October 15, 2010

To: Department Chairs and Graduate Program Directors  
From: Dave Francko, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School  
Re: new Graduate Council Fellowship Enhancement Partnership program for 2011-12 GCF competition

As the Call for Nominations materials go out for 2011-12 Graduate Council Fellowship Rounds, I want to make you aware of a new program we want to pilot this year – the **Fellowship Enhancement Partnership (FEP) Program.**

About 80% of all students to whom we make Graduate Council Fellowship (GCF) offers accept those offers and come to UA. However, many of you have indicated that you are losing your best applicants due to low stipends relative to national norms in your discipline. We lack the resources to unilaterally raise GCF stipends across the board from their current $15,000 levels without reducing the number of fellowships offered. The FEP program will allow us to strategically increase stipends without decreasing the overall number of offers.

The new FEP Program is modeled around the way we now approach the Graduate Student Research and Travel Grant Program - - a partnership between departments and the Graduate School that allows us to fund more than 5 times as many students as we did a few years ago. **The FEP Program will blend departmental stipend add-on funds with add-on funds from the Graduate School to make it possible to offer many more students the higher stipends that competition requires.**

**Departmental participation in the new FEP Program is completely voluntary,** and for those departments without sources of add-on funding or who do not wish to commit their own resources, we will retain the current $5,000 supplement program. Departments who do not elect to participate in the FEP Program may still request a $5,000 supplement for their top candidate, without any cost sharing required. However, because of resource limitations we will probably need to restrict the current no-cost-share $5,000 supplement awards to one student per department per year.

To participate in the new FEP Program simply requires a memo from the department Chair telling me; 1) the total number of GCF nominees they are willing to support for all three Regular Rounds of competition (we will exempt applicants for the Research and Creative Activities Round from the FEP Program since these are current UA students), and 2) the amount of add-on support the department is willing to commit per student funded. **The Graduate School will match this departmental add-on 1:1 in the final stipend award, up to a total of $3,000 per student, with no restrictions on the total number of students receiving add-ons.**

As an example, department A indicates that they are willing to support up to 5 GCF awards with $3,000 each in departmental add-on funding. If upon screening all the applications from that department the Graduate Council Committee on Financial Aid recommends that we make 5 total awards in Rounds 1, 2, and 3, then each of department A’s nominees will receive **$21,000 stipend offers, effectively doubling the department’s investment.** If the department wishes to fund 5 awardees, and commits an additional $1,000 per award, than we’d match the $1,000 and make the stipend $17,000 instead of the usual $15,000.

**Any source of departmental matching funds can be used, including grants and overhead recovery funds.** Because we want to work with rather than compete against divisional add-on
programs designed to enhance recruiting within their respective departments (e.g., the new Dean’s Merit and Dean’s Diversity awards in Arts and Sciences and the C & BA Fellowship program), **departments many not use divisional add-on funds to match Graduate School FEP Awards.**

Only ONE additional restriction: for 2011-12 at least, we will allow departments to use up to a 0.25-FTE GTA or GRA as match for an FEP award, but NOT a 0.5-FTE position. Why this restriction? Simply stated, we want the new FEP program not only to leverage more acceptances from our top students, but also to free up departmental and grant-supported GTAs or GRAs that can then be used to make additional awards to different students – **thus increasing the total number of funded student positions your department can offer.** Think of it this way - - Nick Saban heavily recruits 5-star recruits, but he knows that if he does not ALSO effectively recruit those 4-star and 3-star players who would be a good fit in his system, he won’t have the kind of team he wants.

We want to GROW graduate enrollments with quality and diversity, not simply cannibalize existing pots of money to fund the same number of students. We anticipate funding perhaps 20-25 new FEP Program students for 2011-12, along with perhaps 3 – 5 students funded with the existing $5,000 supplement program. That means the Graduate School investment in the GCF program would increase from the current $25,000 per year or so to perhaps $100,000 yearly. With that level of commitment, we expect to enhance BOTH quality and quantity in your departments.

One other stipulation to keep in mind. The existing $5,000 supplement program requires that departments commit to a second year of funding from their own resources for all awardees. For second-year PhD students, the Graduate School adds the $5,000 to the departmental award, thus providing 2 years of enhanced support. **We will administer the new FEP Program the same way. Departments will be expected to provide 2nd year support, without enhancement, for their successful Master’s applicants.** **For PhD students, the department will agree to provide some sort of 0.5-FTE assistantship for the second year and both the department and the Grad School will agree to maintain the agreed-to add-on stipend in the second year.**

Again, if you do not wish to participate in this first-year pilot program, you need do nothing at this time. If your department DOES want to try this out, I ask Chairs to send me a memo outlining the level of your participation (# of students and cost-share per student) by November 15, 2010. Nothing is currently written in stone - - if you have a more creative way to approach this pilot year within your department I’d be more than happy to hear you out.

It is my hope that at least a few departments will agree to try this out for 2011-12 - - if you are already supplementing your offers this is a way to double the effectiveness of your precious funds!

c: Academic Deans
Provost Bonner