REVISION OF THE GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Why we need to change the current system of fellowship awards.

1. The present system of competitions for block grants and individual open-nomination fellowships is too labor intensive both for Graduate Directors and for the Fellowship Committee. Graduate Directors spend too much time writing applications of various sorts to the Fellowship Committee. They should be spending their time competing with Graduate Directors at our peer institutions rather than competing against their fellow Graduate Directors here.

2. The open-nomination process is too slow and too cumbersome. The process cannot be initiated until after an application to a graduate program is approved for admission. Then the Graduate Director must complete a fellowship application and write a testimonial. Finally, the application must be submitted to the Fellowship Office, distributed to the committee, ratings made and tallied, and the results reported back to the Graduate Director. In spite of our best efforts, and the heroic efforts of the committee to provide 24-hour turn around, as a result of this complex procedural chain, many of our Graduate Directors are unable to make fellowship offers until the last two or three weeks of the recruiting process. These late offers put us at a competitive disadvantage.

The Proposal.

1. Our proposal is to change the system of allocation of fellowship funds by allowing each college Dean to determine the amount of funding awarded to each unit within his/her college. The underlying principle behind this approach is the view that the Deans know better what the needs of their units are than does the Fellowship Committee on the basis of applications submitted by the Graduate Directors.

2. Those programs that were funded by their Dean would have a block grant that would enable them to run their own fellowship recruitment programs, within guidelines established by the Fellowship Office. Programs could begin recruiting potential fellows much earlier. They also would be better able to combine different sources of funding to produce early, attractive fellowship offers. Under this new program, the open-nomination system of individual students being nominated to the Fellowship Committee by their Graduate Directors would cease to exist, except for a handful of special fellowships and awards, such as the dissertation fellowships, Spencer Fellowship, Graduate Dean’s Scholarships, Pelczar Award, SREB, GEM, etc.

3. Graduate Directors could use their fellowship funds for recruitment fellowships, retention fellowships, or dissertation fellowships, as their needs might dictate.
4. **NEW.** Doctoral fellowships would no longer have to be for two years. They could be for one year, two years, three years, or whatever package of support the program can afford. They also could be used to provide 12-month fellowships.

5. **NEW.** The requirement to match each year of fellowship support with a year of assistantship support would be removed.

6. Fellowship funds also could be used to augment assistantships, but only up to a maximum of 35% of the total award to any individual graduate program. This percentage would be evaluated after several years of experience with the revised program when we can determine whether students who get assistantships augmented by fellowships are of the same quality as students who get fellowships or fellowships augmented with partial assistantships.

7. **NEW.** Initially, each college Dean would receive an award that would consist of the total amount of fellowship support from indefinite-term block grants, two-year block grants, and open-nomination fellowships that were awarded through the Fellowship Committee to the college’s programs for the current year.

8. The Deans should not initiate intra-college fellowship competitions between their units because this would defeat one of the major purposes of changing the system.

9. A special arrangement would be required for intercollege programs, such as CONS, NACS, etc, which are responsible to several Deans. For each intercollege program, the funds would be given to whichever participating Dean was serving as the “lead” dean for that program.

10. **NEW.** Current doctoral fellows who received their first year of fellowship funding in Fall 2003 or prior and who have not yet taken their second year of support would continue to be funded individually by the Fellowship Office as under the current system. These funds would be released to the graduate programs when they notify the Fellowship Office that this individual student is ready for his/her second year of support.

**Evaluation.**

1. Every second year, each college would be evaluated by a committee to determine the size of their award for the next two years. Evaluations would be made on the basis of progress or improvement on four factors: recruitment (GPAs, GRE, quality of previous institutions), retention and completion (attrition, time to degree), placement (quality of job placement), and diversity.

The first three factors would be evaluated quantitatively using a rating system. Each of these three factors would be given approximately equal weight by the evaluators.
Diversity would be evaluated only by ratings of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

2. Reviews would be done only on a college-by-college basis. Individual units within a college would not be reviewed separately by the Research and Graduate Studies.

3. Any graduate student who receives any amount of fellowship funding would be included in the evaluation pool of students. Within this pool, no distinction would be made between partial fellows and full fellows.

4. Each college’s fellowship budget for the next two academic years would be determined on a basis of the evaluation.