

Memorandum

Date: June 2, 2017
To: Dean Shane Burgess
From: CALS Graduate Funding Task Force
Subj: Recommendations

Over the past 9 months the CALS Graduate Funding Task Force has collected data and sought feedback from Unit Heads and key stakeholders in graduate education with a goal of developing a plan for expanding financial support for CALS graduate programs. The committee has developed a set of recommendations (*Five Principles*, attached), including budgetary implications. A two-year phased implementation could begin in FY 2018 (specifically, August 2017), with full implementation in FY 2019.

We believe that adoption and funding of the Five Principles proposal would be a major step forward for graduate education in CALS. Importantly, the proposal would make CALS units more competitive in attracting and training high-quality PhD students and improve our ability to deliver on our undergraduate instructional mission. Under the Five Principles, CALS would increase its central investment in funding graduate students (both research assistants and teaching assistants) by \$654,000 per year, expanding the total pool of centrally provided funding by 38%.

CALS Academic Units would receive central (non-grant) funding sufficient to cover the full cost of first-year PhD students (targeted at 40 students for the initial year of the proposal, reflective of enrollment patterns over the past 3 years), with the understanding that the Units would assume responsibility for guaranteeing student funding in subsequent years, up to a maximum of 5 years in the program. Students would receive 12-month assistantship support and stipend levels would be standardized within a program at a nationally competitive level for the discipline. Each PhD student would receive a meaningful teaching experience during their program and CALS would centrally provide TA funding for all undergraduate Gen Ed and service courses (including lab sections) that reach designated enrollment minimums.

Implications for the CALS all-funds budget derive from two key components of this proposal, the commitment to centrally fund first-year PhD students and the agreement to centrally fund TAs for Gen Ed and service courses. CALS funding of Gen Ed and service courses could begin in Fall 2017. Based on modeling of 2016-17 enrollments across the college, we estimate that this TA funding component will cost an additional \$331,000 annually. It would grow as enrollments grow, and could be easily funded out of the incremental RCM revenues.

Since the class of PhD students who will enter in Fall 2017 has already been recruited, we recommend that the central funding of the entering class (up to 40 students across the college) be implemented in FY2019, and be distributed across Units on a pro-rated basis based upon the current size of their graduate PhD programs. Under the Five Principles, we estimate the total incremental cost to the CALS central budget annually to be \$323,000. Adoption of the Five Principles proposal now means that Units could begin recruiting PhD students next fall with the assurance of centrally provided funding.

The attached table contains a summary of our modeling of the budgetary implications. A more detailed report from the Task Force will follow shortly. But, given this point in the budget preparation cycle, we want to provide you with this high-level statement of our recommendations and associated budgetary implications.

Modeling of fully loaded cost of entering class of 40 PhD students, plus expanded TA program	Unit	1st yr PHD Students	Expense (12 mnth @24K + ERE (13.5%) + Tuition (12K) = \$39,240	TA Slots	Expense: \$5,675 + \$3,000 tuition remission, since regular semester 1/4 time TA slots can be supplemented with summer teaching	Total cost of both programs
	ABE	3	\$ 117,720	11	\$ 95,425	\$ 213,145
	ACBS	2	\$ 78,480	13	\$ 112,775	\$ 191,255
	AGED		\$ -		\$ -	\$ 31,019
	AREC		\$ -		\$ -	\$ 11,250
	ENTO	1.5	\$ 58,860		\$ -	\$ 58,860
	FCSC	4	\$ 156,960	8	\$ 69,400	\$ 226,360
	NSC	2	\$ 78,480	27	\$ 234,225	\$ 312,705
	PLS	4	\$ 156,960	9	\$ 78,075	\$ 235,035
	SNRE	9	\$ 353,160	5	\$ 43,375	\$ 396,535
	SWES	10	\$ 392,400		\$ -	\$ 392,400
	MAC		\$ -		\$ -	\$ 17,000
	CAS	4.5	\$ 176,580	16	\$ 138,800	\$ 315,380
	Grand Total	40	\$ 1,569,600	89	\$ 772,075	\$ 2,400,944
CAS Funds to Disburse Annually						
Tuition Remission	\$ 451,000		Net new investment needed to implement both programs	\$ 654,820	Net new investment needed to implement TA program in Fall 2017	\$ 331,283
CALS GA	\$ 410,707					
Micro	\$ 100,000					
Tier 1	\$ 164,000					
RC Waivers	\$ 470,417					
GC Fellowships	\$ 150,000					
Total current CALS investment	\$ 1,746,124					

CALS “Five Principles” for Support of Graduate Education

- 1. First year funding for all PhD students will come from institutional sources (UA, CALS, Grad Program) or fellowships or institutional training grants, and not from individual faculty grants.**

Rationale:

- a) This enables lab rotations for programs where this is appropriate.
- b) Regardless of whether rotations are a desired activity in a particular program, this policy frees first year students from potential pressure by PI’s for lab productivity during a year that is full of coursework and other non-lab activities.

- 2. All matriculating PhD students should be guaranteed full support for the duration of their graduate training up to a maximum of 5 years.**

Rationale:

- a) It’s difficult to be competitive with graduate programs across the country because most programs make this guarantee in their offer letters.
- b) In principle, the funding responsibility should lie with the graduate program and not with the student.
- c) The funding guarantee is made collectively by the graduate program/department, ensuring that as long as a student remains in good standing the graduate program commits to identifying stipend and tuition funding. Funds will typically come from numerous sources, including competitive fellowships that students obtain from external sources, faculty grants, institutional sources, etc. For many graduate programs, this matching of resources with students is an ongoing process. Historically most programs have covered funding for their graduate students for the duration of their training. It’s frequently a bit of a scramble each year, but it comes together in the end.
- d) Since the duration of a typical grant is three years and most PhD students require at least five years to complete their graduate training, faculty are often concerned that they cannot guarantee support for the duration of a graduate student’s career. It is acknowledged that at the time of matriculation it will only rarely be possible to identify the funding mechanism(s) supporting a particular student through their entire graduate experience. This should not be a rationale for failing to guarantee support for matriculating students for the duration of their graduate education.

- 3. All students should receive 12 months of support**

Rationale:

- a. In almost all cases, PhD students are full time employees and their support should reflect this.

- 4. Stipend levels should be standardized within a program and be at a nationally competitive level for the discipline.**

Rationale:

- a. This is important to make us competitive with programs at other institutions.
- b. In principle, all students should be paid similarly within a program, acknowledging the occasional fellowship that might pay higher stipends and graduated stipend levels for more senior students

- 5. All PhD students will have a meaningful teaching experience.**

Rationale:

- a. This could be an official T/A position or a non-paid experience. The mix depends on the availability of T/A slots and the specific graduate program. The latter non-paid experience model is used by numerous graduate programs on campus that don’t have associated T/A slots, or not enough, but still feel that teaching experience is an important component of training.