

This document has been revised to reflect updated data from the Humanities Division, February 25, 2008.

To: University Community

From: Provost Thomas Rosenbaum, Deputy Provost Cathy Cohen, and Vice President and Dean of Students Kimberly Goff-Crews

Date: February 21, 2008

Re: Action Steps in Support of Graduate Students

In May of 2007 the Provost appointed the Working Group on Graduate Student Life in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Divinity School to explore issues of graduate life relevant to both current and future graduate students. Over the past few weeks we have shared the Working Group's report and recommendations with graduate students and faculty, and we have met with numerous groups in order to hear their questions and concerns. The feedback we heard in these discussions and in earlier communications from graduate students has informed our decisions.

We are deeply committed to the success of our graduate and professional students. The University of Chicago graduate experience has been distinguished by our outstanding faculty, our exceptionally gifted graduate students, and our commitment to follow innovative intellectual pursuits independent of discipline or scholarly tradition. Our goal in taking these additional actions is to enhance the educational experience of all our graduate students, and to provide them with the resources they need to succeed in the academy or in their chosen profession.

The actions we announce today will materially improve the circumstances of graduate students in Divinity, Humanities and Social Sciences as well as addressing a broad range of concerns affecting graduate and professional students. The Central Administration, the Divisions and the Departments together will commit approximately \$4.9 million over the next five years in order to implement these actions.

Specifically, we will:

* Allow departments in the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions to reduce the number of new graduate students admitted in 2008-09, and use the reallocated funding to raise the stipend level for current graduate students. The resources made available by the Provost's Office, the Divisions and the Departments to improve support for current students will be \$705,000 in the Humanities and \$421,000 in the Social Sciences. The following Humanities departments have elected to participate: Art History, Cinema and Media Studies, Classics, Comparative Literature, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, English, History of Culture, Jewish Studies, Linguistics, Music, New Testament, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Slavic Languages and Literatures. Participating departments in the Social Sciences are

Sociology, Political Science, History, and the Committee on Social Thought.

* Expand the Graduate Aid Initiative to include matriculating doctoral students in the Divinity School beginning in 2008-09. In addition, Divinity also will reduce the number of students admitted in order to reallocate funds to raise stipend levels for current graduate students. This represents a new funding commitment of \$1.4 million over four years in support of current graduate students.

* Increase the number of Provost Summer Fellowships from 25 to 100 in 2008, and from 15 to 50 in 2009. (The number of fellowships each year will decrease as the number of students in Scholastic Residence not covered by the Graduate Aid Initiative also decreases.) This new funding commitment of \$330,000 is coming from the Provost and the Vice President and Dean of Students. The Summer Fellowships, awarded competitively, are designed to assist students so they may concentrate on undertakings such as preparing for exams, completing a thesis or conducting research during the summer.

* Increase the number of dissertation-year fellowships by 15 during the 2008-09 academic year. Currently there are 80 such fellowships offered within Humanities or Social Sciences, allowing advanced graduate students whose funding has expired to concentrate on completing their dissertations. The new fellowships will be funded for the next five years, with a goal of expanding to 20 new fellowships during that period and raising sufficient funds to fully endow the new fellowships into the future. The University's five-year funding commitment for this program will be more than \$2 million.

* Appoint a committee to review the compensation structure for graduate student teaching, with a goal of implementing the accepted recommendations by the start of the 2008-09 academic year. In addition, the committee will be asked to make a wide range of recommendations concerning the roles and responsibilities of graduate student teachers, pedagogical training, and systems for monitoring and improving the experience of graduate student teachers.

* Appoint a committee to review the advanced-residency system and the yearly increases in advanced-residency tuition.

* Appoint a committee to recommend improvement of services in support of international graduate students.

* Review the effectiveness of health insurance programs and health care services for graduate students.

* Strengthen the mechanisms for consultation with graduate students, and develop regular surveys of graduate students.

These action steps, and the appointment of the Working Group, are part of a larger effort by the University to invest in graduate students and graduate education. In addition to the Graduate Aid Initiative and the expansion of health insurance coverage for current graduate

students announced last year, there are numerous other ways in which we have demonstrated the significance of graduate education to the life of the University. The appointment of Professor Cathy Cohen as the new Deputy Provost for Graduate Education was part of that commitment, as was the appointment of Kimberly Goff-Crews as Vice-President and Dean of Students. Over the next several months we will engage in a critical assessment of the graduate experience across the University as part of our ongoing work to improve the experience of graduate and professional students.

A more detailed description of our action steps, along with the complete report of the Working Group, is available on the Provost's office website at <http://provost.uchicago.edu/news/>.

We will schedule an open forum soon for the three of us to meet with graduate students for a follow-up discussion. If you have questions in the meantime, you may respond to this message at provost@uchicago.edu <<mailto:provost@uchicago.edu>>.