June 29, 2020

To: Graduate Secretaries

From: Val Meyers, Associate Director, Regulatory Compliance

Office of Financial Aid

Melissa Del Rio, Chief of Staff

Graduate School

RE: Fellowship and Assistantship Awarding

The 2020-2021 academic year is steadily approaching and financial aid funds will be disbursed soon. The Graduate School and The Office of Financial Aid are working in partnership to reduce the number of payment discrepancies made to students. What has happened in the past is that awards initiated after the financial aid had already been awarded for the semester caused the students to be over-awarded with a combination of fellowships and federal financial aid. Students were then notified that they were required to re-pay federal funds that had already been released to them.

We are asking for your assistance in the following ways to prevent overpayment:

* Please process all fellowships by:

Fall 2020 - August 1

Spring 2021 - November 1

Summer 2021 – April 1 – enrollment required

* Please process all Graduate Assistantships by:

Fall 2020 - July 1

Spring 2021 - October 1

Summer 2021 - March 1 – enrollment required

If you have questions about the effect of an award on a student’s financial aid offer, you may contact the Office of Financial Aid as described below.

When awarding travel fellowships, or fellowships for non-standard costs, please have the student provide a copy of the meeting registration form, airline ticket price, hotel costs, etc. to you. We ask that you compose a letter to the Office of Financial Aid indicating that the funds are for these particular costs and request that a budget increase be processed for them. This allows OFA to accommodate the fellowship without affecting other aid for the student.

If you have questions about the structure or contents of this letter, you may phone or email the Office of Financial Aid. Please identify yourself as an MSU department staff member to ensure your call is routed correctly.

The student should do this as soon as possible once the decision has been made to award the funds.

Please note that the final decision on handling funds are made on a case-by-case basis by the Office of Financial Aid following guidelines provided by the federal government.

We understand that unforeseen circumstances do occur such as students arriving late etc. In these instances, we are asking that if you award fellowships and/or GAs after the deadline, please instruct any student receiving federal aid to contact the Office of Financial Aid at 517-353-5940, or email finaid@msu.edu to see how the award may affect their existing aid. Office hours are 9 am to 4:45 pm weekdays.

Lastly, in your award letters could you insert the text or a version of the text below to ensure students are knowledgeable of the effects of the award.

*PLEASE NOTE: If you have Federal Direct or Grad PLUS loans or other need-based loans/aid, the amount of your fellowship award may cause a reduction of your loan(s) or other financial aid. Please seek advice from an Office of Financial Aid advisor before you turn down a fellowship.*