

October 15, 2015

To the Graduate Council:

The Mathematics Department has previously hired graduate students outside the department for hourly jobs including staffing the Math Help Room, covering office hours, grading homework and quizzes for classes such as Math 104, 105, and 181, and the occasional exam grading for those classes. This semester the need for exam grading increased greatly. Since on previous occasions the department has received approval to hire outside graduate students to do these jobs, it came as a surprise when the Graduate College recently denied our request to hire hourly exam graders.

The reason given was that grading duties can only be performed by those hired on teaching assistantships, and not by hourly workers. The Graduate College is cautious about allowing the hiring of graduate students on an hourly basis to perform duties traditionally done by those on assistantships, because of the potential for abuse. For example, a department might decide to recruit more graduate students than it has guaranteed assistantships, expecting the remaining students to get funding from hourly jobs that may or may not materialize. Although the Mathematics Department does not engage in abuse of hourly positions, the quantity of hourly workers it sought to hire may have triggered the Graduate College's suspicion.

However, we would like to note that the above concerns are handled in the Graduate College Handbook, which states,

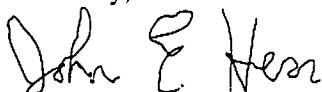
"U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are on graduate assistantships may also work on an hourly basis provided that the additional work is approved by the unit awarding the assistantship. Total hours (assistantship and hourly work) cannot exceed 30 hours per week. Non-immigrant international students must abide by the terms of their visa status and immigration guidelines according to total hours worked." (Graduate College Handbook, September 2015, page 17)

We feel that as long as our proposed hiring adheres to these simple and explicit rules, there is no basis for them to be denied by the Graduate College. There is no stipulation in the Handbook that qualified hourly workers cannot be hired to grade. Moreover, the Mathematics Department lacks the funds to make hiring additional teaching assistants reasonable.

Mathematics graduate students have experienced several workload paradigm shifts this semester, including an increase in teaching duties. It would ease our minds to have as little additional commotion as possible. Without outside help, overload grading will converge on us at a time we are already busy studying for our own classes and qualifying examinations.

We therefore formally request that the Graduate College reverse its recent decision to restrict our use of hourly hires, or at least grant us an exemption for this semester. If the Graduate College wishes to add additional restrictions to its hourly hire policy beyond what are stated in the Handbook, then we request that it amend the Handbook and wait until next semester before enforcing them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John E. Herr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Herr

GPSS Senator Representing Mathematics Department Graduate Students