

Proposal from the Ad Hoc Committee on Fellowships concerning UWM's Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowships and Dissertation Fellowships

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** That the Graduate School advocate for increases in the amount of Chancellor's Award monies, develop additional sources of funding (separate from the fellowships) to establish programs for improving recruitment of graduate students, and encourage University Development to find a benefactor(s) to support and provide a name for the Dissertation Fellowships.
- 2** That the Graduate School work to increase the both number and the award amounts of both the Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowships and the Dissertation Fellowships.
- 3** That the description of the Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowship be changed from—
This fellowship is awarded annually to exceptional newly-admitted or currently enrolled UWM graduate students.
 —to—
*The Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowships recognize and support the most academically excellent Masters and PhD students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. (Only PhD students who have **not** achieved dissertator status by the application deadline for the award are eligible for this award. Programs can nominate incoming students for the award, understanding that incoming students are rarely as competitive for this award as enrolled students.) Students are nominated for this award by their programs and compete with other nominees from across the university; fellowship decisions are made by a university committee.*
- 4** That the title of the Dissertation Fellowship be changed to the "Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship"
- 5** That the description of the Dissertation Fellowship be changed from—
This fellowship is awarded annually to exceptional UWM doctoral students with dissertator status.
 —to—
The Dissertation Fellowships recognize and support the most academically excellent PhD students who have achieved dissertator status at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee or who will achieve dissertator status during the time of the award. (Should a student who applies for the Dissertation Fellowship without yet having achieved dissertator status win the award, the amount of the student's award will be at the rate of the Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowship until the student achieves dissertator status). Students are nominated for this award by their programs and compete with other nominees from across the university; fellowship decisions are made by a university committee.
- 6** That the "Selection of Nominees" language for both fellowship categories have the following language added following the initial criterion that "No more than two nominees from your graduate degree program may be forwarded for the DGFSF [or DF] competition.":
For the sake of these fellowships, a "graduate degree program" is defined more broadly than the UW System definition to include any graduate program that meets both of the following criteria:
 - 1 Students must make specific application to the degree program on their applications to the Graduate School or department.*
 - 2 Students cannot transfer out of the program without making explicit application to another program, even within the same department or unit.**If a program offers both the MA/MS and PhD degrees, it is considered a single graduate program and can nominate only two students.*
- 7** That in fall 2012 the Fellowships Subcommittee and the Graduate School form an ongoing committee to review requests from graduate programs that would like to nominate students but that in the past have not been able to nominate students because of the previous language about graduate degree programs.

- 8 That the Graduate School together with members of the Fellowships Subcommittee make yearly informational presentations—in fall semester—to UWM’s departmental grad reps concerning the Fellowships nominating and decision processes.

RATIONALE

The above recommendations address the following concerns raised by faculty:

- ***Misunderstandings about the fellowships.*** Some programs have not nominated students, or have not nominated appropriate students, because the reasons for the Fellowships have not been articulated. The recommended reason statements, combined with the recommended yearly informational presentations, should help programs understand which of their graduate students are most appropriate to be nominated for the fellowships.
- ***What counts as a “graduate degree program.”*** In some units on campus all students receive the same degree even though students within the unit have applied to and study within distinctly different programs that lead to distinctly different positions following graduation. The proposed criteria acknowledge these conditions and so allow such distinct programs to nominate students.
- ***The number of students a program can nominate.*** Some programs with large numbers of graduate students would like to nominate a number of students proportional to the number of enrolled students. Our review of the distribution of fellowships over the past three academic years shows that, given how they competitive they are, fellowships are well distributed across programs that do nominate students; we do not believe that changing the number of students a program can nominate will change the number of fellowships won by any program.
- ***Whether students who have applied for graduate admissions but who have not yet enrolled should be eligible for the fellowships.*** Although such potential students been eligible under past criteria to apply for the Distinguished Grad Student Fellowships, they only rarely win them because they are not usually competitive with enrolled students. And if they do win a fellowship, they are nonetheless under no obligation to enroll at UWM; in such cases, when students receive fellowships but do not enroll, fellowships are lost to the department.

Nonetheless, we believe that, because a few programs are able to make the fellowships work as recruiting tools and because there are so few resources for recruiting incoming students, we should continue to allow incoming students to be considered for the fellowships until the Graduate School is able to develop specific support for recruitment.

- ***Part-time students.*** Nothing should prevent excellent part-time students from being nominated for fellowships as long as such students recognize that the fellowship eligibility requirements stipulate that they enroll full-time for the year of a fellowship.
- ***The small number of fellowships available.*** We have close to 5000 grad students but only 36 fellowships —meaning that any year our rate of fellowships is 0.76%. Increased support for excellent graduate students is fully in line with the university’s mission.