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College of Letters and Science

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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TO: Deans Phillip R. Certain and Yvonne Ozzello,
Letters & Science
Deans Virginia S. Hinshaw and Martin Cadwallader,
Graduate School

FROM: James S. Donnelly, Jr., and Steve J. Stern

RE: Preliminary Assessment Report
on Graduate Program in History

Please find attached the Preliminary Assessment Report, which was unanimously approved by the Department of History at its meeting of 12 November 1997, and which includes policy changes adopted by the History Department to improve recruitment and financial aid for graduate students.

Since the History Department will implement these changes in time for this year's recruitment of prospective graduate students, we would like to meet with you as soon as possible to explore ways that the Graduate School and Letters and Science can work with us. Our goal is to develop a more well informed and proactive approach to graduate-student recruitment and financial aid. In particular, we are eager to explore the possibilities of the History Department serving as a "pilot department" (perhaps in combination with other departments) for a block-grant style of financial support similar to the AOF experiment begun this year.

We will be in touch with you to schedule meetings. In order to improve the chances of a meeting in the very near future, we will seek one meeting with Phil and Yvonne, and another with Virginia and Martin. We think that 30 minutes or so should be sufficient for an ample exploration of possibilities.

Happy reading, and thanks in advance for your time!

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HISTORY: FALL 1997

INTRODUCTION

In accord with the priorities established in last year's departmental plan for assessment of the graduate program, this preliminary assessment focuses on the financial aspects of the graduate program. Once the Department moves into a second-phase assessment next year, it will have an opportunity to assess new areas (for example, measures of academic/career success by Ph.D. graduates), or to explore some of the topics considered below in greater depth.

Please note that this report concludes with a recommendation for departmental action to improve our ability to recruit and financially support prospective graduate students. If we act now, we can implement the recommendation beginning with this year's cohort of prospective graduate students.

To gather and assess data, and to draft this report, the Graduate Council set up a Graduate Assessment Committee (Bernault, Boydston, Cohen, Koshar, and Stern [Chr.]). The Committee drew on excellent assistance in data collection and analysis from departmental staff (Cochran, Heitzkey, and Struebing).

The most important numerical data are incorporated directly into the text of this report. Additional detail, however, is provided in a tabular format in a series of appendices. Please note that the letters ("A," "B," and so on) that identify particular sections of the text below also serve to identify the corresponding appendices (Appendix "A," "B," and the like) that amplify and document sections of the text.

FINDINGS

A. Context: Matriculation and Employment.

The Committee found good news at the beginning and end points of the graduate pipeline. (See Appendix A, "Matriculation and Employment.") The Department has experienced a downward trend in matriculation. (See Table A.1). The range of entering class sizes runs as follows:

in 1988-91: 48-80 per class
1992-94: 36-44 per class
1995-97: 25-34 per class.

As we shall see below, the 25-34 range brings us for the first time in recent memory in balance with the number of TA positions we have historically generated.

The Committee also found encouraging news on employment. Our job placement record is strong, perhaps surprisingly strong. Within one year of receipt of the Ph.D., most of our students have gotten jobs in the academic marketplace. By this measure (for greater detail, see Tables A.2-3), the data for degree cohorts between 12/90 and 12/96 is as follows:

for cases for which we have information
(n = 119; this figure excludes 12 unknown cases and 1 deceased student):

received academic jobs within a year:	94
did not within a year: all cases:	25
did not, "by choice":	10
did not, by market:	15.

If one removes the "by choice" subcategory, the net figures (n= 109) run as follows:

did receive jobs:	94 (86%)
did not (net figure):	15 (14%).

We were unable to track statistically at what rate students who begin in visiting jobs end up in multi-year or tenure-track positions. (Table A.3 shows that our only 54% of our Spring placements are in tenure-track positions, but note that our Spring placement lists include ABD hires.) Judy Cochran's impression, however, is that most students who crack into the market via visiting positions do "land on their feet" in tenure-track or multi-year positions.

(We appear to do better than the expectations suggested by national aggregate statistics. A recent report calculated 562 positions for junior history faculty listed in the 1996-97 cycle of posting in the AHA's Perspectives, and new history Ph.D. recipients in 1996 at 767. Just as important, more than a third of the new assistant professor positions were filled by persons who had not completed the degree within the previous three years. [See Robert Townsend's report in AHA, Perspectives, October 1997, pp. 9ff.]

In short, at the end of the pipeline the economic future of most our students is not at all bleak.

B. Context: Academic Reputation.

The placement picture is consistent with our reputation as a top ten department. (See Appendix B on 1995 NRC rankings.)

The reputational news, however, is mixed. On the one hand, we enjoy a strong reputation as a graduate program. In the 1995 NRC rankings we rated number ten in overall scholarly quality of faculty, and number six in effectiveness in training research scholars.

On the other hand, we face stiff reputational competition when we compete for graduate students. Yale, Berkeley, and Princeton consistently outrank us, and other private and public universities are in our reputational league. Among the publics, Michigan and UCLA are "in our league" in most of the NRC reputational lists.

C. Funding Offers and Acceptance Rates.

The data presented in Appendix C demonstrates that multi-year package offers make the crucial difference in our ability to recruit top students. For prospective incoming students from 1990-91 through 1997-98 (see Table C.1), the matriculation rates ran as follows:

for all students admitted:	353/1267:	27.9%
for all students offered UF/AOF awards:	57/180:	31.7%
ditto, with package group removed:	30/113:	26.5%
for students offered packages (any source: UW, external, or mix):	27/67:	40.3%.

If one focuses on a more select group -- the top twelve students on the Department's ranked UF list -- the recruitment gap is even wider. During the same 1990-91 to 1997-98 period, the matriculation rate (see Table C. 2) ran as follows:

for top-12 group offered 1-yr. awards:	16/60:	26.7%
for top-12 group offered packages:	14/30:	46.7%.

Our ability to recruit minority candidates who are offered financial support appears comparable to that in the UF cases. the matriculation rate for the 1990-91 to 1997-98 cohorts (see Table C.3) was 13/44, or 29.5%.

In short, offers of one-year awards appear to have had little or no effect on our overall matriculation rate, while multi-year have indeed made a tangible difference in our ability to compete for top students.

D. Peer Institutions and Graduate Student Recruitment.

The findings in Section C -- that one-year awards fail to make a difference in our matriculation rate, but that package offers do indeed enable us to compete more effectively -- are consistent with what we know about the recruitment procedures and results of peer departments of history.

Our information is extremely limited but suggests that our chief competitors for recruiting students to whom we have offered financial aid are Berkeley, Harvard, Princeton, Michigan, and Yale:

each outreached us in 5-6 cases between 1990-91 and 1997-98. A mix of public and private schools, some of them within the top 10 of the 1995 NRC list, and most of them within the top 20, round out the picture of the competition. (See Table D.1. Please note that in most cases we do not have information about the destination of students who turned down our offers, although there is good reason to believe that the top group identified for the "known cases" also applies for the unknown ones.)

Among the five chief competitors identified above, all except Yale were included in Chuck Cohen's meticulous study of financial aid and peer departments of history. A copy of Chuck's report, written for the Peer Institution Study Team of the Graduate School in 1996, appears in Appendix D.

Chuck's detailed report on peer departments of history establishes that our support offers are woefully uncompetitive on two levels. We fund a lower percentage of the students admitted, and we tend to rely more on one-year rather than multi-year packages for the top students.

The result was tangible: a 1994-95 comparison of seven peer institutions found that the UW's matriculation rate for prospective students who were offered aid tied for worst in the group.

(The Graduate School's Study Team came to similar findings for other social science and humanities programs on campus. The Graduate School's report is not provided in Appendix D, but we will be happy to share it with any members of the Department who wish to read it.)

E. De Facto Mobilization of Financial Aid.

Even though we fail in most instances to offer multi-year guarantees, and to plan ahead accordingly, our de facto mobilization of resources establishes a track-record compatible with well planned multi-year offers.

For student cohorts that entered between 1990-91 and 1993-94, and that received support during the first year, the average number of years of support actually mobilized during the first four years of graduate study ranged between 2.3 and 2.9 years of support. (See Table E.1.) If one removes students who entered with packages, the average number of years of support ranged between 2 and 2.7. (See Table E.2.)

For more recent cohorts, the figures are even more promising. Students who entered with aid in 1994-95 have received an average of 2.75 years of support within their first 3.5 years. The experience of subsequent cohorts seems consistent with this pattern (see Table E.3). Our transition toward smaller entering cohorts, and the effect of the five-year rule, seem to have generated a tangible improvement in the balance between resources and student needs.

For all students receiving the Ph.D. between 1990-91 and 1996-97, the average number of years of support per degree-receiving cohort ranged between 2.9 and 4.5 years of support. (See Table E.4.)

The de facto pattern shows that simply by the year-to-year efforts of faculty and students, we have managed to mobilize significant support beyond the first year for students offered financial aid in the first year.

F. Departmental Resources (I).

We are a department with significant resources for organizing financial aid for graduate students.

(1) Data on TA appointments since 1989-1990 show that we consistently appoint between 26 and 38 people as TAs every semester. (See Table F.1.) These resources, if combined with good planning, allow for select funding package guarantees.

We have a chance to achieve a comparatively reasonable balance between graduate student needs and departmental if our entering class cohorts remain in the 25-34 range of recent years.

(2) In addition to our TA resources, the new delegated budget system offers some additional flexibility. Our budget history and Danny's budget projections (see Tables F.2-4, especially F.4) demonstrate that the department is likely to have savings revenues that provide significant flexibility and backing for recruitment packages (and/or other initiatives). Under conservative, middling, and optimistic projections, the Department is likely to generate net savings of over \$300,000 in FY 98, and \$100-150,000 in FY 99. It is possible to allocate a portion of these funds for hiring (teaching assistance, project/research assistance, departmental work), and it may be possible to use some of the funds toward scholarships.

At the same time, the time horizon of flexibility offered by the delegated budget system is finite and marked by diminishing expected annual net savings. Under current projections, the tipping point (when we go from net savings to net deficit) will be reached in FY 00, FY 01, and FY 02, according to conservative, middling, and optimistic projections respectively.

In short, expected savings under the new budget system can, with careful planning and monitoring, contribute modestly to improved financial support for graduate students but only in combination with better planning of the department's total resource picture. Net savings cannot be expected to "carry" a high-cost initiative indefinitely.

(3) Beyond TAs and budget savings related to faculty grants and unfilled FTE positions, the department has two supplemental sets of resources applicable to financial aid. First,

the department has some endowment accounts that generate modest funds for financial aid. In some instances scholarship funds from these accounts can be used to trigger remission of out-of-state tuition without additional cost to the department. (See Tables F.5-6, especially F.5, and the note about foundation accounts that accompanies these tables.)

Second, by the efforts of faculty, graduate students, and staff, our department achieves significant additional infusions of aid through PAships, FLAS Title VI Fellowships, campus MacArthur grants, external awards such as Javits Fellowships, and the like. These infusions make a substantial contribution to our de facto financial aid/support system. In the Fall 1997 semester, for example, 118 students in the Department have received support; of these, fully 45 (38.1%) are supported either by UW-administered competitions based on external grants such as FLAS and MacArthur fellowships; external grant competitions such as Fulbright and Javits awards; or project and research assistantships. (See Table F.7.)

(4) Based on 1995 statistical profiles from the Graduate School (see Table F.8), the total amount of support in the form of Fellowships, PAships/RAships, and TAships received by graduate students in the History Department is relatively large. For Fall 1995, these sources supported 84 graduate students in the History Department. This total was comparable to those of Sociology (88.8) and Economics (80.9). In a comparison with peer departments in social sciences and humanities, only English (at 102.9) exceeded the History total substantially.

G. Departmental Resources (II).

The procedures of the Graduate School may move in the direction of a "block grant" system that will grant the department greater flexibility to handle fellowship funds allocated by the Graduate School as a flexible resources for proactive recruitment of graduate students.

An important change has already taken place in AOF allocations, which will experiment with a new model of financial aid allocations.

The memoranda outlining the new procedures are reprinted in Appendix G. Please read them with care.

Beyond this year's figures and due dates, two important points emerge from the memoranda. First, we appear to be entering a new era in AOF funds for recruitment of minority/disadvantaged students. This era is marked by block grants that will provide the Department more autonomy and more potential for rapid action, but greater responsibility to use the grants effectively or suffer declining annual scholarship grants.

Second, the AOF initiative, and its mix of greater autonomy

and responsibility, indicate a more general direction of change as the Graduate School and Letters and Science rethink graduate student recruitment. The cover memo from L & S asks us to consider the AOF initiative "as a pilot program" whose spin-offs may lead to "a more proactive approach" to graduate student recruitment in general.

If this new approach to fellowships "takes off" within the next several years, and is encouraged by departmental initiatives in organizing financial aid, fellowship funds themselves may come to resemble "departmental resources," in the sense of budget items about which we can plan as part of a larger financial aid strategy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The Committee's first conclusion is that the financial underpinnings of the graduate program in the Department of History are mixed and almost paradoxical. We mobilize and utilize, on a year to year basis, large amounts of resources devoted to student financial aid. (In addition, we appear to be rather successful in placing most graduating Ph.D. students in the academic job market.) But despite our track record and financial capability, our resources are woefully underorganized, from the point of view of medium-range planning. Given the resources that we mobilize on a de facto basis, we could do a better job of organizing financial aid packages that would enable us to compete more effectively for prospective students, to alleviate unnecessary anxieties for at least some students, and to plan more capably for all students.

The Committee's second conclusion is that we have arrived at a significant opportunity to improve our financial aid system and our capacity to recruit and support superb prospective graduate students. The knowledge we have acquired about our resource base and our competitiveness in the "recruitment wars," the more favorable student-to-resource balance created by declining graduate enrollments, the flexibility introduced by delegated budgeting and by the rethinking of financial aid awards in the Graduate School and in Letters and Science: these factors create an environment of "opportunity" for financial aid planning and initiatives.

To lose this opportunity would be especially regrettable because our foundation is sound. On the one hand, we do mobilize and manage considerable resources for financial aid from year to year and can expect to continue to do so in the future. On the other hand, our high scholarly reputation, and our effort and effectiveness in placing most graduating students in jobs at the end of the graduate school pipeline, give us a strong platform for recruitment and training of graduate students.

The Committee's recommendation and motion, **as revised and approved unanimously by the Department of History on 12 November 1997**, is the following.

"The Fellowships and Scholarships Committee may offer up to twelve multi-year financial aid packages to prospective graduate students each year. After a student's first year of residence in the Program, continued funding is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward the degree and, should the student hold a TAship, satisfactory performance as a T.A. This act [Art. III, Title 8] repeals and supersedes the existing legislation, and goes into force immediately."

This motion includes the following six understandings.

(1) At least during the first years of the new system, multi-year offers would provide packages of up to four years. Normally, four-year packages will be offered to students for whom a package includes a commitment of at least two years of fellowship support from the Graduate School or a comparable "non-departmental source" (for example, a consortial-style arrangement between the Graduate School and another funding agency).

(2) Every academic year, the Department Administrator will monitor the financial implications of the commitments made to entering students and will include, as part of standard budget reporting for consideration by the Department, an assessment of the commitments and feasibility issues linked to financial aid packages for graduate students.

(3) In addition to its annual monitoring through budget reports by the Department Administrator and routine reports or information by the Graduate Council, the Department will undertake a review of the new system after it has been in place for five years.

(4) The language of "up to twelve students" recognizes that it is wiser to legislate a principle than a precise number of packages. The quality of prospective students and the availability of funds may oscillate somewhat from year to year.

(5) It shall be understood that multi-year packages will not be created by "sacrificing" fellowship recipients on the bottom half of the Graduate School list of fellowship awards in order to create packages for recipients on the upper end of the Graduate School award list. Any exceptions to this principle would be made only with consent of the involved faculty.

(6) Each year the Fellowships and Scholarships Committee shall make every effort to offer multi-year packages to individuals drawn from the diversity pool conventionally represented by AOF candidates.