

November 12, 2014

To: Jose Wudka, Chair  
Riverside Division

From: David Lo, Chair   
Graduate Council

RE: Doctoral Student Support

The Steering Committee report on Doctoral Student Support raises several issues of concern in graduate training programs. In reviewing this report, we found that some issues seem to be presented in a more limited context of the robustness and commitment of the financial support of graduate education. We would counter that many of the serious challenges can be viewed instead in terms of structural and cultural challenges. Such challenges can be met with strategies leading to clear “best practices” that in some cases already have some notable track records, and in other cases should be tested with the most successful practices to be ultimately disseminated systemwide. Our response here discusses some of our comments and recommendations.

*Non-resident Supplemental Tuition*

There are varying conceptions of the rationale for NRST, ranging from a disincentive for admitting non-resident students, to a tariff to account for the costs of educating non-California resident students paid from resident taxes. While the UC system is expanding its enrollment of non-resident undergraduates, in part benefitting from the increased revenue from non-resident fees, it may seem incongruent to simultaneously reduce graduate student NRST. However, an important rationale for NRST changes is to reduce barriers to recruiting the highest qualified graduate scholars from around the world to UC campuses. For this reason we are supportive of the proposed changes to NRST.

Apart from internal or external views of the rationale for NRST, practical changes in the managing of NRST funds might also alter the impact of the way NRST is applied to graduate students on different campuses. A concern is the fiscal impacts of NRST as well as the effect of reducing its application. The funds collected might be variously applied in different educational programs, but if the Graduate Division on campus is given control of the collection and disbursement of these funds, then these impacts are fully within the power of the Graduate Dean to direct. For example, collected NRST funds may be applied to fellowships or other offer packages and used in multi-year offers as discussed below, potentially reducing any effect of NRST. This could reduce the need to develop complex plans for work-arounds, reimbursements, or other ad hoc mechanisms.

### *Net stipend Competitiveness, Multi-Year Funding, and Transparent Offer Letters*

In general, discussion of stipend competitiveness could be viewed in the context of what appears to be considerable graduate program success in recruiting qualified candidates and the resulting high reputation of UC graduate programs. That is, as a whole our programs do appear to be competitive; however, there appears to be considerable variation in the development of graduate program offer letters, not only from campus to campus, but also among graduate programs on the same campus. This promotes competition both between campuses as well as within campuses for qualified candidates. Whether this is a healthy situation or not, there is serious potential for significant inequities in the treatment of students. Thus, there are distinct advantages to having more effective coordination by the Graduate Division, at least within a single UC campus, so that confusion among students is minimized. Moreover, good behavior by graduate programs with respect to student recruiting, etc., can be rewarded by better cooperation from Grad Division, ready access to fellowships, and so on.

The offer letters sent to candidates reflect not only the variation in stipends among programs, but also variation in promises of multi-year funding. There will of course be variation among programs that reflect the differences between social sciences, humanities, and STEM fields and the nature of available support so it is not so much a question of insuring uniformity across campus or across the UC system as it is insuring transparency in the offer letters and proposed support packages.

This transparency should certainly be instituted as a policy, not just a general guide. So while some offers may only commit a certain number of years of certain support, they should also provide details on potential sources of funding in later years of the student's program. From the point of view of the graduate faculty, this not only provides clear milestones for student accomplishment, it also openly supports incentives for students to progress in their graduate programs. These would include writing for fellowships, or to compete for positions in laboratories with extramural funding.

### *Professional Development*

A major concern with graduate student training is career preparation. The proposal for a portal lacks important details such as the nature of content to be provided in this portal. Would it be job postings, fellowship opportunities, internships, or training courses? The variation in types of careers available to students across many disciplines has also not been addressed here. The need for career preparation is quite clear, and it would make sense that for most basic needs, such as resume preparation, interview skills and so on, the existing resources available to undergraduates in campus career centers be expanded to include graduate students in their mission. Each campus Graduate Division can be instrumental on coordinating the needs for those with graduate degrees, including coordination of training in professionalism, and responsible conduct of research. Successful strategies identified by this approach can be documented and disseminated across graduate programs and among campuses.

However, the issue of most relevance to graduate students is whether career resources are appropriate and useful. Here, we have to reinforce the existing assumption that the main burden for career preparation rests with each graduate program, where career options specific to each type of graduate training should be best understood. The challenge for each program is to

overcome an innate cultural resistance to promoting careers outside of the academy. This is an important issue; recent studies on STEM PhD graduates have already shown clearly that the vast majority (about 90%) of PhDs are in non-academic non-tenure track careers. These may be in industry, NGOs, government policy, advocacy, and so on; indeed, these diverse options are available across disciplines from STEM to humanities. At a basic institutional level, we fail to appreciate the value of graduate level skills across all types of careers outside of academia. Graduate programs along with Grad Division should work together to identify outside speakers and mentors to introduce students to non-academic careers; this enlightened approach can even be highlighted in student recruitment.

### *Diversity Proposals*

There is no resistance to the notion that we should expand diversity programs to provide additional incentives for diverse student populations to choose graduate study over other attractive alternatives such as medicine. Along these lines, we should consider broader notions of diversity to include support for students with other disadvantages. These could include students from economically or educationally disadvantaged regions of California, students that are first in the family to enter college, and so on.

A notable challenge in recruiting and hiring diverse faculty on our campuses is the limited diversity not just in the pool of applicants, but in the pipeline in general. To address these needs, we should take note of the fact that a major potential source of diverse student populations is our own Cal State University system. We already draw from these students for our graduate student population, but one area where we can improve the pipeline is by helping the CSU faculty provide more exposure for undergraduates to research on CSU campuses. CSU faculty have a significant teaching burden that reduces the time available to provide research experiences, so UC campuses should explore partnerships with these faculty to enhance that exposure to research. This will help increase the likely pool of graduate program applicants, as well as provide for a pool of students with better preparation for research.