

## Summer 2021 Holistic Graduate Funding Task Force Basic Principles and Specific Tasks

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### Goals of Task Force

The first goal of the task force is to elucidate the present situation:

- a. what resources the university presently allocates to graduate support;
- b. how we package those funds into different forms like “block grant”, “diversity fellowships” and so forth; and
- c. how the funds then get delivered to the students.

The second goal of the task force is to recommend how we might do better in the future by:

- making processes [b] and [c] more transparent, simple, streamlined, and rational and
- by either reconfiguring [a] to ensure more of those resources go toward graduate stipends directly and/or increasing the resources in [a] if possible.

To the extent that we can get accurate information from other UC’s about stipend sizes, the task force will take that information into account.

### Basic Principles of Graduate Funding

- All PhD/MFA students are guaranteed 5 years/3 years of full support.
- Full support is defined as:
  - All tuition and fees (note: 90% of pre-candidacy NRST provided via campus-based GSGEI program; post-candidacy NRST provided via UC waiver)
  - A stipend of not less than \$30K across 12 months
    - Each academic-year quarter, the funding package minimum is equivalent to the compensation of a 50% TA.
    - Every student will be afforded the opportunity to earn a 12-month minimum stipend of \$30K;
    - For students in A&H or SS (except Psychology), as well as students in Mathematics, *two of their five summers* will be fellowship supported; the remaining summers will be employment based;

## **Block Grant: Context and Recent History**

- The block grant is an annual sum of money distributed to programs for direct student support.
- Programs enjoy flexibility in how they decide to distribute these funds to students, so long as they adhere to the basic principles of graduate funding.
- The block grant is not the single source of funding for doctoral/MFA students
  - TA positions, readerships, grant funding (faculty grants, training grants, etc.), endowments, and various other external sources are additional elements making up the corpus of funding
  - Data show that STEM programs have ample grant funding to typically admit a substantially larger cohort than the block grant can sustain
  - Other programs (mostly non-STEM) rely upon the block grant and TA funding to fully support their students
- Historically, we have not had an easy-to-understand block grant formula. The Senate-Administration Workgroup report that led to graduate funding reform suggested creation of an easy-to-understand and more predictable formulation.
- During 2019-2020, The Graduate Division assembled a working group of faculty and administrators to discuss creating an easy-to-understand and predictable block grant formula, which also fit within the allocated budget. This resulted in the following:
  - A working formula of a certain number of quarters [Q] of stipend plus tuition and fees, plus one summer [S] of stipend as a basic formula for the calculation of the block grant--this formula would be multiplied by cohort size, and adjusted by a scaling factor that took into account a program's access to grant resources (i.e., [*# of quarters*] \* [*stipend plus tuition and fees*] \* [*incoming cohort size*] \* [*scaling factor*])
  - We agreed that the ideal formulation would be  $3Q + S$ , but we also modeled other formulations (e.g.,  $2Q + S$ ) in order to match the budget that was allocated for the block grant
  - Every program agreed to have annual cohort-setting conversations with the Graduate Division, which we began in Spring 2020
- Pandemic-related financial questions impeded our ability to use a formula for the 2020-2021 block grant allocations
- As a result, in 2020-2021, all programs simply received a 2% increase over their last block grant allocation; we agreed to return to a formula-driven approach as soon as possible

## **New Investment in Block Grant: The \$30K Initiative**

The Chancellor and EVC have prioritized ensuring all PhD/MFA students have the opportunity to earn at least \$30K of stipend across a 12-month period. This is already true in most STEM programs, where it is also true that sufficient support is provided so students are able to work on their own research. The university will invest additional funding for programs that lack sufficient grant resources to enable 12-months of stipend at the \$30K level and, in so doing, will also ensure that students in these doctoral programs receive two summers of fellowship support and students in MFA programs receive one summer of fellowship support. During the remaining summers, students shall be given the opportunity to earn employment based funding.

The programs included in this \$30K initiative are:

- all Arts & Humanities programs
- all Social Sciences programs, except Psychology;
- the Mathematics department's programs, and
- the JDP in Clinical Psychology
- These programs shall receive additional funding, via the block grant, that will help fill the gap between the average 12-month compensation their students received (according to 2019 baseline data) and \$30K. Specifically, this support will allow these programs to provide fellowship support for two summers for each doctoral student and one summer for each MFA student.
- The remaining summers of support shall be employment based. The university will make additional investments in summer session TAs and in summer employment opportunities in other university units.
- All other programs have been deemed to already meet the \$30K minimum 12-month stipend equivalent, and will therefore not receive this infusion of additional block grant support.

## **Resuming Effort to Create a Simplified and Predictable Block Grant Formula**

In general, twelve months of minimum support for one student can be expressed as:

$$3Q + S$$

( $Q$  is one quarter of stipend plus resident tuition and fees;  
 $S$  is one summer of 50% TA-level stipend)

It is our goal to have the block grant provide one full year of non-TA based support for students who are enrolled in programs that lack sufficient grant, or other, resources to meet this goal. As such, the amount of block grant allocated to such a program can be expressed as:

$$[3Q + S] * [cohort size]$$

For programs that are in the \$30K initiative described above, the block grant allocation for MFA students would be well-described by the above, while that for doctoral students can be expressed as:

$$[3Q + 2S] * [cohort size]$$

We suggest that the  $[3Q + 2S] * [cohort size]$  formula represents the ideal for any doctoral student, whether or not they are enrolled in a program that is part of the \$30K initiative. Our experience suggests that those programs that are not part of the \$30K initiative already meet the ideal that the \$30K initiative is trying to reach. That is, they offer summer support and/or other non-TA-based funding that allows students to work on their own research. And they do so at a level that is at, or above, the \$30K level across a 12-month period.

So, for simplicity, we recommend the block grant formula be  $[3Q + 2S] * [cohort size]$  for all doctoral programs, but a scaling factor be added to the formula. This scaling factor would range from 0 to 1. Likewise, we recommend the block grant formula be  $[3Q + S] * [cohort size]$  for all MFA programs, again with a scaling factor included.

The scaling factor would take into account a program's current access to grant resources and their dependence upon the block grant to meet the ideal funding level of \$30K per year with a minimum of two summers of non-TA support for doctoral students and one summer for MFA students

Hypothetically, a program within the \$30K initiative, which we know is almost entirely reliant upon the block grant and TA funding to support students, and/or otherwise lacks sufficient grant resources to meet the basic principles of graduate funding, would have a scaling factor of 1, whereas other programs (mostly STEM programs) would have a scaling factor of less than 1.

Doing so would yield a universal formulation, as follows:

For PhD students:  $[3Q + 2S] * [cohort size] * [scaling factor]$

For MFA students:  $[3Q + S] * [cohort size] * [scaling factor]$

**Recommendation Needed:**

***Suggest a methodology for determining the scaling factor for each program***

## **TA Funding**

In the spring of 2021, TA funding was calibrated to take into account the pedagogical demand of delivering each course. Every department participated in a data collection effort, guided by a set of universally-defined rubrics, that allowed the departments to categorize the pedagogical demand of their courses.

This effort led to the creation of a new TA resource allocation for every department. These resources, as has historically been true, were sent to Divisional Deans, who then had the flexibility to either follow the allocation or make internal adjustments. Allocations were also communicated to programs.

Overall, the new TA funding allocation distributed more TA resources in the direction of academic divisions whose departments offered more courses that were deemed to be more challenging, pedagogically, to deliver.

*Note: Because we promised that the TA allocation methodology would be re-examined in a few years, the task force has no work to complete in this area at this time.*

## **Diversity Fellowships**

The Graduate Division has sponsored the San Diego Fellowship and the Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship over the past many years (<https://grad.ucsd.edu/diversity/incoming-fellowships/sdf-cr-fellowships.html#Eligibility>). These diversity fellowships, though successful in helping the university recruit students, are not sufficiently funded to support the current awarding approach. Moreover, the current approach may not currently be yielding broad success in increasing diversity across a range of programs campus-wide. We describe each dilemma, below.

### **Insufficient Funding**

The current awarding approach asks every program to nominate a maximum of three individuals in their incoming admitted class. The monies awarded are ultimately a function of who accepts an offer to come to UC San Diego. Theoretically, a program might have all three of its nominees choose to accept an admission offer, but often a program will have fewer accept the offer. When a program has none of its students accept an offer, they often ask if they can nominate other students. However, fiscal constraints make it difficult to give programs this desired additional flexibility.

Diversity fellowships are multi-year commitments, and the cost to The Graduate Division is long term. However, in the past, monies were never specifically earmarked to support diversity

fellowships. The monies come straight out of the core block grant allocation. What this means is that the more successful we are in attracting our diversity fellowship nominees, the less core block grant allocation is available to fund The Graduate Division's other block grant commitments. What has happened over the past several years is that diversity fellowship commitments have reduced block grant funding to the point that The Graduate Division has entered a sustained period of deficit spending.

Aside from the structural deficit caused by an underfunded diversity fellowship program, the potential scenario where every department yields all three of its diversity fellows would further exacerbate the challenge. As of now, spending on diversity fellowships is not at the level of a fully-realized yield. If every program had all three of its nominees accept their offers of admission, the deficit spending would expand even more.

### **Questionable Campus-Wide Efficacy of Current Approach**

Because of the constraints of affirmative action legislation, the criteria to be eligible for a diversity fellowship are necessarily broad in nature. Specifically, programs nominate a student *whose presence would enhance diversity to the benefit of the entire campus community as evidenced by having overcome barriers such as social, educational or economic backgrounds, and/or demonstrating a commitment to diversity or increasing educational access for underrepresented students.*

Nowhere do these eligibility criteria ensure that nominees are individuals who are from backgrounds that are traditionally underrepresented. And, although it would be infeasible, legally, to write eligibility criteria that would ensure this, the question still remains whether the current criteria are producing the educationally-beneficial diversity that programs desire.

Moreover, our data suggest that the current diversity fellowship approach does not uniformly benefit every program. Some programs have enjoyed tremendous success yielding their nominees, whereas others have enjoyed little success. This leads us to conclude that, aside from the fiscal constraints outlined above, we may also need to review the current diversity fellowship approach in terms of its overall efficacy to produce broad success across all programs at the university, and not just those that seem to have been repeatedly successful.

### **Recommendation Needed:**

*Review the diversity fellowship approach and recommend a new approach that is both fiscally sustainable and efficacious in producing greater diversity across the campus, not just within a small set of programs*