

## **Quick Guide to Working with SPS Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs)**

SPS currently employs GRAs in both Criminal Justice (Master's students) and Public Policy and Administration (both Master's and PhD students). The guidelines below provide some information for those who hire and/or advise GRAs. GRAs will also meet with an SPS administrative specialist after they've been hired to address questions related to filling out timesheets, tuition remission, vacation hours, etc. GRA appointments may be semester-long or year-long appointments, with the possibility of renewal pending acceptable performance reviews.

### **GRA Assignments**

Students desiring graduate assistantships will apply for positions in their home programs, and will include a statement of intent that addresses why they would like the position and how it will assist in their scholarly and career goals. Applications should include 2-3 letters of recommendation. Program Leads, in consultation with program faculty, will review applications and make placements. Placement decisions consider appropriate matches between faculty and students, faculty need and placement rotations, and on faculty ability or potential to effectively mentor and advise GRAs.

### **Planning and Mentoring**

At the beginning of a GRA assignment, the mentor/advisor should meet with the GRA and put together a clear plan for the semester or year in writing. This plan should be appropriate for the length of assignment, and should include the tasks or objectives for the time period, along with a plan for periodic check-ins and updates with the advisor. If the GRA is not meeting expectations, the GRA advisor must notify the Program Lead. Then the advisor and Program Lead will work together to put together a work improvement plan, including a timeline. If the improvement plan is not satisfied, the Program Lead may choose to terminate the GRA assignment at the end of the semester. Program Leads are responsible for reviewing GRA performance and the assistant-advisor relationship once a year, generally in the Spring semester, by talking with the GRA advisor and GRA.

### **Appropriate tasks**

Generally speaking, Graduate Research Assistants should have an opportunity to develop skills that will assist them in preparing for their academic fields of study and/or desired career paths. Appropriate tasks and skills building may involve working on research projects, performing editorial duties, managing projects, or working with community or other partners.

In some instances, it may make sense for a GRA to perform administrative or programmatic tasks, though advisors should have a clear rationale for assigning these to a GRA, and should make every effort to connect these opportunities to the GRA's professional development. It is never appropriate for GRAs to perform personal tasks for faculty mentors or advisors. GRAs also cannot perform teaching tasks, such as grading or leading classes on regular basis. GRAs are employees and professionals-in-training and should be treated as such.