

Report of the Provost's Committee on Advanced Residence and Time-to-Degree May 18, 2009

I. Committee Charge and Process

Over the past several years, the University of Chicago (“the University”) has committed significant resources to improving the experience of current and future graduate students. President Zimmer announced the Graduate Aid Initiative in February of 2007, and later that spring Provost Rosenbaum convened the Working Group on Graduate Student Life in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Divinity School (“the Working Group”). In response to the Working Group’s recommendations, the University announced in February, 2008, six action steps aimed at improving the experience of graduate students in the Humanities Division, the Social Sciences Division, and the Divinity School. Among these action steps was the creation of a committee chaired by the Deputy Provost for Graduate Education to review the advanced residence (AR) system for the entire University.

This Committee on Advanced Residence and Time-to-Degree (“the Committee”) convened initially in the spring quarter of 2008. Members included:

Cathy Cohen, Chair, *David and Mary Winton Green Professor of Political Science and the College, Deputy Provost for Graduate Education*

Kathleen Fernicola, *9th-year Ph.D. student in Sociology, Preceptor in the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences*

Robert Kottwitz, *William J. Friedman and Alicia Townsend Friedman Professor of Mathematics and the College*
David Mihalyfy, *3rd-year Ph.D. student in the Divinity School*

Mario Small, *Associate Professor of Sociology and the College*

Rebecca West, *William R. Kenan, Jr. Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and the College*

Tina Rzepnicki, *David and Mary Winton Green Professor in the School of Social Service Administration*

Tom Thuerer, *Dean of Students in the Humanities Division*

Jennifer Westerfeld, *9th-year Ph.D. student in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations*

Committee Staff:

Cheryl Bradley-Stone, *Consultant for Strategic Initiatives (Spring 2008)*

Beth Niestat, *Planning Manager for Student Initiatives (Fall 2008-Spring 2009)*

The Committee was charged to review the current AR registration system, the annual increase in AR tuition, and the out-of-pocket contribution of students as well as to consider how restructuring tuition rates might lessen the financial burden on students entering AR status. The Committee was also asked to examine the relationship between the AR system and time-to-degree and to make recommendations aimed at helping students complete their degrees in a reasonable length of time.

The Committee met twice in the spring quarter of 2008 and began its work in earnest this academic year. Over the course of fall and winter quarters, the Committee met with select departmental chairs, with deans of students or graduate student administrators from each of the divisions and schools,

and with graduate students at different stages of their doctoral programs.¹ In addition to discussions with these key stakeholders, the Committee surveyed current divisional policies regarding out-of-pocket tuition aid and current departmental practices regarding efforts to support and monitor student academic progress and lessen time-to-degree. The Committee also reviewed previous University reports and recommendations, national studies, and policies and practices at peer institutions that address time-to-degree limits and systems for supporting timely degree completion.

Complementing the focused conversations the Committee held with graduate students, Cathy Cohen held an open forum with graduate students at the Graduate Council meeting on March 9, 2009. She talked about the Committee's work, answered questions, and listened to graduate student concerns and ideas for the Committee's recommendations. During the same time period, a student group, Graduate Students United, solicited students to provide their thoughts to the Committee on the AR system, generating over 20 student letters submitted to the Committee. The Graduate Council's Graduate Funding Committee also submitted a written report with recommendations to the Committee.

II. Why a Concern with Time-to-Degree?

Universities throughout the country have become increasingly concerned with time-to-degree. Studies of trends in time-to-degree note that the marked increases in time-to-degree that took place during the 70s and 80s began to level off and then decline slightly since the mid-90s.² The Committee was asked to explore the issue of time-to-degree in part because the amount of time students take to complete their doctoral degrees can have an impact on students' satisfaction with their graduate education, on the University's ability to recruit the very best students, and on the job prospects of our graduates. During several meetings, the Committee repeatedly heard from students who expressed dissatisfaction with the length of time their degree completion was taking.

Many departments also support reducing time-to-degree, given that students in their tenth, eleventh, or twelfth year (and beyond) of graduate education are often students only on paper. Some faculty noted that advanced graduate students who "disappear" for years may eventually reappear with a finished dissertation of low quality, the result of an extended period without mentoring or advice. In addition, one Committee member who directed graduate Admissions for his department this year reported that several of the top admitted candidates declined the University of Chicago offer in

¹ Deans of students and graduate student administrators who met with the Committee included Malaina Brown (Booth), Ellen Cohen (Harris), Patrick Hall (Social Sciences), Rick Hefley (Physical Sciences), Penny Johnson (Social Service Administration), Sandy Norbeck (Divinity), and Nancy Schwartz (Biological Sciences). Departmental chairs who met with the Committee were Bruce Cumings (History), John Kelly (Anthropology), and Martha Ward (Art History). The Committee met in small groups with (or received written comments in the case of two students scheduled to meet with the Committee who were unable to attend) 16 students ranging in progress from Year 5 through Year 10 in programs in the Divinity School, the Harris School, the Humanities Division, the School of Social Service Administration, and the Social Sciences Division.

² Thomas B. Hoffer and Vincent Welch, Jr., "Time to Degree of U.S. Research Doctorate Recipients, NSF 06-312," *Science Resources Statistics: InfoBrief*, (Arlington, VA.: The National Science Foundation, 2008). The authors report that when measuring time-to-degree as the time elapsed between completion of the baccalaureate to the doctorate, there was a "slight increase from 1978 to 1996, followed by a slight decline through 2003." When the measure of time-to-degree is time in graduate school less those periods of non-enrollment, then the pattern is one of increasing time-to-degree through 1998 and "leveling off at 7.5 years from 1998 to 2003."

favor of a peer institution in part because they feared an unnecessarily extended stay at the University.

Consistent with some of the concerns expressed by students and faculty, recent studies suggest that students who finish their degrees more quickly are more likely to secure ladder faculty positions, while also avoiding additional difficulties in funding their graduate education.³ Finally, shortening time-to-degree ultimately reduces costs for students, enabling them to move on to the next stages of their lives and careers with less debt and financial pressure.

The University of Chicago has long prided itself on training exceptionally prepared scholars, and the Committee believes that maintaining this tradition should remain our top priority. Some students take many more years than others to finish their programs because of required research demands such as learning multiple languages or spending several years immersed in fieldwork. The University should not interfere with the training process for these students. Some students, however, take longer than necessary to finish their programs because they failed to develop effective work strategies, received poor academic advising and mentoring, or lost precious research time taking jobs to make ends meet. In order to address these issues, the Committee believes it is imperative to optimize time-to-degree by striving to reduce it for those students whose extended graduate student status has resulted from an inefficient training program.

In general, time-to-degree is longer in the social sciences and humanities than it is in the biological and physical sciences. The data from the University of Chicago are no different. Data provided by the University to the National Research Council (NRC) in 2005 for an evaluation of Ph.D. programs indicate that the median time-to-degree for full-time students who received a degree between 2003 and 2006 ranged from 5.5 years in the Physical Sciences Division to 8.3 years in the Humanities Division. The median time-to-degree in the Biological Sciences Division is recorded as 5.6 years, and it is 7.2 years in the Social Sciences Division. As we would expect, there exists significant variation across departments in all the academic divisions.

According to the 1995 NRC report on doctorate programs, the median time-to-degree for Ph.D.-granting units at the University is on average slightly higher than other similarly ranked programs and departments across the country, especially in the humanities and social sciences.⁴ Interestingly, when we compare our current time-to-degree data with that reported in 1995, the data suggest that median time-to-degree has been declining at the University. We should be proud of this decrease in time-to-degree, particularly because it was not accompanied by a decline in the quality of our training. We must also acknowledge, however, that our time-to-degree was historically high relative to other universities, so we had more room to improve. In addition, as noted previously, there has been a slight decline in time-to-degree nationally as funding packages have become more lucrative and extend over a longer period of time. The limited data available comparing our current time-to-

³ Joseph Picciano, Elizabeth Rudd, Emory Morrison and Maresi Nerad, "Does Time to Degree Matter?" *Spotlight on Graduate Education*, no.3 (Seattle, WA: CIRGE, University of Washington, 2008). The focus of this study was on students who received their doctorate in the social sciences.

⁴ Marvin L. Goldberger, Brendan A. Maher and Pamela Ebert Flattau, eds., *Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change* (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1995).

degree with those of our peers suggests that we continue to have slightly higher rates of time-to-degree, especially in the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions.⁵

Entering into AR status in Year 5 often marks a critical point in a student's graduate career. Many students, especially those in the Humanities Division and Social Sciences Division, are no longer receiving a stipend and yet are expected to pay for AR tuition, fees, and health insurance. National studies⁶ and the Committee's own experience and observations, however, suggest that both the University's support and students' focused attention to their work during the *entirety* of the graduate experience affect students' successful completion of graduate programs and their times-to-degree. Focusing solely on a graduate student in the advanced stages of graduate work, therefore, may not effectively address time-to-degree. While focusing on AR students, the Committee therefore discussed the whole of a student's graduate career from recruitment to job placement.

One of the goals of this Committee is to make recommendations that will continue the decrease in time-to-degree we have begun to witness, and we are committed to identifying strategies that do not compromise the exceptional education our graduate students receive. In order to lessen time-to-degree, the Committee believes departments and other Ph.D.-granting units will need to address the process of selecting graduate students, the early years of graduate training, and the later years when students are researching and writing their dissertations. To lessen time-to-degree and uphold and improve graduate education, universities must engage in a range of activities, including providing students with appropriate financial support, making markers of progress clear, holding students accountable for meeting programmatic milestones and timely progress, creating research and publishing opportunities, developing effective mentoring and advising systems, and monitoring and supporting students as they research and write the dissertation. At the same time, some graduate students will have to change their approach to graduate education—engaging, for example, in long-term financial planning about how to pay for their education, meeting scheduled markers of progress, and having realistic expectations about workload and how to complete the research and writing of the dissertation. Finally, faculty members must also be responsible for adopting strategies which will lessen time-to-degree, including providing timely comments on papers and dissertation chapter drafts, closely monitoring the progress of students they are advising, making themselves available to meet routinely with students, and helping students to manage their time and financial support most effectively.

Fundamentally, the Committee advocates greater transparency as one means to decreasing time-to-degree. Faculty, administrators, and students should know and regularly discuss such topics as estimated time-to-degree, program milestones, the schedule for completing requirements and reaching candidacy, the number of courses students are teaching and the process for making teaching appointments, the effectiveness of faculty mentoring, and general student progress. Only through mutual commitment, conversation, and transparency will the University community make substantial gains in reducing time-to-degree.

⁵SED Data on time-to-degree from 2001-2006 for the Social Sciences Division at the University of Chicago compared to peer institutions.

⁶ E.g., The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's "Responsive Ph.D." initiative, the Council of Graduate Schools' "Ph.D. Completion Project," and the Mellon Foundation's "Graduate Education Initiative."

III. Background: The University of Chicago Residence System and Time-to-Degree

The University of Chicago requires continuous registration in an approved residence status (during three quarters per academic year) from the time of matriculation until degree completion. Approved residence statuses include: Scholastic Residence (SR, Years 1-4), Advanced Residence (AR, Years 5-12), Pro Forma (for students who must move away from Chicago in order to conduct their research), and Extended Residence (ER, after Year 12). ER is not a full-time student status. For spring quarter 2009, University enrollment includes approximately 1,700 SR students and 1,400 AR students as well as 228 students in ER status.

The University's current doctoral student residence system was created with the understanding that doctoral programs can take many years to complete and that eligibility for full-time student privileges should extend beyond the initial period of course registration. Before the current residence system was implemented on the recommendation of the Commission on Graduate Education chaired by Keith Baker in the mid-1980s, graduate students were required to register for 27 courses (essentially three academic years), after which students typically stopped registering and became, in the administrative parlance of the time, "ghosts." They continued to work on their degree requirements, but did not register and had no official status at the University. The system implemented based on the Report of the Commission on Graduate Education ("the Baker Report") was revised in the late 1990s on the recommendation of the Committee on the Doctoral Student Residence Track chaired by Robert Zimmer, creating the system we know today. As evidenced by the existence of the Baker and Zimmer committees, questions and concerns regarding registration status are not new, and the system benefits from periodic reviews and subsequent changes.

AR status, a major innovation of the residence system established in the mid-1980s, was set up to facilitate students' continued progress toward their degrees and to encourage students to finish their degrees in a timely manner. Initially recommended to offer a "supportive and stimulating institutional context for [graduate students'] continued research,"⁷ the concept of registration for advanced graduate students is now perceived by many students to be little more than a financial burden in the form of AR tuition. AR tuition currently ranges between \$3,724 and \$6,675 per quarter, depending on the academic unit.⁸ Also depending on the academic unit, tuition aid is provided to students at a rate that varies between 83 and 100 percent of AR tuition. In those units that do not provide 100 percent of AR tuition aid, students who do not receive external support are expected to pay out-of-pocket tuition of \$784 per quarter (\$2,352 per year).

This out-of-pocket AR tuition charge generates revenue to the University and the specific academic units to support the privileges and services students need and use to complete their degrees. AR out-of-pocket tuition was designed to provide an affordable status that would allow advanced graduate students to continue to have all of the privileges associated with full-time registration, including access to faculty, eligibility for student housing, library privileges, athletic facilities access, computer time, access to student health insurance and the services of the Student Care Center and the Student Counseling and Resource Service, access to programs and services offered by organizations like the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Career Advising and Planning Services, eligibility to

⁷ Keith Baker, "Report of the Commission on Graduate Education," *The University of Chicago Record* 16 (May, 1982), p.127.

⁸ Quarterly AR tuition rates for 2008-09: Biological Sciences (\$3,724); Booth (\$6,675); Divinity (\$4,668); Harris (\$4,494); Humanities (\$5,052); Physical Sciences (\$5,052); Social Sciences (\$5,052); Social Services Administration (\$4,365).

borrow under the student loan programs, deferment of loan repayments, and (for international students) certification of full-time status for visa purposes.

AR tuition rates are established separately in each academic unit, which recommends annually a new rate largely based on the previous year's rate with some adjustment for inflation. In previous years, there has been an almost automatic yearly increase of 5 percent, exceeding most inflation indexes. The rate recommended by the academic unit is then reviewed by the central administration and approved by the Board of Trustees of the University. AR tuition is lower than tuition assessed on Scholastic Residence because of the recognition that advanced graduate students tend to access fewer academic resources and services of the University in the later stages of their graduate career.

Just as questions about the residence system have been raised and addressed at various times over the past three decades, the issue of time-to-degree also is not new. The Baker Report expressed concern in 1982 that time-to-degree had increased in the previous decade, and it offered various recommendations to address time-to-degree issues, including the aforementioned significant changes to the registration and residence system. In the 1990s, the University participated in a 10-year study of Ph.D. programs aimed at supporting students' degree completion in a reasonable length of time and reducing attrition rates, the Mellon Foundation's Graduate Education Initiative.⁹ The study's findings suggest that reductions in cohort size, increases in financial aid, and increases in student quality along with the setting of clear expectations and departmental encouragement and support are all connected to reducing attrition and improving graduation rates. Most recently, in 2007, the Graduate Aid Initiative—providing students in the Humanities Division, Social Sciences Division, and the Divinity School with five years of substantial funding, two summer fellowships, and health insurance—was implemented in part to facilitate timely degree completion.

Like the committees that have addressed the challenges of graduate education over the past 30 years and made recommendations for improving the experience and education of the University's students, this Committee, too, has identified challenges to address and changes to make. In the current economy, we recognize that some of the recommendations may not be financially feasible, and yet we still wanted to take this opportunity to detail a variety of possible recommendations we believe can significantly improve graduate education at the University, and in particular, the experience of students in AR.

IV. Recommendations

As noted earlier, recent studies have identified a number of clear initiatives universities can implement for improving Ph.D. programs and for shortening time-to-degree without sacrificing academic excellence. Specifically, these national studies have suggested that paying closer attention to the selection process of potential graduate students, adequate financial support, advising and mentoring in the early years of graduate education, providing opportunities for research with faculty, clearly delineating and tracking progress toward candidacy, and informal and formal support during the research and writing of the dissertation all contribute to the successful completion of the Ph.D. in a timely fashion.

⁹ Harriet Zuckerman and Joseph S. Meisel, *The Foundation's Programs for Research Universities and Humanistic Scholarship: 2001 Annual Report* (New York: NY: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 2001).

While there is disagreement in some departments about whether lessening time-to-degree should be a priority, it is the Committee’s opinion that for students who wish to complete their degrees in a shorter amount of time, the University has an obligation to ensure there are support structures to facilitate timely completion without sacrificing the high quality academic rigor that is the hallmark of a University of Chicago education. At a minimum, the Committee believes that minimizing time to candidacy should be a priority.

The Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out National Survey concluded that “the route to shorter [time-to-degree] runs through improving the quality of support and attention offered to students not only in learning to do research and through mentoring by the dissertation chair, but also in program transparency, guidance to complete the PhD, career preparation, and training in professional skills such as teamwork, communication, and management.”¹⁰ Many departments within the University are already engaged in some of the best practices identified in the recommendations below. It is the Committee’s hope that by formally recommending them, the Provost can encourage more departments to implement and to share successful practices across the divisions and schools.

The Committee recognizes that there are essentially three cohorts of graduate students: 1) students in the Humanities Division, Social Sciences Division, and the Divinity School who benefit from the Graduate Aid Initiative (GAI), 2) students who matriculated into those three academic units before the GAI and the students in less well-funded schools not covered by the GAI, and 3) students in the Biological Sciences Division, the Physical Sciences Division, and the Booth School of Business, who are generally regarded as well-funded. The experience of these three student groups may be considerably different as they advance through the residence system, and the Committee is aware of the need to keep in mind the needs of the non-GAI population, especially those students who received significantly less funding upon entering graduate school, when making recommendations for changing the residence system.

Recommendation #1: Implement an official process for determining the AR tuition and adjust the cost of AR out-of-pocket tuition to an appropriate level that reflects the total range of services and resources to which students have access as they complete their doctoral degrees.

The Committee understands that employment and loan burdens necessary to pay for AR out-of-pocket tuition, other fees, and living expenses can keep students from focusing on their graduate work. The Committee recommends that the University make every attempt to reduce the rate of AR out-of-pocket tuition that students pay, but not eliminate it entirely.

AR tuition and associated out-of-pocket costs reflect all of the services and resources that the University makes available to those who have chosen to be members of its community of scholars-in-training. Although this reflection of the cost of available resources is the primary rationale for the existence of AR tuition, AR tuition can also take on several important secondary functions, though they may not be applicable to all students to the same degree. For example, in conjunction with other fees, health insurance, and living expenses, AR out-of-pocket costs can help to encourage students to make important decisions about whether to continue pursuing a Ph.D. AR tuition can

¹⁰ Picciano, “Does Time to Degree Matter.”

also help to discourage students from delaying progress in order to maintain full-time privileges, such as loan deferments, eligibility to borrow, and access to student health insurance.

Currently, the process for determining the appropriate level of AR tuition varies across divisions. The Committee recommends that a clearly defined system for determining AR tuition and out-of-pocket tuition be developed and implemented. We also recommend that the divisions, schools, and the Office of the Bursar place clearly on their websites an explanation of what programs and services are supported by AR tuition so that students will be aware of all the programs and services available to them and understand how their tuition dollars support graduate education. Similarly, any planned increase in AR tuition or out-of-pocket tuition should be accompanied by a public narrative explaining why the increase is necessary.

Recommendation #2: Redistribute teaching aid so that all advanced graduate students can benefit from these funds instead of only those students who teach.

Teaching aid, also known as tuition remission, is the payment of out-of-pocket tuition costs by the division for AR students during the quarter that they teach. There is no coherent rationale for tying tuition to teaching, beyond the fact that students who have access to teaching jobs have become accustomed to it from the days when it was instituted as a benefit to offset low pay. Since teaching remuneration was raised this past year, however, the University's teaching compensation compares favorably to other teaching opportunities for graduate students in the local area.

Teaching aid is funding that is distributed inequitably since students in those fields with many teaching opportunities on campus benefit from this form of divisional support in a way that students in departments with few teaching opportunities do not. Students who cannot find teaching work on campus but do secure teaching work at other area schools, for example, have expressed feeling "punished" by AR tuition in a way that their peers who have teaching jobs on campus are not. Also, there are students who would prefer to take teaching positions more relevant to their subject area elsewhere, but they feel obliged to take less relevant teaching positions on campus in order to secure the teaching aid.

The Committee understands that there are possible negative consequences to disentangling teaching and tuition benefits. In addition to the fact that current students benefiting from this structure will lose a source of financial aid, the system incentivizes students to teach at the University. Eliminating teaching aid may result in some departments having difficulty filling their teaching positions, at least in the short term while students adjust to the new system. In order to address these concerns, part of the money currently going to teaching aid could be directed to further increasing teaching compensation. This approach might mitigate the feeling among current students that they are losing a benefit while still accomplishing the goal of separating tuition aid from teaching. It would do little, however, to address the inequitable availability of teaching positions among graduate students.

While there are numerous opportunities for using the money currently directed to provide tuition remission for graduate student teachers, the Committee recommends that the current divisional teaching aid funds be redistributed among all advanced graduate students, lowering the AR out-of-pocket tuition of all AR students across the University.

Recommendation #3: Develop and implement strategies for lessening student financial stress.

The Committee believes strongly that both the University and students should share the responsibility for financing their graduate education. One overwhelming issue of concern for nearly all graduate students is how they will finance their education once they no longer receive internal or external support. Early in students' graduate experience, more explicit discussion about students' financial responsibilities during graduate education should be held by departments, divisions, and central administrative offices involved in graduate education. All levels of the University need to help students early in their graduate careers plan for the financial portions of graduate education that they will be expected to bear.

- A. Departments, divisions, and the Office of the Vice President for Campus Life and Dean of Students in the University should develop and hold yearly workshops for new graduate students to help them engage in financial planning and time management for timely degree completion. Workshops for current students on work-loan strategies should also be held regularly.
- B. The University should continue to work to increase the number of dissertation awards, perhaps through fundraising of named fellowships.
- C. Building on the success of the Provost Summer Fellowships, a new Provost Research Fellowship program should be created starting in 2009-2010 to award 50 competitive fellowships of \$4,500 each to non-GAI students in the Humanities Division, the Social Science Division, the Divinity School, and the School of Social Service Administration through the summer of 2013. The priority for these fellowships will be for those students who have recently advanced to candidacy or are near doing so, and the fellowships should help students maintain or accelerate their progress. This fellowship program is meant to aid those students who are not a part of the GAI and who with small financial assistance could make significant progress toward the Ph.D.

Recommendation #4: Structure teaching opportunities for advanced graduate students to provide greater transparency and access for more students across divisions and schools.

Graduate degrees often take more years to complete than students receive in funding, either internal or external. Many advanced graduate students, especially those outside of the biological and physical sciences, must therefore find ways to support themselves financially during their graduate work, and teaching is often a preferred source of income. It has come to the Committee's attention in talking to students, however, that there are inequities and barriers to teaching that better communication and planning might eliminate. To improve the graduate student teaching experience, the Committee recommends the following three initiatives, some of which divisions have already begun addressing as they make preparations for helping students meet the teaching requirements of the GAI.

- A. Departments should be asked to make teaching assignments on a yearly basis (rather than quarterly) to the extent possible so that students can make realistic and appropriate plans for their financial future.

- B. Departments should centralize the process for making teaching appointments so that all positions are publicly listed, all students both in and outside of the department are allowed and instructed how to apply, and a departmental committee or appropriate administrator, not individual faculty members, makes placement decisions. There is a perception that some students may receive better access to teaching opportunities because of their relationship to specific faculty members, for example, and not because of their qualifications.
- C. The University should create and maintain a comprehensive, current, and easily accessible list of teaching jobs open across all departments and academic units. We believe that there should be increased transparency in the process of applying for and awarding teaching positions.

Recommendation #5: Suggest that departments create guidelines about teaching during the first five years of the graduate program and, if they are not already doing so, consider limiting the amount of teaching advanced students can do during any given year (and enforcing current limitations where they exist).

- A. Unless programmatically important, we recommend that students under the GAI not teach until their third year in the program, giving them time to complete course and exam requirements.
- B. For GAI students, departments should provide students upon entering their programs a document that details expectations and guidelines regarding fulfilling their teaching requirements under the GAI.
- C. Graduate students who are expected to teach and who are not under the GAI should also receive a set of written guidelines and requirements detailing what is expected of them with regards to teaching.
- D. Departments should consider putting a limit on the number of courses a student can teach in any one year. Students should be encouraged to take on a reasonable teaching load that will allow them to make progress on their dissertations. Limiting the amount of teaching positions for individual students may mean that students must consider combining teaching income with loans in order to provide the time for dedicated work on the dissertation.

Recommendation #6: With departmental approval, allow students who have five years of funding to bank their fifth year of funding for use in Year 6 or Year 7.

For students who have clearly met requirements for progress and departmental metrics for success, we advocate they be allowed to bank their fifth year of funding to use in their sixth or seventh year if they feel that they will be in a better position to focus on the completion of the dissertation in Year 6 or Year 7.

Recommendation #7: Ensure that all internal funding awards for graduate students in AR, such as dissertation awards, include health insurance and AR tuition out-of-pocket coverage during the period of the award.

The Committee understands that AR tuition and health insurance costs are a significant burden to many AR students. We believe that internal funding awards when possible should relieve students of most financial burdens allowing them to focus on the completion of the dissertation and Ph.D.

While the committee believes that the University should explore the feasibility of providing health insurance to all students in AR2 and AR3, we recognize that in this economic environment such a policy is probably cost prohibitive. Including out-of pocket and health insurance coverage in current and new internal awards for AR students seems a more reasonable goal.

Recommendation #8: Eliminate Extended Residence (Year 13 and beyond) for students under the Graduate Aid Initiative and immediately take measures to decrease the number of students in ER until ER is eliminated for all students admitted after the 2007-08 academic year.

Since 2007, the Graduate Aid Initiative has drastically changed the funding opportunities the University provides to graduate students in the Social Sciences Division, the Humanities Division, and the Divinity School. Now, like their colleagues in the sciences and many in our professional schools, graduate students in the Humanities Division, the Social Sciences Division, and the Divinity School receive multi-year packages that provide them with the financial support needed for dedicated work on the Ph.D. Given the aid provided through the GAI, the Committee believes that all students who received funding under the GAI should be able to finish graduate work by the end of AR—Year 12—without compromising the quality of their research. Thus, like our peer institutions who have caps on the amount of time students may be enrolled in a program, we are suggesting that at the end of Year 12 graduate students be automatically withdrawn from the University, making them ineligible to receive aid and student privileges in any capacity from the University.

Students who complete the dissertation after an automatic withdrawal at the end of Year 12 would be required to reapply to their departments to be awarded the Ph.D. At the discretion of the departments, these students may be awarded their Ph.D.'s when they meet the following requirements: 1) the sponsoring department certifies that their dissertations meet the standards of the department; 2) the department certifies that the students are knowledgeable about the current state of their fields; and 3) the students register and pay tuition and all fees for the quarter in which they plan to graduate.

The Committee does not recommend that ER be eliminated immediately, but we strongly suggest that the University begin immediately to implement policies which will discourage departments from allowing students to linger in their doctoral programs unnecessarily.

Specifically, we recommend that the following four initiatives be implemented.

- A. Ask departments to submit annually to their academic dean and the Deputy Provost for Graduate Education a memo with detailed information on the progress and plan of completion for every ER student in the department.
- B. Require students to be in candidacy as a condition of ER registration.
- C. Require students in ER to pass a new set of exams demonstrating competency and understanding of the current state of the discipline before receiving the Ph.D.
- D. Institute a policy that the number of new students a department is allowed to admit will be determined, in part, by how many ER students a department has. There are a number of ways to implement such a policy. One option could be that departments with cohorts of 1 to 5 students lose a new admit for every 6 in ER; those with cohorts of 6 to 10 lose a new admit for every 5 in ER; those with cohorts of more than 10 lose a new admit for every 4 in ER. Another option could be for each department to set an optimal number of graduate students relative to the number of faculty in the department. Students in ER will be counted as part of the total number of graduate students allowed, so the entering class each year is determined by subtracting the current number of graduate students in the department (including those in ER) from the agreed upon number for the overall graduate student population for that department. The Committee recommends that the Office of the Provost work closely with the academic deans to establish a policy that will be most effective for each division.

This policy should be implemented in academic year 2011-2012 when the GAI is fully operational, providing sufficient time for departments to work with students currently in ER status toward the completion of the Ph.D.

We believe that there is a limited capacity on the part of the faculty to mentor and advise students. Departments, in conversation with divisions, should determine the number of graduate students that they can effectively support with a focus on how they can help students in ER to finish or make decisions about terminating their studies at the University.

Recommendation #9: Increase awareness and understanding among incoming and current students of realistic programmatic and financial expectations.

Studies suggest that students provided greater information about the requirements of graduate school during the selection process and early in their graduate careers are more likely to complete their programs. The following four initiatives should be instituted to further this goal.

- A. In an effort to ensure that current and prospective students fully understand what is involved in undertaking doctoral work, all departments should hold an annual meeting with all current graduate students to discuss:
 - all programmatic requirements for the completion of the Ph.D.,
 - an estimated schedule for when requirements will be completed,
 - expectations about time management and completion of significant markers of progress (e.g., candidacy),

- information on median time-to-degree,
 - expectable expenses and support at different stages of program, and
 - data on placement.
- B. All of the above information should be included in departmental recruitment materials, in interviews, and readily available on departmental websites.
- C. In their first quarter of graduate study, each graduate student should be provided with a document that outlines the programmatic requirements for the Ph.D. and the expected timeline of completion.
- D. The University should develop an online milestone tracking system of student progress. Students should have an easily accessible electronic portfolio that describes milestones completed and those that need to be addressed, yearly progress reports, their transcript, and teaching evaluations.

Recommendation #10: Increase awareness and understanding among faculty members of realistic programmatic and financial expectations for students, the progress and needs of their current graduate student population, and the overall status of their graduate programs.

Departments and Ph.D.-granting units should implement the following three initiatives.

- A. All units should hold a yearly faculty meeting to discuss programmatic requirements, median time-to-degree, placement information, trends of special populations (e.g., women students, students of color, international students, students involved in field work, students engaged in language acquisition), and how the department's graduate program compares to that of its peers.
- B. All units should hold a yearly review of all students in the graduate program. The review should provide written feedback to students about their progress in the program and include a reasonable schedule, developed in partnership with the student, for completion of the Ph.D. The results of the review should also provide information to the student's advisor and the rest of the faculty on the progress of students in the program. This review is important for all students but may be especially necessary for students in AR status.
- C. Every five years, all Ph.D.-granting units should be required to conduct an extensive internal review of their graduate program with a summary report of their findings to be submitted to the relevant academic dean(s) and the Deputy Provost for Graduate Education. The review should address the following:
- information and trends regarding matriculating students,
 - evaluation of the program requirements such as coursework and field exams,
 - progress of students in all residence categories (SR, AR, ER),
 - time to candidacy,
 - the impact of incompletes on the progress of students,
 - advising and mentoring processes for students—formal and informal,

- pedagogical requirements and support for graduate student teachers,
- special efforts to support research and publishing among graduate students,
- programs to support the writing of the dissertation,
- professional development workshops,
- opportunities for students to present their work in professional settings,
- changes in median time-to-degree,
- financial support provided to students through the department,
- new initiatives to improve the graduate program,
- placement trends, and
- how the program compares in structure and success to peer departments.

Recommendation #11: Require departments to submit to their deans of students a plan for the advising and mentoring of graduate students.

Recent data on graduate school completion has highlighted the positive impact of mentoring during the early years of graduate education on completion rates.¹¹ We believe that all Ph.D.-granting entities should develop and implement a plan to mentor graduate students early and throughout their graduate careers. This form of mentoring might include some combination of faculty mentors and advanced graduate student mentors.

In general, departments should devise ways to increase substantive faculty contact with students. Departments should also be sure to pay attention to the challenges faced by certain student populations (e.g., students of color, students with disabilities, international students, and women or men, depending on the field).

We recommend that units:

- A. Set and communicate clear expectations for advisor-student contact for each phase of program completion;
- B. Establish incentives and procedures that reinforce the importance of timely faculty interaction with students, including turning in grades on time and providing comments on dissertation chapter drafts in a suitable amount of time;
- C. Create a conflict management strategy to resolve problems between students and advisors;
- D. Hold an orientation for new faculty (and occasional faculty workshops) on mentoring and advising graduate students and how those responsibilities change over the course of a student's graduate career;

¹¹ *The Responsive Ph.D.: Innovations in U.S. Doctoral Education* (Princeton: N.J.: Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005).

- E. Assign a specific faculty advisor to each entering student, requiring visits with and reports from the advisor during the first two years of study until students are able to establish their own faculty mentorship and advising relationships;
- F. Implement advising sessions between faculty and students at the dissertation stage, in which the multiple demands of the academic profession would be realistically described and discussed, and the essential importance of time management and multi-tasking would be highlighted, along with strategies for coping with these demands. Dissertation committees should be mandated to meet as a group once a year with a progress statement by the student endorsed by all members of the dissertation committee.
- G. Designate a set of advanced graduate students who will help newer students problem-solve and provide support and guidance;
- H. Establish a cohort support group led by advanced graduate students; and
- I. Match applicants and faculty interests in the screening process. Successful applicants should be matched to faculty advisors based on similarity of scholarly interest and willingness of faculty to mentor.

Recommendation #12: Create and publicize resources and support networks for graduate students.

- A. The Office of the Vice President for Campus Life and Dean of Students in the University should expand and coordinate proposal development and dissertation workshops that help current dissertation writers work on issues of time management, writing strategies, and deadlines (fostering interdisciplinary exchange and community-building and reducing isolation), ultimately helping students to understand and plan for the academic profession's demands for simultaneously teaching, researching, and writing.
- B. Departments should make a list available of all doctoral students who wish to be included in proposal and dissertation writing groups, with relevant information regarding areas of interest and contact information provided to facilitate networking and peer support. Students have complained that they often feel isolated and unaware of other students, even within their departments and divisions, with whom they might network and find support.
- C. The Office of the Vice President for Campus Life and Dean of Students in the University should create interdisciplinary events and networking opportunities that bring students (especially underrepresented minorities) together to reduce social isolation and increase interdisciplinary interaction.
- D. Departments should explore the possibility of creating departmental dissertation proposal courses.

Recommendation #13: Departments should encourage language preparation in the summer before matriculation and consider expanding the number of low-cost summer courses available to students for commonly-studied languages.

Based on discussions with department chairs and students, the Committee understands that the need to learn one or more foreign languages (in particular, Asian languages) can add a considerable amount of time to doctoral education. The Department of Art History has found that having students on campus the summer before they start their first quarter of graduate work for intensive language courses—an initiative funded both by the department and by individual students themselves—has been a big success, helping students acclimate to the University of Chicago and enabling students who needed it to get a jump-start on their language learning.

Recommendation #14: Increase student access to research opportunities.

- A. The Office of Graduate Affairs, departments, and divisions should enhance their regular communication to students regarding awards, events, activities, and funding opportunities.
- B. Faculty should provide opportunities for early research experience (pre-dissertation research internships/assistantships).
- C. Departments and faculty should strongly encourage students to present dissertation chapters and draft articles at workshops sponsored by departments, divisions, and the Council on Advanced Studies.
- D. Divisions and departments should encourage and allow faculty to teach two-quarter research and writing graduate courses where students have time to produce publishable papers for their final grade.

Recommendation #15: Extend the Graduate Aid Initiative to all relevant doctoral students, regardless of division or school.

Although the current economy might make doing so prohibitively expensive immediately, the Committee believes that the University should strive to extend the GAI to doctoral students in all relevant divisions and schools, such as doctoral students in the School of Social Service Administration.

Once the extension of the GAI is permanent, it would then make sense to restructure the registration system to parallel the years of funding provided, with Scholastic Residence (SR) tied to the initial multi-year funding package so that SR is Years 1-5 and AR is Years 6-12.

V. Conclusion

The University's central administration, the divisions and schools, and the academic departments and programs have a clear responsibility to provide reasonable support so that students can make steady and adequate progress through their programs. At the same time, students also have a

responsibility to plan how they will complete their graduate education in a reasonable amount of time, recognizing that while the University will invest significant resources toward their education, they must also shoulder the responsibility and make their own financial contributions toward the completion of their degrees. We believe the recommendations detailed in this report will enhance the experience of our graduate students, providing them greater time and resources to concentrate on the completion of the dissertation and their graduate education in a reasonable amount of time. Finally, the Committee recognizes that in the current economy it may be difficult for the University to fund all of our recommendations. It is our belief, however, that these recommendations speak to long-needed changes that will improve our graduate program and should be implemented as soon as possible.