

April 27, 2004

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Yearly Report

This memorandum describes the financial aid packages offered to PhD students in the Arts & Sciences departments at Columbia, and is presented to the Columbia community in lieu of an annual report. A list of the Arts & Sciences departments is given in an appendix at the end of this memorandum. While in a later section there is discussion about the support of non-Arts & Sciences GSAS students, the rest of the report deals only with the Arts & Sciences students. The material in this report brings up to date two previous reports that are available on the GSAS website:

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/GSAS_Faculty_Report20020211.pdf

and

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pdf-files/GSAS_Faculty_Report20030204.pdf

I. A brief history of multiyear fellowship funding at GSAS

The Arts & Sciences departments are divided in three divisions: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. The funding history of each division is discussed in turn.

1) Multiyear funding began in the Natural Sciences. Over 30 years ago, the university established a system of 5-year fellowships in the natural science departments. According to the terms of these fellowships, students receive funding for 5 years if they maintain satisfactory academic progress. What made this program, known as the “faculty fellows program”, possible many years before a similar program could be established in the other divisions was grant support (to individual faculty, to groups of faculty and to individual students) received from agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Health, which paid roughly half of the support of the students during their studies here.

2) In the mid to late 80's, two successive deans of the graduate school, Gillian Lindt (1983-89) and Roger Bagnall (1989-1993) made multiyear funding to the humanities and social science departments one of their top priorities. As Dean Bagnall noted in his 9 June 1993 report on his deanship: “Late in Dean Lindt's term two departments (Classics and History) introduced plans modeled on those of the Natural Sciences”. Multiyear funding was then extended to five humanities and one social science departments through the support of the Mellon Foundation. Fifteen years ago, the Mellon Foundation started a major initiative to decrease the time-to-degree of Ph.D. programs in the humanities. Columbia was fortunate to get ten years of funding from the Mellon Foundation to support five departments: Anthropology, English and Comparative Literature, Music, Philosophy and Religion. Art History and Archaeology were added to the program later. These grants transformed graduate education in these departments by improving the funding of supported students. As the grant neared its end, the Mellon Foundation helped

Columbia raise a \$12,500,000 endowment to replace it by providing a gift of \$4,500,000 which Columbia matched with \$8,000,000. [This initiative and many other issues of funding in graduate education are well documented in the book by William G. Bowen and Neil L. Rudinstine, “In pursuit of the PhD” (Princeton, 1992).] During Dean Bagnall’s term, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures introduced its own plan based on existing resources, and fundraising, and then German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, and Political Science followed suit, using internal resources and new revenues from tuition-generating terminal MA programs.

3) Multiyear funding was systematically extended to the rest of the humanities and social sciences departments through the enhancement plan of Dean Eduardo Macagno (1993-2001). In 1996 Dean Macagno developed a plan to bring the entire graduate school to “full-funding” in 10 years. This plan has completed the transformation of graduate education at Columbia but added many millions of dollars to the cost of running the Graduate School. The key components of the enhancement plan are as follows. Most of what follows only refers to the humanities and social science departments. The situation in the natural sciences departments is comparable but is driven by grant support.

a) A steady increase in stipend level to remain competitive with peer institutions.

Year	Standard Stipend	% Growth
1998-99	\$11,385	
1999-2000	12,000	5.4%
2000-01	13,000	8.3%
2001-02	15,000	15.4%
2002-03	16,050	7.0%
2003-04	17,044	6.2%
2004-05	18,000	5.6%

b) Stipend equity. All students in a given department (and cognate departments) receive the same stipend unless they are funded by outside sources that exceed the standard stipend level.

c) A sharp increase in the percentage (and even the absolute number) of students receiving the full five-year fellowship package (4 years if the student comes in with advanced standing). The original goal called for funding 90% of entering students in the humanities and social sciences on 5-year fellowship packages in 10 years, that is, by 2006. This goal has already been attained.

d) The creation of a new kind of “deferred fellowship” program in which a small number of admitted students (who have requested financial aid, as 99% of our students do), though not funded in the first year, are picked up for funding for the 4 subsequent years (3 if the student is coming in with advanced standing). This was fully implemented with the entering class of fall 2001. This eliminates most of the uncertainty over the cost of PhD education at Columbia.

e) The goal of promising all entering students two years of summer support on top of the 9-month stipend they receive. The Graduate School is presently nearing this goal.

f) Streamlining of the graduate student teaching categories. Before 2001, there were a variety of teaching appointments with a range of salaries that were based on the task performed. Beginning in 2001-2002, a single teaching category “teaching fellow” with a single stipend level was created.

g) The reduction and standardization of the teaching loads of funded students. In the 5-year funding packages, the first and last year are years where the students have no teaching obligations. For the 6 semesters in the middle, they serve as teaching fellows, with a cap on the number of students they work with and a cap on the average number of hours per week they spend teaching. This is fully implemented in most departments.

II. Statistics on the enhancement plan

The plan is now implemented with the few minor exceptions noted above. Furthermore many students in their sixth and seventh year of residence in PhD students at Columbia are now funded as teaching fellows at the same level as during the “fellowship years” (years 1-5). The Graduate School has had for many years a rule that says that graduate students may be in residence for the PhD at most 7 years. This rule is implemented in the following way: no PhD student receives financial support from GSAS after 7 years of residence. We make only one exception: instructors in the undergraduate core curriculum (Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization).

A few statistics: during this academic year (2003-04), fewer than 40 of the over 1300 students in the first 5 years of the PhD program in the Arts & Sciences departments at Columbia are not receiving at least the minimum fellowship package which consists of \$17,044 in stipend, a full tuition fellowship and health benefits. The full value of this fellowship package is about \$50,000. Roughly half of these 40 students are first year students who will be picked up on “deferred fellowship” packages next year. The remaining 20 are 4th and 5th year students who arrived before the creation of the deferred fellowship packages, and for whom their departments were not able to find teaching fellowships.

In 2004-05 all students in years 2-5 (with one exception noted in the next sentence) will be funded through a combination of internal and external funding sources, and there will be only 16 “deferred funding” first year students. [In departments where field work is required, the faculty may insist that all students obtain funding from the outside in year 4 to do the field work, so that they have enough funding once they complete their field work to write up their results. A small number of students fail to obtain funding and therefore go without funding that year, but do get to defer that year of funding.] A large number of 6th year students and a smaller number of 7th year students will also be funded.

III. Comparison with our peers

In terms of funding Columbia is fully competitive with all but perhaps two or three PhD programs in the United States. It is very difficult to compare the programs, because they vary so widely, so it is best to look at a variety of factors individually. The comparison is limited to the humanities and social science departments of the Arts & Sciences, as Columbia is competitive (on funding) with peers in the natural sciences.

1) Stipends: Columbia is competitive with all programs with the possible exception of three well-known schools with much larger endowments. It is hard to say precisely because these three schools practice “differential packaging”, which means that they offer larger fellowship packages to the students they most want to attract. Since Columbia practices stipend equity (as noted above), it is difficult to make a fair comparison. One can certainly not generalize from the fact that one student got a larger fellowship package at one of these schools than the one offered by Columbia. To remain competitive with the three top schools it will be important to include in our offers of admission that students are eligible for funding for at least three and perhaps even four summers.

2) Health benefits: Columbia is competitive with peers.

3) Tuition fellowships: Columbia is competitive with peers, except in the (tiny) group of “deferred funding students” that most peers do not have. Note that many state schools (such as the University of California system) only give the in-state tuition rate for students supported on teaching fellowships.

4) Housing: Columbia currently houses all PhD students who request housing (this has been the case for two years now) and we guarantee housing for all 5-year fellowship students (but not to deferred fellowship students). While only 5 years of housing are officially offered, sixth and seventh year extensions are granted subject to adequate progress. Very few peers offer more than 5 years of housing.

5) Number of years graduate students can be in residence: Some of the top schools require the students to finish in 5 years, and/or cut off funding after 5 years. Columbia’s seven year plan is quite generous.

6) Number of semesters of teaching: The same three affluent schools are reducing the amount of teaching in their five-year fellowship package from 6 semesters to 4 semesters. This is considered favorably by many applicants but it is not clear if it is beneficial for students in the long term. A variety of teaching experiences is essential preparation for students to be competitive for the best jobs in higher education.

IV. Funding in GSAS Non-Arts & Sciences Departments and Programs

There are also non-Arts and Sciences PhD programs, which have the equivalent of the Teaching Fellows and Research Fellows in the Arts & Sciences. Note that the titles in

many of these schools have not been streamlined along the lines of the Arts and Sciences as described in I.1.f. In most of these programs the level of support exceeds the support in the Arts & Sciences humanities and social science programs, and at least equals the support level in the Arts & Sciences natural sciences programs: this is the case in the Medical School campus PhD programs and Business. The Engineering School has not implemented stipend equity to the extent the Arts & Sciences departments have, but the funding level is roughly comparable. There are still a few small programs on the Morningside campus (in the Schools of Social Work, Architecture and Journalism) where support is not yet at the desired level. The Executive Committee of GSAS (on which two graduate students sit) has made it its top priority to improve the funding levels in these programs. The difficulty is that these schools are graduate schools, and so have little access to undergraduate teaching. A primary objective of the Executive Committee has been to make teaching assignments accessible to qualified graduate students independent of the program they are in. Some progress has been made, and we expect more progress soon.

V. Conclusion

The Graduate School is reaching the end of a 30-year project to reform PhD education at Columbia. The hope is that the improved funding available to PhD students in the Arts & Sciences will result in a shorter time-to-degree and a higher rate of completion of the degree (significant improvements in these areas are underway).

The history shows that the introduction of teaching into the fellowship packages was done for two reasons. The first and primary reason is to offer them sufficient financial aid to complete their studies under optimal conditions and in a reasonable amount of time. The second key reason is to give extensive teaching experience to graduate students so that when they leave graduate school they are fully prepared for their role as teachers.

Appendix A: The Departments in the Arts & Sciences by Division

Humanities: Art History and Archaeology; Classics, East Asian Languages and Cultures; English and Comparative Literature; French; Italian; Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures; Music; Philosophy; Religion; Slavic Languages; Spanish and Portuguese.

Social Sciences: Anthropology; Economics; History; Political Science; Sociology.
A new PhD program in Sustainable Development run by the Department of International and Public Affairs will join them next year.

Natural Sciences: Astronomy; Biological Sciences; Chemistry; Earth and Environmental Sciences; Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology; Mathematics; Physics; Psychology; Statistics.