LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

FEE WAIVERS FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

Graduate assistants provide meaningful teaching and research functions at most of our state universities. UFF supports legislation that provides graduate assistants with fee waivers or exemptions from financial aid fees, technology fees, capital Improvement fees, and other fees tantamount to fees for the right of employment. Consider the following.

- Florida does a disservice to itself by permitting its universities to impose an unreasonable burden of fees on graduate assistants. In essence, they must pay to work!
- These employees, whose teaching is significantly responsible for the high quality of education Florida's undergraduate students receive, and whose research has brought millions of dollars to their employing universities, are trapped in a system that keeps them in poverty.
- Fee waivers will assist thousands of graduate assistants with added financial support to supplement their stipends for teaching and/or research.
- Approximately 14,000 graduate assistants teach or support research at eleven of our universities.
- University faculty have stated that some prime candidates for graduate assistants go to other states due to the low support from the state for these valuable services.
- Many graduate assistants earn below poverty wages even before fees are factored in. They can then find themselves denied up to one-fourth of their income because they are forced to pay fees back to the university.

- The estimated cost of the bill is approximately $25 million. This is just over one-half of 1 percent of the total Universities E & G appropriations. For the current year E&G is funded at $4.368 Billion.

The Higher Education Affiliate of Florida Education Association, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and AFL-CIO