

Financial Aid Information for Graduate Nursing Students

There are many resources of financial assistance available to graduate nursing students seeking ways to pay for graduate studies. For many students, the majority of aid comes directly from the university in the form of scholarships, loans and/or student employment opportunities, however, other students pursue external funding options as well from employers, professional nursing organizations, local civic foundations, and both the state and federal government.

Note: this document is intended to provide a basic guide to financial support and should not be viewed as an exclusive list of opportunities.

The information below pertains to students who will matriculate in 2021 and is subject to change.

Cost of Attendance:

To begin a search for financial assistance, students first need to determine the annual cost of attendance specific to their educational program (COA). For graduate nursing students the COA varies between PhD and MSN or DNP students due to the addition of school-based tuition to MSN/DNP programs of study. Assessing the COA should combine program-based costs, to include University tuition and fee rates, additional school tuition (if any) and nursing course fees, plus estimated cost of living expenses posted on the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid (OSSA) website.

Tuition/University fees: review posted tuition/fee tables at Cashier's Office website for University rates specific to the PhD, DNP and MSN programs; see Academic Year 2020-2021, page 7:
<https://cashier.unc.edu/tuition-fees/>

School-based tuition: included in the posted tuition rates of the University rate tables above

Nursing course fees: all nursing courses containing laboratory, clinical or research-intensive clinical requirements are assessed a special fee to cover the overhead for the resources needed to provide the additional course elements; see Academic Year 2020-2021, page 11 for identified courses assessed the special fee and fee amounts: <https://cashier.unc.edu/tuition-fees/>

Cost of living expenses: carefully review information delineated for graduate students at this site:
<https://studentaid.unc.edu/graduate/costs/>

University Based Financial Assistance

There are two primary types of aid available to graduate nursing students who are enrolled at least half time in a degree seeking program:

Scholarships: awardees are selected based on meritorious achievement and/or financial need from a variety of funds. The Office Scholarships and Student Aid administers scholarship programs such as: James M. Johnston Graduate Nursing Scholarship (merit based), the Whitehead Foundation (merit and need-based) and state/federal grants.

Loans: the Office of Scholarship and Student Aid provides loan support to eligible students to include federal (subsidized, unsubsidized and Graduate Plus) and private loan opportunities. Review additional loan and repayment information here: <https://studentaid.unc.edu/graduate/what-aid-is-available/loans/>

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): University support is calculated using cost of attendance data and income assessment data derived from the FAFSA. Students are to complete the FAFSA annually by the priority deadline of March 1st. The FAFSA must be completed annually to be considered for federal aid through the University. Site: www.fafsa.ed.gov; UNC federal school code # 002974
Additional information: <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

Graduate Funding Information Center (sponsored by The Graduate School):
<https://gradfunding.web.unc.edu/>

University Tuition Waiver Program: The State University System provides an opportunity for an eligible employee to have the tuition waived for a course taken at a constituent institution in the UNC System. This waiver authority also applies to state employees of the UNC Health System. A limited number of graduate nursing students admitted each cycle may use the tuition waiver program. Eligibility to use the tuition waiver program is determined at the time of admission. Selection is merit-based and applicable only to program pathways for which the tuition rate includes the University rate in combination with the School-based supplement; both may change annually. Students enrolling in the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Post-Graduate Certificate program are not eligible for tuition waiver consideration: <https://hr.unc.edu/benefits/educational-assistance/tuition-waivers/>

School of Nursing (SON) Financial Assistance:

Graduate nursing students are considered for SON support through the following:

Merit-based scholarships: awardees are selected based on the strength of application portfolio and articulated in recruitment packages for incoming students (PhD and top tier MSN, DNP students) and on academic performance and strength of clinical acumen for continuing clinical students (MSN, DNP). No special application is required.

SON-Related Funding:

- a. **Non-merit-based Scholarships** are announced via email each semester; typically, special applications are required; example: SON Alumni Association Scholarships.
- b. **Training Grant Assistantships/Fellowships:**
 - Clinical specialty-based training assistantships are often available due to HRSA grant support for MSN and DNP students; example: Advanced Nursing Education Workforce grant (currently supporting APRN students in behavioral health); opportunities vary based on federal funding availability
 - Research traineeships funded by the NINR Institutional Research T32 Predoctoral Grant program are available for PhD students who are US citizens/permanent residents in the area of interventions to prevent/manager chronic illness
- c. **Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP):** this federal program was designed to increase the number of nursing students who pursue careers as full-time faculty teaching in schools of nursing post-graduation. Full-time or part-time graduate students who plan careers as nurse faculty are eligible to apply and may be eligible for up to 5 years of financial support (contingent upon ongoing federal funding and therefore subject to change). SON contact: Dr. Margaret Wilmoth, Executive Vice Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Graduate student employment: opportunities to work for the SON as a Teaching Fellow, Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant are often available:

- a. **Teaching Fellows** are experienced nurses hired to provide clinical supervision for an undergraduate group or co-teach an undergraduate course; requires considerable responsibility and equates to an average of 12-13 instructional hours/week
- b. **Teaching Assistants** are typically hired to provide support to faculty and students in a specific course for 5 hours/week; example responsibilities include managing discussion forums, proctoring exams, assisting with office hours/Q&A session, among others
- c. **Research Assistants** are hired to provide support a variety of roles and responsibilities within research projects, as defined by the principle investigator of the project; roles can vary widely in worked hours per week (2-20).
- d. Students may serve in multiple roles in the same semester, however, at no time may a student exceed 20 hours/week of University employment in accordance with the SON Student

- Employment Policy and Graduate School restrictions.
- e. Reasonably competitive hourly rates and student benefits are overseen by the Graduate School; additional information here: <https://gradschool.unc.edu/funding/stipends/>

External Funding Opportunities: Students are encouraged to explore myriad opportunities outside of UNC or SON for financial assistance. Areas to pursue include local communities, employers, fraternal, civic and professional organizations, military services and governmentally supported options.

NC General Assembly: Forgivable Education Loans for Service (FELS): this opportunity was established by the NC General Assembly in 2011 to provide financial assistance to qualified students who are NC residents committed to working in NC post-graduation supporting critical shortage professions; see <http://www.cfnc.org/fels>.

Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA)/Health Workforce Programs:

- a. **Nurse Corps Scholarship Program:** federal support to selected eligible students providing a monthly stipend, tuition, fees and educational assistance; <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/loans-scholarships/nurse-corps/scholarship>
- b. **Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program:** federal loan repayment support for selected qualifying registered nurses in exchange for working in a facility designated as having a “critical shortage”; <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/loans-scholarships/nurse-corps/loan-repayment-program>
- c. **National Health Service Corps:** federal support via scholarship and loan repayment options for primary care nurse practitioner students willing to service in Health Professional Shortage Areas post-graduation in adult, family, geriatrics, pediatrics, psychiatric-mental health or women’s health specialties; <https://nhsc.hrsa.gov>

Employers: all graduate students should contact the Human Resources Department of their employer to explore availability of financial assistance for graduate study.

External Scholarships: the SON has created a compendium of funding opportunities from professional, corporate, local/civic/fraternal, and/or military-based organizations; eligibility requirements, amount/type of support and deadline vary; <https://nursing.unc.edu/academic-programs/scholarships-financial-aid/financial-aid-resources/>

Other resources:

- College Foundation of North Carolina: www.cfnc.org
Finaid: www.finaid.org
Johnson & Johnson’s Campaign for Nursing: <http://www.discovernursing.com>
The Student Guide: <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>