student in successfully completing their graduate degree.

Graduate students in these positions are paid on term-based contracts according to the salary ranges found on the [Graduate Assistant Salary Spreadsheets](#) or by approved alternative salary.

Within a department, and as far as possible throughout the University, graduate appointees holding the same type and level of service appointment should have equal workloads.

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### Job Codes for Graduate Student Assistants

- **1502 Graduate Assistant (GA):** Graduate students with assignments within the department but not directly involved in instruction.
- **1503 Graduate Part-Time Instructor (GPTI):** Graduate students with a master's degree or equivalent who have demonstrated competence in classroom teaching. GPTIs generally have full responsibility for an undergraduate class and are designated the instructor of record.
- **1505 Research Assistant (RA):** Graduate students assisting with and performing research, writing up results of experiments, presenting findings at conferences, etc.
- **1506 Teaching Assistant (TA):** Graduate students who supervise and lead quiz sections, discussion sections, recitations, or laboratory sections, serve as class assistants, or perform comparable activities under the guidance of a designated professor.

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### Graduate School Policies on Graduate Student Assistant Appointments

#### Eligibility

To be eligible for a graduate assistant appointment, students must be currently enrolled full-time as regular, degree-seeking graduate students on the CU-Boulder campus.

- Students enrolled in professional programs (e.g., JD, MBA) or Professional Master's Programs (PMP) are not eligible unless enrolled in a dual-degree program with a traditional graduate program.
- Concurrent (BA/MA) students are not eligible to hold a graduate student appointment until they are considered to be at graduate student status as defined by the Graduate School.
- Incoming graduate students may be employed during the summer prior to their first semester; however, eligibility is dependent on verified enrollment for the fall term immediately following.
- Students on appointment must fulfill the requirements of the position in a satisfactory manner and behave in a professional manner or risk termination.

- If the work involves export-controlled technology, employment may be contingent upon obtaining an export license from the Departments of State, Commerce or Treasury. The Office of Export Controls (303-492-2889) can assist in making this determination and applying for a license.

### **Appointment Procedures**

The Graduate School requires letters of appointment for all graduate students, regardless of the type of appointment (GA, TA, GPTI, RA). These letters must indicate the percentage of time, salary, period of appointment, maintenance of academic progress requirements, etc. Academic year letters must contain a clause that the second semester appointment is based on the student's adequate academic progress and performance.

When hiring a new graduate student, confirm that a social security number has been entered in Campus Solutions (CS) for the student. If the social security number is missing in CS, HR will not be able to confirm enrollment, and the student will be automatically enrolled in and charged for student retirement. To add a social security number, the student must call or make an appointment with an Enrollment Services Representative (ESR) in the Office of the Registrar.

International hires can complete Form I-9 but will need to return to HR to submit their Social Security Number in order to be processed through the E-Verify system. During this time, the international hire can continue working if a temporary SSN is entered into HCM. A status J1 or F1 international student must have appropriate authorization for any work and may not be employed for more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session, no exceptions.

Regarding the HCM start date vs. I-9/ E-Verify “start date”, the start date used for I-9/E-Verify will be the day that employees are physically here for work. Our interpretation of the rule is that the 3-day window begins when the employee is actually working on campus. For example, this year the HCM entry will be 08/15, but the employee may not actually arrive and begin working until the 1st day of classes. This 3-day window will begin each year on the 1st day of classes.

All graduate students must be paid at the campus standard rate set by the Graduate School each spring. Any deviation in this rate must be approved by the senior assistant dean of the Graduate School or designee prior to hire.

Auxiliary enterprises interested in hiring graduate students into one of these job classes are encouraged to do so through an academic department. In such cases the auxiliary enterprise will be responsible for providing the hiring department with salary, fringe benefits, and the resident portion of the student's tuition.

Students hired into security sensitive positions (this is very rare for graduate appointments) may require a background check before being employed.

Since students are not eligible/entitled to fringe benefits they cannot receive benefits in exchange for work such as retirement, vacation, snow days, unemployment and/or paid holidays.

Graduate Students Assistants are not eligible for paid vacation leave; however, they receive all university holidays as paid leave.

Qualifying graduate assistants may be eligible for [paid parental leave](#) and/or [FAMLI leave](#), as well as [sick leave](#) and/or [FAMLI leave](#).

Hourly appointments may only be used for graduate assistant positions if the weekly time commitment is less than 5 hours and/or they will be employed for less than one month. They will be paid the equivalent of the hourly rate of \$34.83 per hour. There is no tuition remission or university contribution to insurance.

### **Appointment Periods**

Appointments in HCM must be entered on a per term basis. These positions are paid on a contract basis and are paid out on the last day of each month of work. Appointment begin and end dates for contracts are as follows:

Fall Semester 8/15/YR-12/31/YR; Spring Semester 01/01/YR-5/15/YR

### **Exceptions**

An exception to some regulations governing graduate student appointments may be warranted in special cases.

- For a student to be appointed more than 50% in any capacity, the department must [petition the Graduate School](#) for an exception prior to the appointment begin date. This includes all types of appointments.
  - A student may be appointed for 100% during the summer without filing an exception.
  - International students may never be employed for more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session per visa regulations.
- Spring semester probation/suspension lists are available the last week of December and both the student and the department will receive notification of the probation/suspension.
  - Students on academic probation may lose their eligibility to hold a graduate-level appointment at the discretion of their supervisor and/or home department. Graduate School level permission is not required for the student to continue.
  - For a request involving an appointment when the student is on academic probation for more than one semester, departments may request exceptions by writing to the senior assistant dean of the Graduate School before the beginning of the appointment. Requests should come from department faculty or staff (not the student) and include the following information: department support for the exception; the proposed resolution of the problems causing the probation; departmental monitoring of academic improvement.
  - Students placed on suspension must have their appointments terminated immediately.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Whenever possible, graduate students and faculty in graduate programs should seek informal resolution of appointment conflicts. A list of campus resources that may be helpful in identifying and achieving resolutions can be found on the [Graduate School website](#).

If a student has concerns about appointment duties, time commitment, compensation, etc., these should first be addressed to the employment supervisor. If that is not feasible, or if the graduate student is unsatisfied with the outcome they should speak to the employing department's Director of Graduate Studies (also commonly referred to as the Associate Chair).

Graduate director's responsibilities include ensuring fair and equitable treatment of graduate students and adjudicating any inconsistencies between the employment contract (e.g., employment offer letter) and the actual scope of work. The graduate director will advocate on behalf of the student with the employment supervisor or other faculty if appropriate.

After working with the graduate director, if the student still feels that they have not obtained a successful resolution they may contact the Graduate School at [graduate.school@colorado.edu](mailto:graduate.school@colorado.edu) to discuss further options.

## **Responses to Unprofessional Conduct and/or Subpar Employment Performance**

General Principles Established Under the Faculty Professional Rights and Responsibilities:

- Responses to unprofessional conduct should be proportional to the conduct in question. These responses, whether informal or formal sanctions, may include a range of remedial actions such as voluntary apologies, educational programs (e.g., anger management classes or training on university policies), restorative practices (e.g., victim-offender mediation, conferences, circles), and use of existing university mediation services (e.g., Ombuds Office, Faculty Relations). Assistance with informal resolution is available through the Ombuds Office and Faculty Relations.
- Responses to findings of unprofessional conduct will generally be progressive, starting with informal attempts at resolution and potentially leading to formal sanctions. However, in cases of egregious conduct, severe sanctions may be warranted regardless of prior discipline.
- Responses to unprofessional conduct will depend on the specific facts and circumstances, including the nature of the conduct, whether it was purposeful or negligent, its frequency, the power dynamics between the parties, the Responding Graduate Student's admission and remorse, the harm caused, and other relevant factors.

Informal responses may include:

- A reminder to the graduate student of their professional responsibilities, either orally or in writing.
- An oral or written warning to the graduate student.

Formal Sanctions will be communicated to the responding graduate student in writing and will become part of their personnel file. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

- A written reprimand of the graduate student.
- Temporary or permanent reassignment of the graduate student's office or other working space, with appropriate consent from any affected academic unit.
- Temporary or permanent reassignment of the graduate student's courses or other duties.
- Termination of the graduate student's employment.

### **Employee Termination**

Students are considered "at-will" employees, meaning the hiring department can terminate their employment at any time due to performance issues, unsatisfactory academic performance, or disciplinary reasons.

We recommend that your department develop a clear termination policy and communicate it to employees upon hiring. When drafting this policy, consider the following:

- **Immediate Termination Grounds:** Specify actions that warrant immediate termination, such as breaches of confidentiality or theft.
- **Performance Issues:** Identify performance-related issues that allow for a correction period before termination.

Ensure that the termination process includes written communication to the student, clearly outlining the reasons for termination. Ideally, there should be a documented trail of written correspondence between the supervisor and the student, highlighting the subpar performance issues. This documentation should demonstrate a good faith effort by the supervisor to inform the student of their performance concerns. It should include specific examples of poor performance, the requirements for the student to remain in good standing, a timeline for correcting the behavior, and the potential consequences, up to and including termination.

Recommended steps to follow before making the decision to terminate a graduate student assistant. These steps are designed to ensure that student employees are afforded due process and promote transparency, fairness, and consistency in our graduate programs.

#### **1. Set Clear Expectations**

At the outset of the appointment, ensure the student understands their responsibilities, deadlines, and performance standards. Ideally you would include work expectations and consequences in a public-facing document that students have access to (e.g. department handbook)

#### **2. Monitor and Document Concerns**

If performance issues arise, keep a detailed record of specific incidents, including dates, descriptions, and any prior communications or warnings. This documentation is essential for accountability and clarity.

#### **3. Offer Constructive Feedback**

Before taking formal action, provide the student with feedback and a chance to improve. This might involve a one-on-one meeting, written notice of concerns, or a short-term improvement plan.

#### **4. Consult Stakeholders and Review Policies**

Before proceeding with termination, consult with the course instructor, department leadership, and the Graduate School to ensure all perspectives are considered. Additionally, review the student's

appointment letter and any relevant policies (such as the Graduate Appointment Manual) to confirm that the process aligns with institutional guidelines.

## 5. Provide Formal Notice

If termination becomes necessary, issue a written notice that clearly explains the reasons, the effective date, and any applicable appeal or grievance options.

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## TA & GPTI Appointments

In making teaching assignments, factors such as course difficulty, necessary class preparation time, as well as number of in-course hours, should be considered. The percentage of appointment **must be equated to the number of hours the graduate student is expected to work**. For example, a student who is appointed for 50% can be expected to work no more than 20 hours per week. These 20 hours must include all duties necessary for the completion of the student's teaching assignment, i.e., office hours, in-class time, grading, and preparation time.

The department should endeavor to provide teaching appointees with facilities needed for the satisfactory conduct of their duties, e.g., office space and access to appropriate technology.

The laws of the state of Colorado require that people employed to teach in any state university who are citizens of the United States affirm in writing that they will support the constitutions of the United States and of Colorado, and that they will faithfully execute the duties of their employment. [The state of Colorado oath](#) must be signed by all active GPTIs and kept in their home department.

Similar to the Ethical Principles established under the [Faculty Professional Rights and Responsibilities](#), graduate students serving as Teaching Assistants and/or Graduate Part Time Instructors are expected to:

- treat students with understanding, dignity, and respect; maintain professional classroom decorum; and create a climate that fosters inquiry, learning, and inclusivity in the class;
- be able to justify, in terms of curriculum and student learning, all materials introduced into the classroom;
- prepare adequately for classes;
- meet classes as scheduled, although the faculty member's dean or academic leaders may approve occasional exceptions to holding class;

Examples of unacceptable conduct include:

- presentation, as part of a course, of significant amounts of material unrelated to its curriculum;
- evaluation of student work, in a course or a professional reference, by criteria not directly reflective of the student's performance as measured by standards applied uniformly to all

students in the course (except as may be necessary to reasonably accommodate students with disabilities);

- failure to avoid an actual or perceived conflict of interest, or failure to disclose the conflict and to thereafter comply with any university-approved management plan designed to remove or mitigate the conflict;
  - failure to evaluate and report the faculty member's assessment of the work of students in a timely manner so that students are able to correct and learn;
  - failure to comply with university or college requirements regarding deadlines, scheduling of examinations, reporting grades, and evaluation of students;
  - discrimination, harassment, or related retaliation in violation of university policy;
  - sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, or stalking in violation of university policy;
  - workplace bullying pursuant to university policy; and intimidation of students or engaging in other conduct disrespecting the human dignity of students.
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## **RA/GA Appointments**

RA appointments should be set up on a per semester contract basis during the academic year. A department may require a student to work during semester breaks. However, the department should notify the student as part of the terms of appointment if it intends to do so.

Undergraduate Research Assistants are paid the equivalent of an hourly rate of \$26.12; there is no tuition remission, nor insurance contribution.

Similar to the Ethical Principles established under the [Faculty Professional Rights and Responsibilities](#), graduate students serving as Research Assistants are expected to:

- comply with professional and ethical standards that govern proposing, carrying out, and reporting results from research, acknowledging that research, scholarship and creative work may take many forms so long as it is presented in such a way that the work can be evaluated by peers in the faculty member's academic discipline;

Examples of unacceptable conduct include:

- research misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication of data;
- failure to comply with established standards in one's discipline regarding author names on publications and creative work;
- failure to comply with federal requirements and university requirements regarding the protection of researchers, human subjects, and the public, and for ensuring the welfare of laboratory animals;



- failure to review and comply with applicable federal regulations and university requirements regarding the confidentiality and security of restricted research and controlled unclassified information;
- other serious deviations from accepted practices in proposing, carrying out, reviewing, or reporting results from research.

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## Tuition Remission Information

All qualifying graduate appointments are eligible for tuition remission, which includes tuition coverage (dependent on the percentage of appointment), partial coverage of the insurance premium<sup>1</sup> for appointments over 20%, dental insurance, and full coverage of mandatory student fees.

- Students must be appointed a minimum of **15% time** and work for a minimum of **12 weeks** in a semester during the AY to be eligible for tuition remission.
  - If a student does not work the minimum 12 weeks the tuition remission will be removed, and the students will be responsible for the tuition, fees, and health insurance originally covered.
  - The 12 weeks start on the first day of classes in the fall and January 1 for spring.
- **Withdrawal from a course after the add/drop deadline will result in loss of tuition coverage for that course.** Please make sure students are informed of this rule!
- Courses taken through Continuing Education, Extended Studies or Outreach programs do not qualify for tuition remission. Courses taken for no credit are not eligible for tuition remission.
- A student must use the tuition remission in the semester in which they hold the position. For example, a student with a fall 50% TA appointment cannot carry over the tuition remission to the spring semester. Tuition remission must be applied directly against actual tuition charges on the student's bursar bill. In order to comply with federal requirements, it may not be paid out as a general scholarship or as an increase in salary.

## Entering Tuition Remission

All tuition remission entries will be handled centrally via an HRSC upload. If your department does not work with an HRSC and you have not been contacted about the new process email [tuitclass@colorado.edu](mailto:tuitclass@colorado.edu).

## Tuition Calculation

Tuition remission must be applied directly against actual tuition charges on the student's bursar bill. It is recommended that tuition remission be entered prior to the date when students can view their billing information for that term. Ensure that it is entered prior to the [bill due date](#).

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<sup>1</sup> The one exception is if insurance is added in the summer term when the student did not have coverage in the preceding spring. There is not contribution in these cases.

Hours Employed per Week	Tuition Coverage	Appointment Percentage
6	3 credit hours	15%
8	4 credit hours	20%
10	5 credit hours	25%
12	6 credit hours	30%
14	7 credit hours	35%
16	8 credit hours	40%
18-20	9-18 credit hours	45-50%

### Insurance Contribution

Graduate assistant appointments of 20% or greater receive a university contribution to insurance benefits if enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan. They also receive dental insurance at no cost.

- Entry of the tuition waiver in CS triggers the students' enrollment in dental insurance for qualifying appointments. There is typically a 3–4-day lag between waiver entry and enrollment.
- Students who select the Buff Value insurance plan will not receive an insurance benefit contribution.
- Students who are not enrolled for insurance in the spring and add it in the summer term will not be covered.
  - If the hiring department wants to pay the insurance cost, they will need to contact the student health center directly to arrange payment.
- Starting with AY25/26 dependent/spouse health insurance will be available for an additional cost. There is no subsidy of the dependent/spouse insurance premium. See the [student health insurance](#) site for more information.

Plan	Plan Cost per semester	Benefit Amount
AY 25/26 Gold	\$2,442	\$2,222.22

### Non-Resident Policy

Non-resident students are always charged non-resident tuition; however, employers are only responsible for the resident tuition portion.

- Domestic non-resident graduate students must obtain Colorado in-state tuition classification prior to the start of their second year of employment or will **lose coverage of the difference** between resident and non-resident tuition starting with the following semester. This differential will then become the responsibility of the student to pay.
  - As an example, a student who first starts working on a graduate appointment fall 2024 should have resident status for fall 2025. If they do not have residency by this time, they will be given a one-semester “grace” period. Failure to achieve residency by spring 2026 will result in the student being ineligible to receive tuition remission.

- International students are exempt from the residency requirement and the differential will be covered as long as they are on a qualifying appointment.
- WRGP students are not required to obtain residency but must ensure that they are being billed at the in-state rate.

### **Retroactive Tuition Remission**

Departments must submit the change of records form to the Graduate School for retroactive tuition remission in cases where a student retroactively adds credit hours to a past term. Email [tuitclass@colorado.edu](mailto:tuitclass@colorado.edu) to request coverage of these charges.

### **Tuition Remission Exception**

If a student is being paid from a sponsored project at a percentage less than 15%, a [Tuition Remission Exception form](#) may be used to charge tuition in proportion to the actual effort on the sponsored project. A tuition waiver should not be entered in Campus Solutions. The total hours worked during the semester will determine the maximum tuition benefit amount allowable on the project. Further information on the process may be found on the form itself.

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## **Fellowship Guidance**

Fellowship job codes receive payroll stipends, which are not subject to withholdings. There is no expectation of services to the University in exchange for the payment.

- **3204 Pre Doc-Trainee** This title is used to designate graduate students enrolled in a pre-doctoral program and participating on a training grant. Training grants are awarded to the institution or PI and not to the student directly. It is up to the PI of the award to determine which students are awarded these trainee positions. The appointment is not eligible for employment benefits but may be eligible for dental insurance (e.g. T32 training grants).
- **3205 Student Stipend** This title is used to designate trainees, who are not graduate students but enrolled in high school or undergraduate programs, on training grants. No service is expected. Payment allows for the person to continue their education. These are traineeships which are awarded to the institution or PI and not to the student directly. It is up to the PI of the award to determine which students are awarded these trainee positions.
- **3207 Participant Stipend** This title is used for support payments made to individuals who participate in specific training activities such as participant costs at conferences, symposia, workshops, or other specific training activities.
- **3208 External Fellowship (NEW)** This title is used for enrolled graduate-level students who are recipients of external fellowships that include a monthly stipend. The fellowship is awarded directly to the graduate student based on the student's intellectual merit and potential and there is no expectation of service to the university. The fellowship may be transferable (e.g., NSF GRFP) or restricted to the university (e.g., F31).
- **3209 Internal Fellowship (NEW)** This title is used for enrolled graduate-level students who are recipients of university fellowships that include a monthly stipend. The fellowship is

awarded directly to the graduate student based on the student's intellectual merit and potential and there is no service expectation to the university.

**Examples Where Fellowship Job Codes Should Be Used:** The following are situations that would require the use of a fellowship job code in order to pay a stipend.

- **Trainees paid on Federal Training Grants and Fellowships** – Federal agencies award training grants and fellowships that require the payment of a stipend for the trainees participating in the training program.
- **Federally sponsored Pre-doctoral Fellowships** - Awarded under a national competition on the basis of a student's intellectual merit and the potential that the student and her/his proposed research may have for creating positive societal impacts. Pre-doctoral fellowships are typically portable, meaning the recipient may choose the educational institution and graduate program for which the fellowship will be utilized. Pre-doctoral fellowships typically provide multiple years of funding at nationally competitive rates to fully support the educational and living expenses of recipients in the early stages of their graduate programs. Most include a cost of education (COE) allowance in addition to the fellowship stipend. If the COE does not cover the full cost of tuition, fees, and insurance, the Graduate School may provide funding (with the expectation of a departmental match) to help cover any remaining costs. You may request these funds using the [Requests for Matching Fellowship Funds form](#).
- **Recipient of Training Fellowship from Private Organizations** – It is not uncommon for the University to be the sponsoring institution for an individual receiving a Fellowship from a private organization (e.g. American Heart Association) with the purpose of providing Post-Docs or Pre-Docs an opportunity to expand their research knowledge and training. The fellowship is given as a training award. The individual who received the fellowship is responsible for carrying out the research protocol with guidance from a university mentor. The mentor acts as a resource to the individual, but the individual retains the right to decide how, where, and when to perform the activity.
- **Participant in a Department-Paid Training Program** – An example is first year graduate students rotating through laboratories to receive training, but not performing any services for the University.
- **Institutional graduate fellowships** – May be offered by academic programs or the Graduate School for the purpose of recruiting or retaining graduate students and recognizing outstanding academic achievement. Institutional graduate fellowships are typically sponsored through donations made to the University of Colorado Foundation or through other authorized funds designated by the University.

**When Fellowship Job Codes Should NOT Be Used**-Due to the fact that the fellowship job codes pay stipends (not salaries), these job codes should not be used for someone who is performing a service for the University and being supervised by a university employee (supervisor). A supervisor has the right to instruct the individual how, where, and when to perform the activity and provides a performance evaluation, at a minimum annually, to the employee. This supervisory relationship is not negated when you provide the employee the freedom of action. The key factor is the University's right to control the details of the activity performed.

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## **Student Retirement**

Employee Services runs an interface that updates student retirement status in HRMS daily based on current course load. ES will not process student retirement refunds for prior semesters without documentation showing that student enrollment data was not correctly reflected. Further information on student retirement may be found on the [employee services](#) site. If you have any questions regarding Student Retirement refunds or processes, please contact the ES payroll support line at (303) 860-4200.

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## **Mandatory Reporting**

Graduate teaching assistants and graduate students who oversee a lab or other people's work are considered "responsible employees" and required to report any incident of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct involving any member of the CU community to the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance \(OIEC\)](#).

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## **Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Policy**

The University of Colorado Boulder does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. The University takes affirmative action to increase ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity; to employ qualified disabled individuals; and to provide equal opportunity to all students and employees.

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