

February 4, 2003

## GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES

### Yearly report

Dear colleagues:

This is my second report to the faculty. The first report (dated February 11, 2002) can be found on the web at [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/GSAS\\_Faculty\\_Report20020211.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/GSAS_Faculty_Report20020211.pdf) or by first going to <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/do/main/pages/pub/index.html> and navigating from there. This report is also linked to that page.

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#### 1. Statistics for the Past Year

In fall 2002, we enrolled 288 new Ph.D. students in the 27 departments (93 in the Humanities departments, 84 in the Social Sciences and 111 in the Natural Sciences), of which 30 (11 in the Humanities and 19 in the Social Sciences) were unfunded either by GSAS or major external fellowships. Overall this put us slightly below our targets for total number of students and for unfunded students. By contrast, the previous year we enrolled 316 new students, a significant overyield that produced stress on the budget. Because of this year's relatively small entering class, we were able, for the first time in recent years, to house all entering Ph.D. who requested it. Among the entering students are 12 underrepresented minority students.<sup>1</sup> All received fellowships, and benefited from the GSAS minority incentive plan.<sup>2</sup>

We also enrolled 396 new terminal M.A. students, an increase of 33% over the previous year. We were able to house a small number of entering international M.A. students, but housing for M.A. students remains a difficult problem.

Graduation numbers for the Ph.D. in calendar year 2002, compared to those of the two previous years, are contained in [Appendix A](#).

#### 2. Admissions for Fall 2003

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<sup>1</sup> The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences follows the recommendation of the Council of Graduate Schools regarding historically underrepresented groups: underrepresented minorities are defined as African American, Native American, Mexican American and Puerto Rican.

<sup>2</sup> According to which the students receive summer support during the four summers they are on fellowship.

The data concerning applications to the departments as of January 31, 2003, and comparing it to the data gathered at the same time a year ago, are given in [Appendix B](#). For all practical purposes these are the applications to the Ph.D. programs.<sup>3</sup> There was again a sharp increase (over 11%) in the number of applications.

The minimum 9-month fellowship stipend for 2003-2004 will be raised to \$17,044, an increase of 6.23% over last year's stipend. This large increase is necessary in order for us to remain competitive with peer universities.

Last year GSAS was conservative in predicting the yield for the entering class, and this turned out to be the correct strategy, since we produced a class of the appropriate size. We will continue this strategy this year since the conditions are similar: our stipend increase is again large, the economic downturn continues, and, as noted, our applications have increased significantly.

As was already the case last year, we are not asking Humanities and Social Science departments to bring in a minimum number of unfunded Ph.D. students to support the finances of GSAS. It is as important that the departments not overyield on the unfunded students as on the funded students, since these unfunded students will receive full funding in years 2-5. Departments will not be penalized if they do not make their unfunded target. Indeed, the principal criterion for admitting unfunded students is that they be as qualified as the admitted funded students.

### 3. Graduate Student Fellowship Support – The Enhancement Plan 2003-2004

First, a brief reminder of the current form of the Graduate School Enhancement Plan.<sup>4</sup> Entering funded students are offered a multi-year package of full tuition, stipend and fees for five years. In the Humanities and Social Sciences, the plan assumes one year as a fellow engaged exclusively in course work, three years as a teaching fellow and one year as a dissertation fellow (this applies to students admitted in fall 2001 or later). All students who are unfunded in the first year are picked up for funding at the end of their first year, if they meet academic standards. If they do not, they should be told that they are not allowed to continue in the Ph.D. program. After the first year, unfunded students become indistinguishable from the funded students. 90% of all students will receive two summer fellowships during their fellowship years (no firm date has been set for the full implementation of this part of the plan).

The original goal of the ten-year enhancement plan was to reach 90% full funding in the Humanities and Social Sciences by 2005-06. In 2001-02 we were already quite close to this goal, since we were at 83%. It is unlikely that we will be able to progress beyond this this year, as all our resources are committed to the increase in stipend. In fact, further progress towards full funding is contingent on new fundraising for graduate fellowships. As UDAR reorganizes under the leadership of Susan Feagin, it is essential for all of us to focus on raising endowments for fellowships.

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<sup>3</sup> In departments with a departmental terminal M.A. program, there may be a small number of early M.A. applications. We may also be missing a small number of late arriving Ph.D. applications.

<sup>4</sup> For more details see [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/GSAS\\_Faculty\\_Report20020211.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/GSAS_Faculty_Report20020211.pdf), section 1.

It is misleading to refer to the students who receive fellowship support after the first year as “unfunded”, since they are now guaranteed four years of funding after the first year. From my discussions with the entering “unfunded” students this year, they certainly consider themselves to be funded students. Our ability to offer them housing this year has made a big difference. I propose that we choose a different name for this category of students (perhaps “deferred funded” – I await better suggestions) but I will continue to refer to them as unfunded in this document. The difference in support in the first year between funded and unfunded students is nearly \$50,000, taking into account stipend, tuition and health benefits. For that reason, in all but a few departments, it is no longer possible to get strong students to come without funding, even if they are promised funding in the second year, since they often choose to go to other, less prestigious schools where they are funded in the first year. Pursuing an enhancement plan where one of the options is no longer viable is not a reasonable course of action. I see three alternate approaches to this problem:

A) We convert unfunded slots to funded slots according to the actual cost to GSAS: an unfunded student costs about 60% of a funded student. So for example under this plan a department with 5 unfunded students could choose to replace them with 3 funded students. The costs are not borne in the same years so this conversion has to be used with some caution, but otherwise it does not increase the overall cost to GSAS. This approach is not helpful for the departments that are already experiencing a shortage of teaching fellows.

B) We give tuition fellowships to each of our unfunded first-year students, without attempting to increase the percentage of fully funded students beyond roughly 80%. To do this across the board would cost us an extra \$600,000 a year.

C) We move to 100% full funding with the same class size. This would cost us about \$1.5 million a year to implement across the board.

Since C is only possible through unprecedented success in fundraising, I favor a judicious combination of approaches A and B, depending on the department. I hope this can be discussed at the February 12<sup>th</sup> faculty meeting.

#### 4. New Programs at GSAS

We have established a number of new GSAS programs:

A) Consultations with Ph.D. students in the departments on a two-year cycle were started in the fall of 2001. This semester we will be finishing the first cycle of reviews of the 27 departments. The reviews take the following form. We first meet with the departmental leaders (usually the chair and DGS) to get their sense of the issues in the department and to see the physical space and services available to the graduate students. Then we meet with all the students, without faculty or staff from the department. These meetings serve several purposes. The students get to meet the staff of GSAS – people they often only know via email. It allows them to voice their opinion concerning the department, and allows us to correct their misconceptions concerning departmental or GSAS policies. Finally it allows them to make suggestions to improve GSAS and university-wide policies.

B) During the academic year 2001-2002, we instituted a series of evening receptions for Ph.D. students. In the fall of 2001, second-year students (including many third and fourth year students from small departments) were invited in the course of six evenings; in the fall of 2002 all first-year students were invited. This spring we plan to invite the second-year

students, so that by the end of this year all first, second and third-year students will have received an invitation. This fall, the first-year receptions were quite successful: about half the students actually attended. I want to thank the faculty who attended: their presence greatly enhanced the receptions. Up to now I have usually invited the chair and the DGS: if you are interested in attending one of the receptions, please contact my assistant Carmen Aragon Vilardi ([ca2117@columbia.edu](mailto:ca2117@columbia.edu)).

C) We have established a Fall GSAS-wide Orientation and a Winter Teaching Conference. On January 24, 2003, GSAS held its first annual Winter Teaching Conference, organized by Margaret Edsall and Heidi Holst-Knudsen. A schedule is attached as [Appendix C](#). Note the participation of the Teachers College faculty. The conference was well attended, and the feedback received from the attendees was very positive. Starting this fall we will also be holding a yearly Teaching Orientation for new TAs to supplement what is being done in the departments. This is part of a much larger plan to improve the teacher training of graduate students throughout the University, which we hope to implement soon. If you are interested in participating in either of these events, or would like to coordinate the teaching activities of your department with those of GSAS, please contact Assistant Dean Margaret Edsall ([me2@columbia.edu](mailto:me2@columbia.edu)), who has done much over the years to bring the GSAS teacher-training program to where it should be.

D) Tuition recovery from non-NIH government grants. Tuition recovery from government grants for graduate research assistants (GRA) in the Natural Sciences at Columbia is among the highest in the country – with the exception of grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH) where the total cost of a student is capped. This puts a high and inequitable financial burden on Natural Science departments supporting their graduate students on non-NIH government grants. In 2002-03 GSAS started a program by which 10% of the tuition costs of Arts & Sciences students charged to these non-NIH government grants are returned to the department. We plan to increase the percentage gradually in subsequent years.

E) A formal GSAS Orientation for new students was introduced in fall 2002, with two sessions (one for the MA students and one for the Ph.D. students) in St. Paul's chapel, followed by the usual information tables we have set up in previous years. Starting next fall we plan to distribute more extensive orientation materials. Suggestions for the orientation should be directed to the new Assistant Dean of Students at GSAS, John Axcelson ([jwa2@columbia.edu](mailto:jwa2@columbia.edu)).

## 5. Teaching Needs and the Size of the Graduate School

The most pressing problem at GSAS is our increasing inability to staff our graduate student teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences and, in some cases, in the Natural Sciences. Every semester the struggle to find teaching assistants for our classes becomes more acute. Until the Arts & Sciences and the Graduate School can present a funded plan that demonstrates to the faculty how this problem will be solved, the faculty's worries on this score will be legitimate.

Those of our peer institutions who have already reached full funding are experiencing an even higher level of graduate student teaching shortages. One thing they have done to relieve the shortage is to create new categories of faculty positions, usually called "teaching post-docs". I refer those who are interested to a detailed proposal for such

positions ([http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/Teaching\\_PostDocs.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/Teaching_PostDocs.pdf)) that GSAS prepared last spring in consultation with the chairs of the departments and the College. We should also tap graduate teaching resources from other parts of the University: see the next section for details.

I realize that some faculty members feel that the current size of the entering class of the Graduate School (we are aiming for an average class size of about 300 for the 27 departments) is too small. It is instructive to compare our size to that of our peers. Here are two possible measures. The first is the number of students in the entering Ph.D. class per faculty member willing to supervise dissertations. This number is important for the faculty since it measures the access of faculty to graduate students, the higher the number the greater the access. It is at least as high at Columbia as at our peers. The second is the number of undergraduates per student in the entering Ph.D. class. Since a large portion of the funds needed to support Ph.D. education comes from undergraduate tuition, this number measures our ability to support graduate education (a high number indicates greater ability) as well as our ability to TA our undergraduate population (a low number indicates greater ability). At Columbia it is lower than that of our peers, showing both that it should be more difficult for us to fund our graduate students and easier to staff our classes. These are crude school-wide measures that vary from department to department and don't take into account the fact that we, unlike most of our peers, have large terminal M.A. programs. Still, they suggest that we are not out of line with our peers.

There are legitimate arguments for certain of our Ph.D. programs to get bigger (a list of the criteria the Graduate School uses is given at the beginning of the Proposal for Teaching Postdocs ([http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/Teaching\\_PostDocs.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/Teaching_PostDocs.pdf))). Indeed, the Graduate School has been adjusting the size of certain programs incrementally. Overall, however, we are at roughly the right size and the challenge is to get to full funding with this class size.

## 6. GSAS Outside of the Arts and Sciences

Besides being the administrative head of the graduate programs in the Arts & Sciences, the Dean of GSAS has a second role as academic head of all the Ph.D. programs at Columbia, including those at Teachers College. As such, the Dean chairs the Executive Committee of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, which, despite its misleading name, has members from all the schools that grant Ph.D.s at Columbia.<sup>5</sup> Last year, the Executive Committee rewrote the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for GSAS; this year, the main agenda item is to compare support packages throughout GSAS. It has been a useful exercise for the different schools to see how other schools support their students.

This study will produce benefits for both the Arts & Sciences and the other schools. Indeed, most Ph.D. granting schools outside the Arts & Sciences do not have undergraduate students, and therefore have limited opportunities to provide teaching fellowships for their

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<sup>5</sup> Here is the faculty membership list of the Committee, with their school affiliation: Ryûichi Abé, Paul Anderer, Elizabeth Blackmar, J. Chloe Bulinski, Richard Ericson, Patrick X. Gallagher, Patricia Grieve, Christopher Heyde, Carol Rovane, Robert Y. Shapiro, Nicholas J. Turro (Arts and Sciences); James Carey (Journalism); Andrew Davidson (Public Health); John Donaldson (Business); Sheila Kamerman (Social Work); John Kender (Engineering and Applied Science); Mary McCleod (Architecture); Virginia Papaioannou, Howard Shuman (Physicians and Surgeons); John Saxman (Teachers College);

Ph.D. students. Many of the Arts & Sciences departments, on the other hand, are experiencing a shortage of teaching fellows. We hope to reach agreements with several schools, under which students from outside the Arts & Sciences will be eligible to TA in Arts & Sciences departments. The Arts & Sciences will pick up the “teaching costs” while the outside school will pick up the “fellowship costs.” In this way the outside school will be able to move its funding to a level roughly equal to that of the Arts & Sciences Ph.D. program, and the Arts & Sciences will have access to additional teaching fellows. An agreement of this sort is nearly in place with the Communications Ph.D. program at the Journalism School, so that starting next year it will be possible for their students to TA in departments where we anticipate a teaching need, such as Political Science. The decision to hire such students will of course remain in the hands of the department where the student is teaching, with the proviso that the department first make use of all its own students in the fellowship years.

## 7. Conclusion

After several years of sustained investment the Graduate School is in good shape. Our programs are healthy, attract strong candidates, and morale among the less advanced Ph.D. students, who are benefiting from the Enhancement Plan, is high. Several critical issues remain:

- We need to move as quickly as possible towards our goal of full funding of the Ph.D. program. Further progress towards this goal is contingent on fundraising for graduate fellowships. There are three kinds of fellowships in need of fundraising: dissertation fellowships, fellowships for first-year students and summer fellowships.
- The staffing of departmental and core curriculum teaching positions becomes more problematic every year. The first step towards a solution is to raise funds to support new lectureships and teaching postdoc positions; the second, now underway, is to broaden the pool of eligible TAs to Ph.D. students in other Columbia schools.
- We lag behind our peers on “professional training” issues. We are currently working on teacher-training, but other issues remain.
- In many departments we lag behind our peers in the availability of space for graduate students (office space, meeting space). We also lack adequate communal space for the graduate students. Lerner Hall, while originally conceived as a center for all students, now functions as a center for undergraduates. For Lerner to work for graduate students, a free-standing Graduate Student Center would have to be created inside it. A detailed plan for a such a center was prepared by the Graduate Student Advisory Council (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsac/>) several years ago, but little progress has been made.
- Access to graduate student housing remains a serious concern.

Respectfully,

Henry C. Pinkham  
Dean