Report to the Review Committee
Graduate Research Scholars Community

College of Letters & Science C-GRS

April 30, 2018

Review Committee:
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“The College of Letters & Science is firmly committed to providing a transformative liberal arts education experience for all. L&S endeavors to make academic excellence inclusive by sustaining a community of free inquiry in which people of diverse race, ethnicity, cultures, veteran status, marital status, socio-economic level, national origin, religious belief, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, class, political ideology and lifestyle participate in, contribute to and benefit equally from a liberal arts education based on the Wisconsin Idea — one in which we all contribute to advancing society.

A diverse liberal arts community — reflected in the student body, faculty, staff, administrators, trustees and other stakeholders — promotes effective teaching, produces greater learning outcomes and provides students with the tools and skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly diverse workforce and pluralistic society in which differences are respected and appreciated.

The College of Letters & Science is also committed to advancing and retaining students from underrepresented populations, nontraditional patterns of academic preparation, economically disadvantaged backgrounds and first generation status.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
By its very nature the College of Letters and Science (L&S) is diverse. It embraces the liberal arts tradition and its community of graduate scholars come from all walks of life and are engaged in a wide range of scholarship. We recognize many areas of strengths in the L&S Community of Graduate Research Scholars (C-GRS) who are supported by Advanced Opportunity Fellowships (AOF), but we also identified several areas of concern and suggestions for improvement. These are highlighted below, with recommendations provided:

1. Community and Information for Scholars Before Arrival
First-year fellows endure logistical and emotional challenges when they move to Madison. They may benefit from advice passed down from more advanced peers on where to live (e.g., as students of color), how to navigate the city, how to engage with campus and their home department. Providing contacts with (a) more advanced fellows, particularly those within the home department, and (b) with other members of the incoming cohort of fellows (e.g., via social media, email) could build community and provide a sense of connection prior to arrival.

2. Flexibility about timing of first-year fellowships
Students noted how crucial the fellowships were for their decision/ability to come to UW-Madison. However, in departments where all peers are TAs, having a fellowship during the first semester can sometimes lead to isolation. In some departments, field work intensifies in the second year when fellows are first working as TAs or PAs. Thus, flexibility about timing of fellowships (e.g., being able to take it in semesters 2 and 4) while still participating in first-year workshops/dinners could be helpful. Incoming fellows could be advised by more advanced fellows within the department about what timing would be most helpful.

3. Additional Content and Connections During the First Year
The current programming has many excellent features. Fellows from across the humanities, social, and natural sciences attend mandatory monthly meetings structured around a high-quality meal, and
informative panels (e.g., on building CVs). This programming should continue. However, students noted the need for:

A. Ways to communicate with each other between meetings (e.g., establishing a listserv)
B. At least one session in which students divide into smaller groups corresponding to their home division to discuss issues unique to individual divisions.
C. Workshops on mental health and wellness, stress reduction, and time management. More details on ways to connect with health resources on campus.
D. Opportunities to discuss issues relating to social justice, inequality, and implicit bias in an intimate setting among their peers
E. An initial panel in which different groups on campus (e.g., African American Graduate Students Association, Multicultural Center) introduce themselves, make connections
F. More advice from prior cohorts of fellows, particularly within their home departments and related disciplines. First-year fellows felt that they “didn’t know what they didn’t know”, and wanted more insight from those who had already navigated the system.
G. Faculty Listening Sessions - students noted that their home departments were often unaware of challenges faced by fellows. Having rotating groups of faculty from departments that tend to have AOF fellows come listen and engage with the group might strengthen connections.

4. Maintaining Community and Support Beyond the First Year
Interviews with more senior fellows indicated that they wanted more structure and resources for ongoing connections after the first year. These included:

A. One or two events per year that would re-unite cohorts (could be across cohorts).
B. Social media (e.g., a Facebook group) tools for community maintenance
C. Resources for academic success at key transitions, e.g., panels on taking prelims, going on the job market, dissertator-writing groups.

5. Additional Resources for the AOF Program and L&S GRS Community
The AOF Program is critical for departments that struggle to recruit targeted minority students, and for many students it offers the only chance they have to pursue an advanced degree. Unfortunately, our review identified some alarming statistics: 1) AOF recipients are taking longer to complete their degree than any other category of students, including other domestic targeted minorities who don’t receive AOFs; and 2) Both AOFs and other domestic targeted minorities drop out of their doctoral programs or leave with MA’s at higher rates than other types of students. These data indicate that more resources are needed to sustain and manage the program which currently falls on the shoulders of one primary person. Given the size and complexities of the College of L&S, more resources need to be dedicated to the program, especially for the non-STEM fields. At a minimum:

A. More analyses are needed to explain why so few doctoral L&S Fellows (36.8%) complete their program, and why they take a significantly longer time to complete their degree (7.7 years vs 6.7) than non-targeted students.
B. More information is needed to determine at what point doctoral Fellows begin to fall behind; too many withdraw with a Masters (33.7%) rather than complete their PhD, or fail to graduate at all (29.5%).
C. A closer look at particular departments/programs in L&S that tend to have more AOFs, longer time to degree completion, and/or higher levels of dropout is warranted.
D. Systematic tracking of Fellows’ progress beyond the first year is needed.
E. A faculty advisory committee should be established to help oversee the program and provide regular review and guidance.
REVIEW PROCESS OVERVIEW
Members of the review committee met together five times during the Spring 2018 semester. They also conducted individual interviews with faculty, staff, and students associated with the L&S C-GRS and studied materials provided by the College and Graduate School. More specifically:

- The Chair of the Review Committee attended an overview workshop of campus-wide GRS programs hosted by Associate Dean of Graduate Education Lisa Martin on Feb 5.
- The Committee was fully constituted and met on Feb 26 to discuss our charge and strategy for completing the review.
- The Committee interviewed Assistant Dean Brian Bubenzer on March 2 to discuss the self-study that he compiled and to consider which other stakeholders should be interviewed.
- On the evening of March 19, the L&S C-GRS held their last formal dinner and community event to which the Review Committee was invited. Approximately 40 current first-year AOF recipients were divided into three groups roughly corresponding to their affiliation with programs in either the natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities. They had been given in advance a set of questions to consider (see below) which formed the basis for more than one hour of group discussion.
- Committee members individually conducted interviews with current and former AOF recipients in late March/early April. Each of the three professors met with at least two graduate scholars.
- L&S Deputy Dean Eric Wilcots was interviewed by the Review Committee for his perspective on the AOF program and C-GRS on April 9.
- The Review Committee came together for a final discussion on April 18 to summarize their findings.

Questions posed to the current class of L&S AOF-supported graduate scholars:
1. Has the AOF community been beneficial in your first year? If so, how so? If not, what would’ve been more helpful?
2. What can campus/college/department do more of to help you succeed in graduate school?
3. What have we done (at any or all of those levels) that you have found helpful?
4. What have you found most challenging over the first year?
5. What have you found most rewarding over the first year?
6. Were there particular experiences or courses that, in retrospect, helped prepare you for graduate school?
7. Have your career plans changes over the past year?
8. What would you tell yourself if you could go back to the start of the academic year?

OVERVIEW OF THE AOF PROGRAM & L&S COMMUNITY OF GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLARS

L&S AOF-Eligible Pool: Applications, Admissions, Enrollments
As can be seen from data provided by APIR, the number of AOF-eligible applications to the L&S Graduate School has fluctuated over a 5-year period, though the numbers of admissions and new enrollments have remained relatively stable. Over the same time period, non-targeted domestic applications decreased while admissions and enrollments remained relatively stable, and international admissions and enrollments increased. In 2016-2017, AOF-eligible new enrollments constituted 9.9% of total new enrollments.
Trends in Number/Percent of AOF-Eligible Admits who Receive Fellowships
APIR data indicate that the number of students on AOF funding each year has ranged from 51 (in 2013-2014) to 75 (in 2016-2017). As shown below, the percent of eligible enrolled students who had ever received an AOF fellowship has hovered slightly above 50%.

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In terms of the ethnic/racial distribution of those who receive fellowships, the largest group of recipients have been Hispanic/Latinos (24-44 per year), followed by African Americans (10-19/year), and those who identify as multi-racial (5-17). Other groups tend to hover in the low single digits. It is unclear the extent to which these patterns reflect the nature of the admitted AOF-eligible pool and/or patterns of nominations from departments.

Resources afforded by the Fellowship
1. Incoming funding for a year, typically taken in the student’s first year in graduate school (see recommendation).
2. An additional year of fellowship to be taken after students achieve dissertator status.
3. Monthly workshops: First-year AOF fellows are required/strongly encouraged to attend monthly workshops during their first year. These are intended to disseminate information relevant to success in graduate school and to build community. A buffet dinner is served at each meeting to foster a sense of being valued.
4. Support, advice, connections to resources on campus: Assistant Dean Brian Bubenzer serves as a resource to fellows. He meets individually with all incoming fellows. In the final workshop of the year, he emphasized that he would continue to be available to them as they progressed through their graduate programs and would be glad to hear from them.
Distribution of Advanced Opportunity Fellowships to Departments/Programs
Graduate School data indicate that a few departments receive higher numbers of AOF-fellowships, presumably because they admit and enroll high numbers of graduate students. From 2012-2017, Sociology, English, and History each had yearly average of 12-21 AOF recipients enrolled in their graduate program. (Not all recipients were on fellowship each year. These were individuals who had received an AOF fellowship at some point.) Each of these three programs have over 100 graduate students enrolled in any given year. Across the same time period, Chemistry, Botany, and Afro-American Studies had yearly averages of 6-9 AOF recipients enrolled in their programs, and most other departments had an annual average of 1-3 AOF recipients enrolled.

Assistant Dean Brian Bubenzer noted that the diversity of academic/disciplinary interests in L&S is both a considerable strength, but also something of a challenge for the AOF program because it creates a situation where there are many constituent groups and individuals in very different situations. Most fellows are enrolled in PhD programs in different divisions, but there are also some students in professional MA programs. Moreover, the AOF fellowships are of particular importance to students in Afro American Studies bridge programs (e.g., bridge from Afro American MA to English or History PhDs) because students in those program tend to have very limited access to TA or PA positions. The existence of the Afro American graduate program depends on finding this type of resource. Balancing the needs of different departments and programs is a challenge.

One issue that students themselves noted is that there can be some difficulty explaining to their peers in their program about why they have a fellowship. Moreover, in instances where there are multiple students of color in a department or program, it can be challenging when only one has the AOF.

Recruitment
Numerous students at the workshop noted that they could not/would not have come attended graduate school at UW-Madison without AOF funding. They spoke of the importance of the funding and the value of the community created by the fellowship. Some of the students indicated that they first heard about the AOF fellowship in programs like POSSE or McNair. However, many were unaware that the AOF fellowship existed prior to receiving one.

Time to Degree
Data from APIR (see table below) point to some puzzling and troubling patterns whereby AOF recipients take longer, on average, to complete their doctorates than (a) Domestic Targeted Minorities who do not receive AOF fellowships, (b) Domestic Non-Targeted Students, and (c) International Students. These discrepancies are not evident for Master’s degrees, suggesting that AOF recipients may be slowing down in later stages (e.g., completion of prelims, dissertation proposal, dissertation writing).

Further analysis is needed to determine whether these are statistically significant differences, but regardless, they point to the need for more careful monitoring of AOF recipients post-MA, in terms of timely progress toward the degree.

Additional analysis is also needed to examine whether these discrepancies tend to occur uniformly across departments, or whether they emerge primarily in programs that enroll large numbers of students (and therefore have high numbers of AOF recipients). Without knowing the answer, it is hard to diagnose the problem and recommend a solution.
Retention
As shown by APIR data on the next page, completion rates for doctorates for the 2008-2011 entering cohorts are troubling. For both AOF recipients and Domestic Targeted Minorities, completion rates for doctorates averaged 36.8%. Thus, the AOF fellowship did not increase completion rates relative to eligible non-recipients, and the majority of both groups were dropping out or leaving with a Masters. Completion rates for Domestic Non-Targeted and International students were higher (54.6% and 61% respectively).
At the Master’s level, the discrepancies do not appear.

Taken together, the data for time to degree and completion rates point to problems supporting minority students to make timely, satisfactory progress with their doctorates.

![Average Enrolled Time to Degree by Completion Year](image)

![Completion Rates for 2008-2011 Entering Cohorts](image)
Assistant Dean Bubenzer noted that, “Unfortunately, far too often, we don’t do a good job of putting in good advisor-advisee relationships to begin with, or doing all we can to make sure advisors are shepherding students through the process. Lot of work to be done on that. Too often, I see students who don’t have a lot of confidence in their work, don’t like to raise a fuss or be a squeaky wheel, and kind of mosey along through graduate process, they need someone to be on their team. Some students don’t want faculty to pay attention to the fact that they are AOF, and worry about stigmatized. Institutionally, we don’t serve our students well if they keep finding funding beyond their guarantee but they are not being positioned for the next step and are simply treading water.”

He suggested:
- Better communication with departments and (in particular) with advisors, about the challenges that students may face, and the need to keep monitoring and reaching out to them. Indeed, developing a positive working relationship between advisor and advisee seems to be critical for the success of the AOF recipient.
- Better communication with advisors about the function of the fellowship (that it’s valuable for students to work on research, but it’s not a PAship).
- Not keeping AOF to just the first year, but doing more outreach throughout. In particular he suggested having a writing group for AOF students who are at the dissertation phase, organized with help from Brad Hughes at the Writing Center.
- Maybe bring in someone from UHS health and wellness for one of the first year events.

The AOF staff puts a great deal of thought into designing programs and workshops that will aid in retention. These efforts are sometimes complicated by difficulties in students’ everyday lives, such as family needs, medical events, financial concerns, etc. Consequently, this was a topic of conversation in several of our interviews.

Several students we interviewed indicated that they would appreciate more discussion of and advice about how to avoid “burnout.” For them, moving from a 9 to five work structure to a graduate school life defined primarily by an independently-determined work schedule, was often a challenge. “A person could work 24/7, so it is difficult to know how to maintain a reasonable schedule.”

**First-Year Community Building and Activities**

Most of the activities for AOF fellows take the form of monthly workshops during their first year. There is a welcome dinner in August, a social event shortly after that, then monthly workshops, offered on different days per week throughout the semester to maximize possible attendance. The function of the workshops is to offer information and connections to resources on campus. Topics of workshops include faculty panels, in which faculty discuss their own paths into academia and how they found community, advisor-advisee relationships, writing (in collaboration with the Writing Center), CV and resume building, and professional development opportunities. Assistant Dean Bubenzer noted that the latter workshop might be more useful to more advanced students.

Assistant Dean Bubenzer noted that the L&S GRS program doesn’t have much opportunity to interact with other GRS communities on campus. “Nothing ever gets off the ground, we do have a publicity network, we can share events, and there’s enormous potential on that front. But who’s going to ride herd on this? Who’s going to really do it? The graduate school has put us in a position where we could do something like that if someone took a leadership role, but someone would have to be coordinator for this.”
Students at the workshop and interviewed individually had a number of concerns and suggestions about the transition to Madison and to UW-Madison and to graduate school and to their department.

1. Madison feels difficult for students of color. They report feeling much more visible and much more marginalized than in other communities. They are often unsure of where to live, how to handle landlords and whom to turn to when issues involving race on campus arise. They could use advice from students who are already living here. They noted that White students and faculty had little understanding of how “White” Madison can feel.

2. Students varied in their knowledge about what to expect from graduate school, and what to expect from their program in particular. Connecting with more advanced AOF students, both within L&S and within in their program ahead of time, before they came, could have been very helpful.

3. UW-Madison can feel hard, and the AOF program definitely helps with that. However, the start of the semester is confusing and busy. Being able to connect and communicate with others ahead of time would be helpful.

4. Access to campus health and wellness information would be helpful, especially stress management.

5. The workshops are useful, and dinner is greatly appreciated, but it would be good to have a mechanism for more informal community-building. They did not feel particularly coherent as a community, because the workshops were only once a month. They did not particularly think there had to be more workshops, but they needed ways to communicate easily and spontaneously with one another and to build relationships.

6. The question of how to get more students to attend events more regularly was raised in several interviews.

Basically, students suggested that having a Facebook page (or other social media platform) where incoming fellows could connect with each other and with more advanced cohorts, would be beneficial. Being given access to this resource as soon as they were accepted, so that they could use it to make connections and figure things out before they came to campus, would be useful. This would also allow for more spontaneous, informal conversations to happen between workshops.

**Beyond the First Year**

Some of the more advanced fellows felt that the program could have demanded a bit more of them beyond the first year. “There were times when I didn’t really know what to do - am I missing something, should I be doing something related to being AOF? I think having a light but strict structure of expectations beyond the first year would be useful. I wanted more opportunities to connect and reconnect throughout my time.”

Students particularly noted that they wanted more opportunities/resources to connect with more advanced fellows in their discipline. “It would have been nice to stay connected with the community as a scholar, taking ownership of my own scholarship, being connected and having discussions as a scholarly community. I needed more of that than I thought I did.”

**Broader College/University-wide Engagement**

Both Brian and Eric emphasized that a primary goal of the AOF program is “to make a big campus feel small.” Engaging in broader college/university-wide engagement is crucial to the success of program participants.
Some students interviewed noted that the AOF program can’t be all things to all students and that there are other organizations on campus that serve students of color (e.g., the Black Graduate Student Association and the Multicultural Center). They suggested an initial panel in which representatives from these various groups on campus would come and talk and make connections. These initial interactions could be presented as resources that can be used if students have particular concerns related to race, ethnic, or LGBTQ+ identities.

A few students we interviewed suggested that a workshop simply devoted to reviewing campus-wide resources would be helpful. This workshop could provide handouts with lists and contact information for key organizations. In additions, during stressful periods of the semester, reminder emails with this information could be sent to both the AOF recipient and their advisor.

In our interviews, Brian also strongly recommended the renewal of a university wide faculty advisory group that could exchange important information and advice about AOF-related procedures and practices.

**SUMMARY OF L&S C-GRS STRENGTHS**

The Advanced Opportunity Fellows within the College of Letters and Science represent a broader diversity of subject areas than any other Community of Graduate Scholars at UW-Madison. In the true sense of the ‘liberal arts’ they come from programs in the humanities, social, and natural sciences. This heterogeneity of people and scholarship represented by the community is one its greatest strengths. Students interviewed repeatedly expressed this opinion and insisted that the L&S C-GRS not be broken down into smaller disciplinary groups. Some even noted that they were able to identify an outside dissertation committee member by being exposed to faculty from other disciplines via the C-GRS. To coordinate such a diverse body requires a well-rounded individual capable of considerable empathy, and the talented leadership offered by Mr. Bubenzer to the C-GRS is another strength. Fellowships are disbursed fairly and equitably, flexibility is in place, and monthly activities are well organized, well attended, collegial, and productive. A great deal of thought goes into the topic and activities that are organized formally, and at least some of these have inspired students to consider careers outside of traditional academia. Conducting these meetings around a shared meal of high quality is highly effective.

**SUMMARY OF L&S C-GRS WEAKNESSES**

Some of the strengths presented above also represent areas for improvement or ‘weaknesses’. For example, embracing the diverse liberal arts tradition of L&S means that there are limited opportunities for first-year AOFs to interact with other members of their community cohort who identify with a division (e.g., natural science students rarely have the opportunity to discuss issues specific to them). They get the opportunity to engage with peers on a local departmental level and on a broader college level, but rarely in between. A second weakness is the lack of engagement within the community after the outstanding first year experience. A mechanism is needed to keep the community together and cohesive since students struggle with different issues after they complete coursework or achieve dissertator status. It seems that the Assistant Dean (Mr. Bubenzer) carries the entire AOF program for the College on his back exclusively, which leads to a high level of organization, but a limited perspective. As a result, there is little direct involvement by departments after the fellowships are awarded. Some of these areas for improvement may help to explain why so few of L&S Fellows complete their doctoral program (36.8% for the 2008-11 cohort) and took much longer to do so on average (7.7 years).
RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations for sustaining quality and/or improvement are summarized as follows:

1. **Identifying and Addressing Student Needs**
   First-year scholars transitioning from college to graduate school, and from a focus on coursework to research, face challenges that can be especially acute for minority and first-generation Fellows. Workshops on mental health and wellness, stress reduction, and time management are needed. Fellows expressed a need to discuss issues relating to social justice, inequality, and implicit bias in an intimate setting among their peers, and we encourage working these topics into the programming for the C-GRS. We also encourage discussion of the roles and expectations of ‘fellows’ contrasted with TA/PA/RAs so that the former do not feel isolated from their departmental peers.

   - Be certain that AOF scholars are aware that they may ask for limited financial help if economic crises arise, even if those are of a personal nature
   - Emphasize stress management / mental health / wellness
   - Need better clarification of what is expected from a ‘fellow’ and how this role differs from a TA or PA
   - Implement a Writing Group (although this may not be applicable to all scholars) – especially at the stage of dissertator. Stronger connections with the Writing Center would be helpful.
   - Workshops related to time management are important, especially as students begin to make the transition from coursework to research.

2. **Enhanced Programming During the First Year**
   Monthly meetings structured around a shared meal of high quality help to build a sense of community among the scholars, and should continue. We also recommend that the C-GRS continues to embrace the liberal arts tradition by scheduling activities that include students from across the humanities, social, and natural sciences. However, at least one session in which students divide into smaller groups corresponding to their home division is desirable since there are issues unique to individual divisions. Along the same lines, it would be nice to host a mixer among all the Graduate Scholar Communities across the UW-Madison campus at least once per year.

   - Keep the structure whereby students in the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities interact collectively – this is a strength of L&S.
   - Have at least one event where students in programs corresponding to divisional structure break out and discuss matters directly relevant to them. Smaller discussion groups are beneficial.
   - Include workshops that address issues of social justice, inequality, implicit bias since these are topics beyond academic specialties that all the AOF scholars relate to and care about.
   - Find a way to interact with other Graduate Research Scholar Communities even if this happens only once per year.
   - Continue to provide good food at events as a positive incentive for participation and a sense of community for the group. Offering parking validation would help students attend the monthly workshops.

3. **Maintaining Community Beyond the First Year**
   There is no doubt that friendships and collaborations are made by scholars in their shared first year, but it becomes a challenge to maintain the sense of community when there is no longer a schedule of regular activities. Students quickly become ensconced in their silos. Therefore, we recommend that
efforts be made to develop both a horizontal, but also a vertical community among AOF scholars. Social media (e.g., a Facebook group) could be embraced as one possible way to maintain community beyond the first year. Encouraging mentoring of undergraduates via the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE) is another. It may also be worth considering events that are exclusive to the first year Fellows as well as those to which students in their second year of AOF support (dissertators) are invited.

- Embrace Facebook or other Social Media.
- Build connections with undergraduates via the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE).
- After the first year, students in the L&S Life Sciences are encouraged to join the SciMed GRS Community if they desire, students in the physical sciences may want to engage with Engineering GRS, etc.
- Encourage (or even require?) that students who are taking their second year of AOF support join the monthly activities. Senior students need, in fact they want, to be involved in the community.

4. Strengthening Connections Between the L&S C-GRS and Departments/Programs

There appears to be a disconnect between the Fellows, their faculty advisors, the departments, and the Community of Scholars. A ‘Speakers Bureau’ should be created so that faculty from different departments (especially those that advise AOFs) can participate and engage in the monthly C-GRS activities on a rotating basis. This may lead to greater awareness of the needs and issues affecting these students. We encourage departments to consider whether first year graduate students are best served when they are not employed as TA/RA/PAs if the majority of students in their programs are. Some Fellows expressed a feeling of being isolated and disconnected from their departmental peers because they were not employed; this can make it more difficult to transition from college to graduate school. The two years of fellowship support are not required to be taken in years one and four, so students and departments should be made aware that they have flexibility.

- Develop a ‘Speakers Bureau’ so that monthly program content can vary.
- Advising is critical and this happens at the department level. AOF faculty advisors need to be better educated and made aware of the challenges that their advisees may have. They are currently out of the loop.
- Remind Programs that the Fellowship does not need to be used in the first semester. In some cases incoming students may benefit from serving as a TA to integrate better and transition into graduate school.

5. Improved Management of the AOF Program and L&S GRS Community

The AOF Program is critical for many departments that struggle to recruit targeted minority students, and for many of those students it offers the only chance they have to pursue an advanced degree. Given the size and complexities of the College of L&S more resources need to be dedicated to the program, especially for the non-STEM fields. More resources are also needed to sustain and manage the program which currently falls on the shoulders of one primary person. This is not sustainable, and we recommend that - at a minimum - a faculty advisor committee be established to help oversee the program and provide regular review and guidance.

- Continue a system that is fair in terms of AOF allocations. This is currently working well.
- Continue to collect data that can help to explain the alarming statistics that are seen in terms of time to degree, early withdrawal with a Masters degree, or failure to complete degree plan.
- A Faculty Advisory Group at the College level is needed.
# GRS REVIEW

REPORT from the School of Business, the School of Human Ecology, the School of Nursing, and the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

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    - The Fellowships and Their Allocations
    - The Current Difficulties of Creating and Supporting GRS Communities
    - The Review Itself
Introduction

This report, at the request of the Dean of the Graduate School, summarizes the Graduate Research Scholarships in four of the smaller GRS communities:

It was prepared by a faculty representative from each of the units:
Assistant Professor Kendra Alexander, School of Human Ecology
Assistant Professor Myoungock Jang, School of Nursing
Professor Cathy Middlecamp, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
Assistant Professor –Sarada, School of Business

Respectfully submitted on April 6, 2018
Charge to the committee

In January 2018, this letter from Graduate School Dean William Karpus was sent to members of our review committee. In February 2018, Dean Karpus asked Cathy Middlecamp to chair the committee.

“In the course of this review, your committee will examine materials prepared by the Graduate School and the GRS Community, interview staff and faculty involved with the Community and interview students who are members of the Community. Your counsel will offer recommendations for improvement to the Community, the relevant schools/colleges and the Graduate School. This counsel will take the form of a relatively brief report focused on evaluating the operational structure and quality of the community with respect to graduate student and faculty experiences. You will receive a copy of the self-study document prepared by the GRS Community.

Your committee should meet with individuals (graduate students, faculty and staff) as you see necessary to validate the self-study, offer comment on program quality, and make recommendations for improvement. We are especially interested to learn whether students in different groups experience the Community in different ways. We expect the Community faculty and staff leadership to assist you in setting up those meetings.

Your deliberations should produce a brief report (perhaps no more than ten pages in length). We are hopeful that conducting this review and producing the report will take no more than 6-8 weeks, and we hope to receive the report by April 2, 2018.

Please address the following topics in your report:

- A summary of the activities of the review committee and the materials reviewed
- An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the community, with particular attention to the following Community functions:
  - Are the types and frequencies of activities offered by the GRS Community for participating graduate students, and evidence of the contribution of those activities to the creation of community, leading to enhanced retention? Are the activities focused on education, research, community building and career development, and is there robust participation by graduate students and engagement of faculty and staff?
  - Is the Advanced Opportunity Fellowship (AOF) allocation process effective and efficient given that the Communities do not have graduate program admitting authority?
- Is the staffing and resource allocation from the administrative unit sufficient to carry out the Community activities?
- Committee recommendations for future directions, programming, Community restructuring and/or funding allocation process”
Summary of review committee activities

On Monday February 5, 2018, our review team met for the first time at the larger “kick-off” meeting of all the GRS review teams. The four of us were charged to review the four smaller GRS communities (School of Business (“Business”), Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies (“Nelson”), School of Nursing (“Nursing”), and the School of Human Ecology (“SoHE”).

To meet this charge, our team of four immediately reconvened on Thursday, February 8, 2018 to determine a plan of action. At our invitation, LaRuth McAfee kindly joined us at this meeting; we saw the need for additional expertise and guidance as we worked together to map out a strategy.

At this first team meeting, we had before us both the charge given to our committee and the slides and notes we took from the GRS review team kick-off meeting. We immediately recognized that the kick-off meeting raised additional complex and possibly troubling issues, ones that were not apparent in our charge letter. For example, the issue was raised of whether we were not solving problems but rather just giving away money, adding students but not changing the culture or climate of units on campus. More broadly, are the GRS communities maintaining the spirit of the program? Should interactions among the GRS communities be fostered in new and different ways? The question also was raised whether the faculty directors and staff advisors had the expertise and sensitivity to the issues that they needed in working with populations and subpopulations of students. Equally important, the question was raised of what our students were experiencing right now.

Faced with larger questions such as these, but also mindful that our report that was due in early April 2018, we saw the need to limit the scope of the report, given the short time-frame. In our final report, however, we knew that at the very least we needed to acknowledge the larger and more complex issues faced by the GRS community, pointing those in the Graduate School to the need of a more in-depth review at a future date.

Accordingly, to collect data from our four campus units, we mapped out a plan to:

- As a team, conduct individual interviews with GRS faculty directors and staff advisors, asking them to meet at a central site with us. These interviews, 30 minutes in length, would be on a focused set of topics.
- As individual team members, interview students in our school or college, going to them in a comfortable setting likely to draw their participation. These interviews, perhaps over a meal, would be open-ended and unscripted.
- As individual team members, conduct open-ended interviews with the faculty directors and staff advisors in our own units at a time and place convenient to those involved.

As a review team, we conducted interviews with GRS faculty directors and staff advisors on Thursday, March 9, 2018.

As individual team members, we collected data from students by a group interview or by a web-based survey. We also interviewed faculty and staff directors individually during February and March.

We drafted this report in late March, allowing a week for those in our respective units to offer input and comment. We then finalized the text of this report in early April.
Findings from faculty director and staff advisor team interviews

On March 8, 2018, our team held individual interviews GRS faculty directors and GRS staff advisors. Prior to the interview, each interviewee was sent a list of the questions developed by the review committee members. All four committee members jointly conducted the interviews. One faculty advisor was not able to attend (Nelson Institute) and one staff advisor was not able to attend (Nursing).

At the beginning of the interview, each person was welcomed and thanked. Committee members then introduced themselves. The interview then launched with these introductory remarks:

As may know, the Dean of the Graduate School has set up a process to review the many GRS programs on campus. The four of us at the table represent four of the small campus GRS. We have been asked by the Dean to conduct a review.

As part of our review, we are interviewing the faculty director, the staff coordinator, and students from each of the four small GRS programs. Hence our meeting with you today!

One disclaimer. We realize that this interview could address many issues. However, the scope of this review is limited. We are taking the approach of asking for your views on only two of these issues: the size of your GRS community and the expertise that you bring or would like to bring to it. We also are limiting the interviews to 30 minutes so as not to oversample the comments of any one person.

We anticipate that our questions will take no more than 20 minutes. Then we want to leave time in case you have any additional comments for us. We welcome your thoughts and plan to include them in the review, suggesting that in the future, additional topics be discussed.

Again we thank you, and let’s get started.

The interviews were not recorded; one committee member typed a partial transcript from which these summaries of the responses were constructed. The pronoun pair his/her is used when referring to an individual, so as not to given an indication of who was speaking.

1. How long have you been in your current position as faculty director?
2. Are there other people working with you, or are you the only one?

In the four units we studied, the faculty member who had spent the longest time in the position was in his/her third year. Two faculty advisors were new to the position this academic year. All faculty advisors held the rank of associate professor or higher. Some faculty advisors worked with another person or with a committee; others were the sole person serving in this capacity.

In contrast, the staff advisors ranged from 2 years holding the position to two staff advisors who had held the position since the GRS was formed in 2008. One staff advisor worked with another person who as likely to be his/her replacement in the near future. Given the expertise level of those advisors who have been on campus for at least a decade, the importance of succession planning was named.
This next set of questions is about how you perceive your own expertise in issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, as these relate to students here on our campus.

3. What expertise in issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion do you bring to this position? Have you attended any campus events, symposia or workshops in the past 5 years that have added to this expertise? Anything else you’d like to add?

Among both the faculty directors and the staff advisors, the expertise varied widely. Several faculty members fell at the high end of the spectrum. One was pursuing scholarship and had extensive training relating to equity work and to becoming change agents and leaders. Another faculty member reported previous work in “unpacking notions of discrimination” and “looking at oppression dynamics.”

At the lower end of the spectrum were both faculty and staff members. Although all had gleaned at least some expertise, one person reported “not much diversity training” and another remarked “There are many, many limitations on how I can understand the experiences of others.”

Here are some common themes heard across the interviews:

**Training at other institutions or industry:** Several people also remarked that they had gained expertise and received their training at another institution. For example, one faculty member remarked, “These all are experiences I had at University X before I came to UW-Madison” and another provided a long list of training on equity and access at University Y. A third faculty member noted that training in industry “was approached in a more holistic manner, set up for us to help us better interact with our clients. It was more seamless in industry as compared to academia.”

Another remarked “I would like to have more things available that are more in depth on campus and in our school. Some trainings could go from school to school. Perhaps for our retreats. Perhaps more in depth.”

Finally, one person commented on attaining a training that was not university-funded.

**Resources in their own school or college:** Some (but not all) people drew our attention to resources in their own school or college. These included having a diversity officer, a committee on diversity and inclusion, diversity sessions that were part of retreats, unconscious bias seminars.

**UW Annual Diversity Forum:** Attending the wider campus activities such as the annual diversity forum was mentioned only by one person. Another commented, “In the past, I would attend the annual diversity forum in the fall. But the fall has become my monsoon season. I have all these reports due to the Grad School and catalog updates.”

**Learning from students on the job:** Several people reported that their experiences with students over time was of value in performing their job. For example, one person remarked, “I don’t have any formal training but I do have a heck of a lot of experience with students.”
We have read the self-study provided by your unit. In our report, we do not want to duplicate the information that is in it. Rather, our report centers on how the size of your GRS is affecting its students. We have two questions for you that probe aspects of size.

4. Our review team is exploring the question, “Does a GRS community need to have a minimum size?” Please think out loud for us, sharing how you believe the size of your GRS is affecting your students and your program.

Of all the questions we asked, this one elicited the most complex – perhaps even the most anxious - set of responses. Underlying this complexity were ideas expressed such as:

- I am wary of questions like this. I don’t want our GRS to go away.
- Let us do our thing. Nobody is perfect at it but let us do it.
- We have been limited by the funding that we have to begin with.

All those interviewed had an opinion as to the minimum size. Here is a sampling of the responses:

- I don’t think there is a minimum size.
- A minimum number probably – yes, but it could be a small number. Anyone you can reach is important. When you touch 5 people’s lives, you touch 5 people’s lives.
- Two people is really hard. If it is a social thing and the idea that people should get together, two or three people is not enough people. But if the role in the community is broader, then the smaller numbers can be viable.
- I think 10 students would be a minimum size.
- 10 students? I cannot give you a number.
- Is there a critical mass? It depends on the goals of the program. Yeah.

For those interviewed, perhaps more important than the question of size or critical mass was the question of how to build community:

- A critical mass? This is a relative number in relation to the number of students within the program that it pulls from and the extent to which this community is integrated into the rest of the community.
- We want them to be a family. We also bring students in as cohorts. We are starting to see those relationships develop.
- How well immersed are the students with the overall community? ... Our students hang out everywhere. What are the opportunities for students?
5. Your GRS community is small. Why do you think/believe this is the case?

The responses to this question largely fell into three categories:

The lack of funding

- Funding is why our community is small. We have more students who could have joined, had we had more funding.
- Funding is an issue. We only have limited funds. The GRS stipend is focused on the student’s development. PAs and TAs are focused more on other people’s work.
- We need a bigger allocation overall.
- We have been limited by the funding that we have to begin with. We had 15 or 16 AOF eligible out of our 90+ applicant pool. 8 were nominated and 5 were offered, 1 so far has accepted this year. I can say with almost certainty that all 5 will accept. It is a great financial offer.
- Why so small? Our small AOF allocation. If they gave us 6 or 8, I would fill them. We could grow our GRS community to 15 or 20. This year, we have a really robust pool. We have 3. Two have committed already. When somebody turns us down, it is close to the April 15 deadline which is late in the game to reallocate. So we give the AOF to a second year student.
- We are hamstrung by the low allocation. Any GRS community would say the same thing. I don’t know what the constraints are.
- Funding has limited the size of our community.
- I am feeling a little put out by the whole process. We had a budget of XX. We then dropped to XX. Hmmm. Why bother. All those years I worked and couldn’t get anybody in. And now when I am having success, they cut the budget.

The lack of infrastructure and staff

- We don’t have the time or the staff.
- I don’t have a sense of the university-wide coordination between GRS programs. I am interested in the potential for coordination across schools.”
- Why so small? Because we are small to begin with.

The lack of a potential student pool to draw from

- We don’t have enough demand from students who could qualify for the GRS program.
- Issue stems from homogeneity in applicants. This is not that dissimilar from peer institutions.
6. Do you have any other thoughts for the review committee?

This question elicited responses that indicated the need for future reviews to explore some of the larger issues on campus, ones that determine the university organization and academic culture at UW-Madison into which the GRS must fit.

The silos that exist at UW-Madison

- Maybe having our students being able to work more closely with students from other areas. I don’t know the mechanism for how this would work. Our own focus but also figuring out how we can extend beyond the silo of being here.
- I think about how we can interface ... I don’t know the interest base in other schools. In an environment of interdisciplinarity, it makes sense to think about breadth of experience. We have depth pretty well mastered.

The whiteness of UW-Madison

- We need the recruitment of a more diverse faculty, including those who have this form of scholarship. I may not be their ideal advisor, being white. We have a problem in not having a diverse enough faculty.
- A burden of time and an emotional burden is placed on faculty of color.
- In my unit, problems stem from the lack of diversity in the faculty.
- Given the small size, the students in the program sort of “stick out.”

GRS scholarships may segregate students

- It can feel like you are segregating students into a program.
- We are putting people in buckets and I am not sure that I want to put people in buckets. My assumption is that it is not. Color of their skin is what it is about.
- GRS is asking me to segregate students.
- How do we allow the program not become insular? It is important, not just for the small programs but to the big programs too.

GRS scholarships may appear unfair to other grad students

- To some, it seems unfair that the GRS students are offered semesters of no teaching and receive a larger amount of money. We try to maintain some equities across students. Why does this person not have to teach for two years and get more money? Nobody ever promised you that life was fair (this is what I tell my kids). Given there are so few, they do stick out. Doesn’t necessarily make them feel great.
- The GRS students don’t have to teach or be a project assistant. It appears as a free ride. This can be a little uncomfortable.

The overall lack of clarity

- It would be nice to better understand the goal of the program. I understand it generally but to have more specific goals of what we are trying to accomplish.
- I am not sure this program is utilized as best as it can be. A lot of room for improvement.
- I appreciate the efforts of those on campus who offer programs, but it is fairly surface level. There’s only so much that you can do. This was more intensive, multi-week. Understanding our own identities, our own biases.
Findings from the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

Findings from faculty director and staff advisor interviews

Interview question:
“As the GRS faculty director (or staff advisor), please share with me your thoughts on the Nelson GRS.”

Faculty Directors

Professor Adrian Treves (current and new to the position)
His comments:
I am very new to the position and still learning, so I defer to those with years of experience in GRS. I helped Paul Zedler and Jim Miller write the GRS annual report, primarily word-smithing. I am not sure we put our best foot forward with the annual report. We can emphasize our many strengths if we had more time. I had an AOF grad student who has benefitted from the program. I observe that it’s a small group of students, everybody is busy, making it hard to get people together.

Professor Anna Gade (prior director)
Her comments (typed as she spoke):
Since 2015, GRS leadership in the Nelson Institute, EnviroGRS, has prioritized conversations with GRS community members about what support, and resources would contribute to their success. We learned that the GRS community over overall valued support in integrating the social intellectual value-based aspects of graduate level work in environmental studies. We discovered a consensus among students that this integrative enterprise was the characteristic of ES that distinguished our community. In terms of activities, and planning, students welcomed opportunities to come together in our home in the NI to share and synthesize their experiences in participation and learning across disparate campus communities. In addition, our GRS students have benefitted from belonging in regard to the larger GRS communities on campus. They appreciate being invited to social activities and gatherings, such as social hours and pizza parties. I want to remind them that environmental studies does not exist on the drop down menus on many websites for graduate planning and career planning. Other fields do. Because of this, we have unique challenges in recruitment and support. For example, the selection of a conference to attend to recruit “minority students” is not clear cut. Furthermore, the integration of EnviroGRS students into other disciplinary structures does not meet these challenges adequately. The interdisciplinary nature of ES and the principled commitments that many students hold, such as to enhance community empowerment and SJ goals, suits the flexible and student-centered nature of our EnviroGRS. What resources do we need to do our job? We would like to focus on providing a community home for GRS students, other AOF eligible AOF students, and our entire environmental studies.
community. It would support and reassure us that we could confidently rely on university support for AOF grants that are essential maintaining this. This is the support we seek.

in conclusion, I believe that support for our students as members of the distinct community of scholars of ES is essential. An identity in environmental studies is uniquely formed by these students just as they break new ground and develop new pathways for knowledges that are on the frontier of disciplines and divisions. Added to this, their locations members of communities traditionally underrepresented in the academy I see this as all the more essential. Students have asked for programming that addresses shared concerns for equity and social justice. And often our conversations together focus on questions of environmental justice widely understood. With this academic and human value in mind, I see the capacity of the NI recruit students from AOF-eligible backgrounds to a benefit we bring to our University community that enhances the contribution to diversity that GRS already makes so well.

Staff Advisor
Jim Miller

Community is a struggle in its own right, especially with a flexible curriculum like we have in Environment and Resources (E&R). We knew what the challenges would be in E&R. We foresaw the challenges with GRS.

My hunch is that the grad school does not know how community manifests in the Nelson Institute. Students check in with me pretty regularly. I have a hard time of mandating community of everyone. If we do movie night, I don’t want to interfere with family time. Older students don’t seek the community function as much. Students want to be able to pick and choose, not feeling that they must attend. That’s the impression from our students. What I just said, of course, is a generalization.

I am not buying that our AOF students don’t have access to community. Plenty of community manifests itself here through Nelson. I never got the sense that Nelson AOF students were yearning for more community.

I fear we will lose control over our allocation. Will our allocation be shrinking each year? This feels a bit punitive.

If I were a full-time GRS person, I could put on an event every week. Annual reporting and assessment are pulling me away from the students.

Findings from talking with students
GRS students in the Nelson Institute:

An unscripted lunch conversation

Lunch Host: Cathy Middlecamp, professor, Nelson Institute

Background: Currently, we have 11 GRS students in the Nelson Institute. These students are enrolled in different programs: E & R (Environment and Resources), WRM (Water Resources Management) and EC (Environmental Conservation).
Lunch invitation: Three weeks ago, I sent an invitation to these students inviting them to join me for lunch at the University Club (see Addendum). Four responded positively, and one sent a message of regrets. Of the four who responded, two later had a conflict arise and could not make it. A fifth student then asked to join the luncheon party. Outcome: three students attended. All have busy lives!

Lunch date at the University Club: The University Club kindly provided us with a smaller room so that we could chat with privacy.

Each student was in a different program: E&R, WRM and EC. Each had a different background geographically, academically, and ethnically. Two of the students already knew each other. As the host, I had no current knowledge of any of the students but had met one several years ago.

The photos were taken by one of the students who has a background in film production and media. With her permission, I am including them here.

By design, the conversations were unscripted and the conversations were open-ended. Here are some common themes that were expressed:

- **What the AOF scholarship meant personally**
  “I am here because of the AOF. Otherwise, I would have had a lot of loans”
  “I am very thankful. It helped me to take care of my family and go to school.”
  “When I got the announcement, I screamed at my house. I am going to grad school!!!”
  “I wish there were a way for me to send a thank you note.”
  “When I got the letter, I did not understand what it meant. Eve walked me through it. I didn’t know what a “fellowship” meant ...”

- **Fitting into the Nelson community**
  “I don’t seem to look like everyone else in the conservation world who have beards or wear Birkenstocks and REI gear. But maybe I don’t want to fit in. Perhaps featuring different types of people in Nelson marketing, who may not have that same look, would attract more people like me to consider enrolling in EC.”
  “Unless you are courageous, it is really hard to fit in”
  “I don’t want to feel apart from everybody else in the Nelson Institute.”

- **Passion for study/work**
  “I want to study what I want to study”
  “I want to work on projects that I care about.”

Here are some additional thoughts, expressed by one person and often accompanied by head nodding around the table (including that of the host):

- **Imposter syndrome**
  “It is really hard to see yourself as good enough to be part of the program.”
• **The absence of role models**
  
  “On the Nelson field trip, we visited a lot of white men. I am looking for people to look up to who look like me.”
  
  “At the Nelson Institute, I would like to see more stories or photos that involve women.”

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**Addendum: Email message of invitation to the Nelson GRS Graduate Students**

Dear [student names],

And greetings! I am writing because you each are part of the Nelson Graduate Research Scholar (GRS) Community.

Might you be free for lunch on Friday, March 9, meeting at my office in Science Hall (Rm 64) at 11:30 am? I suggest meeting a bit before the noon hour, so we can walk over to the University Club for lunch before it gets too busy. Happily, the Dean of the Grad School, Bill Karpus, is buying lunch for us!

Here’s why. The Dean has appointed me to a team that is reviewing four of the smaller GRS Communities: Nelson, Business, SoHE, and Nursing. He asks, “is there robust participation by graduate students and engagement of faculty and staff?”

I welcome hearing your thoughts on this question or on any other topic you’d like to address. Whatever you say, I will convey (anonymously) in a report. And of course if you don’t want something conveyed, I will keep it in confidence.

Please let me know speedily (say, by this Friday, March 2) if you can attend. Once I have a head count, I will reserve a table.

Thanks for considering. Hope to see you for lunch!

Cathy
Dr. Catherine Middlecamp
Professor
Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
550 N. Park Street, Madison, WI 53706
Findings from the School of Business

Findings from faculty director and staff advisor interviews
Interview question:
“As the GRS faculty director (or staff advisor), please share with me your thoughts on the Business GRS.”

Faculty Director
Professor Stacie LaPlante

Her comments:

- She is new to the position and indicated that it was not a formal appointment. She is the PhD program director of the accounting program. This program happens to have the largest number of GRS students (totaling to 2) of any department in the Business School and as such Stacie fell into the faculty director role.
- While there are a number of faculty on the PhD committee, GRS is not a primary discussion.
- She said that staff director, Belle Heberling, is the lead. Belle engages in various PhD student recruiting events nationwide.
- In fact, one of the 2 accounting students who has the fellowship was awarded this in their second year, which was the time they were identified as being GRS eligible.
- She only very recently became aware of what it means to be GRS eligible. The inclusion of a socioeconomic element in addition to minority status was something she had not been aware of.
- She also pointed out that given that many grad students in the business school come from industry, it would be hard to identify socioeconomic circumstance as a criterion. However, she also acknowledged that the business school application does not include questions on economic circumstances while growing up.
- She indicated that much of the diversity and inclusion activity in the business school is conducted by Binnu Palta-Hill, but that her department (accounting) held an inclusion workshop recently.
- She said that the objectives of the GRS program were not obvious and that it would be helpful to understand the goals of the GRS program.
- She said that the goal of the business school was to place students well, and that there isn’t a clear indication that it helps to bring economically disadvantaged students into a program. She indicated that there would need to be more research on this and that faculty buy in across the different departments would be important.
- She indicated that programs that support some students and not others based off observable qualities that are not academic inherently places people in buckets. She is not sure this is a fruitful path.
Staff Advisor  
Belle Heberling:

Her comments:

- Belle has been the doctoral coordinator for many years and in that capacity the primary GRS staff advisor since its inception. The position will transition to Patrick Stevens as Belle prepares for retirement.
- She indicated that in the earlier years, the business school felt some hostility from the grad school on the GRS and AOF fronts.
- In the early years, funding went to either MBAs or PhDs, now it goes just to PhDs. GRS funding is administered either prior to a student’s arrival or in their subsequent years. She said that this year, for the first time, they have multiple GRS eligible potential recruits, but not enough funds to recruit them. Funding to the business school has been cut over the years from 100k to 40k.
- She said (consistent with Stacie Laplante’s comment above) that the business school typically does not have a faculty director.
- She attends a minority business PhD student recruiting event called the PhD Project held in annually Chicago every year.
- She initially viewed the GRS mandate to only involve minority students. It has now broadened to include socioeconomically disadvantaged students and this is neither something the business school application queries, nor does she feel comfortable asking this.
- The business school application, unlike that of other schools does not ask about participation in school free lunch programs when young. They do not use the standard graduate school application but instead have their own application.
- She pointed out that one issue in attracting GRS students is the lack of diversity within the faculty. In her time, there have been a total of 5 non-Asian minority faculty, 2 of whom are no longer here.
- She does not feel that the Business School is very well liked in the GRS community. Nor does she think that the students receive very much benefit from GRS aside from funding. She however believes this funding itself is crucial to drawing the few minority students the Business School has, and would be disappointed to see further cuts.
- She presented data showing that recruiting minorities into business school is generally tough, and that WSB is not different from peer schools on that front.

Findings from talking with students

GRS students in the School of Business

The business school has four GRS students currently. I took two students to lunch at the Sunroom Café on March 28th and met with a third student (in my office) on April 3rd.

Takeaways:

- The students did not really know what GRS was, and in fact one thought my lunch invitation was a spam message. They were aware that they received some additional funding, and were aware that it was part of the AOF initiative but knew little about GRS.
Students were appreciative of additional funding, but the level of contentment with the overall graduate experience (as related to being a minority) varied.

Biggest issues with being a minority in the business school are a) lack of faculty diversity and b) lack of awareness amongst the faculty c) lack of understanding of circumstantial differences amongst peers. Some students expressed that they were subject to unpleasant comments from other graduate students which they perceived to be based off race and gender. An additional discomfort is that non-GRS peers sometimes view the additional GRS funding as being non-meritocratic.

In dealing with these discomforts, the students expressed that while faculty tried to be supportive, they lacked the awareness necessary to actually be supportive. In one of the departments at the business school, an inclusion workshop was held in response to an incident. However, many faculty members did not attend and students felt that this signaled a less than ideal amount of commitment to such issues.

Students were supportive of having a greater push for more minority students in the business school, and to have more integration. They seemed to know of other minority students in the business school, but did not regularly interact across departments.

One student mentioned that there was a concern with being admitted on diversity grounds (which would be perceived simply by skin color, regardless of scholarship status). This made the student feel that they could not make any mistakes and that they had to always perform at a high level. This pressure was perceived both as a positive push and a negative burden.

In discussing the small number of GRS eligible students in the business school, students proposed a couple explanations. One was on the supply side – too few minorities want to get a graduate business education in the Midwest. However, they said that exposure from the University side was also an issue, and events like the PhD Project for minority recruiting have an impact on that front. Students said that they did not think minority recruiting was a priority for the business school as no senior, influential faculty accompany Belle Heberling to the PhD Project minority recruiting event held in Chicago annually. This relates to the second, demand side issue they describe. Both the lack of a diverse faculty and the lack of participation by senior faculty at these recruiting events lessens the lure of UW to young minority scholars.

Students expressed that finding a community in Madison while not easy, was not the hardest part. The hardest part was being heard by faculty and by the University. Some perceive that faculty and the University do not appreciate that the experience of a minority student in the business school is unique. As such, they face a dual burden - of dealing with both the academic, and also the professional and social complexities.

Students appreciate receiving the funding. The funding was a draw for two of the three students. The third received it after being here for over a year – when it became apparent that they were eligible for it. One student mentioned that the funding has been especially helpful in navigating family constraints by alleviating their teaching load.
Findings from the School of Nursing

Findings from faculty director and staff advisor interviews
Interview question:
“As the GRS faculty director (or staff advisor), please share with me your thoughts on the Nursing GRS.”

Faculty Director
Dan Willis (Current and new director)
As my role as an Associate Dean for Academic Affair, I am in charge of the GRS community in the nursing school. But, I am fairly new to the school as I started my work since last summer and am still learning about the program.

Earlise Ward (Former director)
-I had served as a faculty director for last several years.

-We had initially a monthly meeting with faculty at other departments and schools and then switched to have a meeting once every quarter of a year. At the meeting, we shared what is well going and what is not well going, sort of our experience; I thought it was a great opportunity to share how it works across departments and schools.

-We are small, I think we have relatively small in terms of size, not like an Engineering school. If we could have more money, we could definitely support more students.

-We support both PhD and DNP students since we consider DNP program as a doctoral program. Although the program does not emphasize research as a primary career goal, when we think of the shortage of nursing work force, we have to support them”

-I would like to recommend to graduate school to promote the network for students among different departments and schools, so students can meet other students and can feel they are more connected which make them feel under the bigger umbrella. If it is difficult, letting our students join another community, which is bigger than ours and is well organized, would be great for them to have some connection.

Staff Advisor
Karen Mittelstadt
-I am the best person here in the school of nursing to know the program as a staff coordinator. And we all are new to the program now, the associate dean is new and Katie Bleier (another staff advisor) does not have any chance to be involved in.

-As we have a new associate dean for academic affair, we are working on to change our funding distribution and allocation processes”

- Now we are going to manage the funding for students more systematically by the academic affair, not by PhD subcommittee. But, we understand the GRS has specific eligibilities to be put; so, we have a separate pool for making a decision.
- Once a student was put on the GRS, he/she can continue to be supported by the program. Since they are not mandated to work as either PA or TA, they are recognizable since other students need to work as PA or TA for their tuition waiver and stipend. But I think students would understand every funding source has different eligibility.

- We have not been used the funding resources to attract eligible students to apply for the program, rather we made a decision based on eligibility from - upcoming and continuing students.

- We usually support two PhD and two DNP students; but for DNP students, the students need to register as a full time to be eligible, so approximately about 10% of DNP students are eligible to be supported by school and the eligibility for the GRS may be smaller than 10%, so the student pool for GRS for each year may be equivalent between two programs.

- We may need to connect them each other in the school of nursing as well as with others outside of the school for making a network.

Findings from talking with students

GRS students in the School of Nursing

In the School of Nursing, five students are currently enrolled, and two of them (one PhD and one DNP students) joined a group meeting. I met them at the Cooper Hall (School of Nursing building) on March 22nd.

The two students both are in the first year of the program, but they have different backgrounds: one is from one of the Native American communities and another one is from African American community in a big city. They have never met each other before the interview, so they liked the meeting to share their experiences and they wanted to have more chances to meet each other in the school to share their experience and have support from each other. I asked questions formulated and used by Dr. Cathy Middlecamp for her student interview.

I started by asking what the AOF scholarship means to them personally. One student made his decision to study here UW-Madison because of the fellowship. So, this is an opportunity for pursuing his study here.

“It is definitely an ‘opportunity’ for me to study this school. I didn’t think I could study here. I almost decided to register another university, but I got the notice of the fellowship from the school and changed my mind, it was like a ‘winning the lottery’.”

“I also think it is an opportunity. I think of my community, there are several Native American nurses, but they don’t work for the community. But, I always think of my community. My research is relevant to Native Americans’ health. I will find a way to help them”
However, they did not know why they could receive the fellowship. And they did not have any specific information about the fellowship. One of the students worried about the continuity of the fellowship throughout the program.

“I am so glad to have the fellowship, but I don’t know why I have it”

“I didn’t have any specific information and so, I just thought it was a kind of fellowship”

“I don't know what will be going on in next year. If I don’t have the fellowship for further years, I may need to think of another option to support my study.”

As they are in the first year of the program, they do not have specific career goals. They expressed they want to go through and finish the programs. One student stated he wants to be a role model for others.

“I am pretty open to whatever I have an opportunity after the program, but now my goal is to get through the program”

“I want other people see my path and inspired themselves.”

They experience differences within the Nursing school community. They are either the only Black male in the class or the only first generation of college education in her family. And, they are aware of the diversity commitment at the university level, but they do not have a chance to explore the programs.

“I am the only black male in my class, and my classmates are single white women without any obligation to take care of family”

“I am the only first-generation college student in my cohort. I am struggling with having a family support, social support...my family doesn’t know what I deal with. There is nobody in my family can tell me what to do.”

“I feel differences in the school”

“I like the university committed to diversity, but I don’t have time to explore them”

For the question about what kind of support they need in the school of nursing to be successful, they expressed they want to have more information regarding the program and meet other fellows in the school of nursing. They wanted to have connections in the school of nursing before going beyond the school.

“Thank you for this opportunity to meet each other to share”

“If we have this kind of connection within the school, we would appreciate. It should be a first step”

“It is not too late to have some explanation about the fellowship now”
Findings from the School of Human Ecology

Findings from faculty director and staff advisor interviews

Interview question:
“As the GRS faculty director (or staff advisor), please share with me your thoughts on the SoHE GRS.”

Faculty Director – Connie Flanagan
SoHE GRS no longer operates under the Letters and Sciences (L&S) umbrella, a decision that was made so that the School could have increased autonomy over the decision-making process around fellowship allocations. Despite this separation, L&S has continued to welcome the participation of SoHE GRS/AOF fellows in the events offered to the much larger L&S GRS community.

A major challenge within SoHE has been ensuring that students feel supported and at the same time do not feel burdened by events and activities that are not effective uses of their time. The nature of our AOF/GRS students’ community—engaged work in the Civil Society and Community Studies and Human Development and Family Studies programs, make this issue much more salient.

Improving attendance at AOF-targeted events is a priority. In spring 2017, all SoHE Advanced Opportunity Fellows—past and present—were invited to participate in a faculty panel discussion in which faculty of color in the school shared their experience, answered questions, and engaged in dialogue around what it means to be a scholar of color. This event was targeted to students in the AOF/GRS community, however, the invitation was offered to underrepresented students across the school more broadly.

During the current academic year, Connie met one on one with all four of the current cohort to check in on any needs, concerns, or great things to report. In addition, she and Eric MacKay (staff advisor) had a group event for the current cohort that was a means for the four students to share their biographies and passions, and to learn the same from Connie and Eric. Eric facilitated and Connie says it went great. She has also heard from the current cohort that having the One SoHE grad courses (a set of foundational courses taken by graduate students across the School) has been a means for them to connect with one another and also with the rest of the grad cohort on a weekly basis. They mentioned that the courses were a great way for them to stay connected and form a community.

SoHE is looking for ways to engage AOF students in the planning and decision-making process for future events.
**Staff Advisor - Eric MacKay**

SoHE GRS is quite new as a standalone community. Eric MacKay began with SoHE in Spring 2016, which coincided with the transition of SoHE GRS from Letters and Sciences (L&S). In this first year, because admission decisions had already been made when the transition occurred, it wasn’t able to be used as much of a recruitment tool and the SoHE procedure was essentially adapted from what had transpired under L&S.

With a small community, the challenge is to provide something distinctive about activities. To address this, multiple strategies are employed, depending on the purpose of the event. In some cases, events are open for all SoHE graduate students to attend and others are directed invite events for AOF/GRS Fellows only. (One underrepresented student, who is the recipient of a fellowship similar to the AOF – the Kemper-Knapp fellowship – is also included in the directed invite for SoHE GRS community events.) The current plan is to have two events per semester, with one event being a sort of social/check-in and the other focusing on professional development, i.e. guest speaker.

Going forward, there is a focus on obtaining student feedback and input on what they want the community to be and what it should be. In addition, an emphasis will be made on defining roles and responsibilities within the administration of the program. In particular, a faculty advisory committee is needed. Engaging faculty of color is a priority, as they are vital in terms of resources and mentoring for AOF students. The challenge is finding a way to provide these faculty with an “open seat at the table” while recognizing the inordinate burden already placed on them in terms of mentoring and supporting students of color.

**Findings from talking with students**

**GRS students in the School of Human Ecology**

SoHE GRS students were invited to a lunch discussion on March 22 at the University Club. Of the eight invitees, three students responded that the date worked for them, with a fourth expressing interest in attending, but a lack of availability. There was no response from the remaining four students. On the date of the luncheon, there were no students in attendance. I received a message from one of the students letting me know that her schedule was too tight and that she wouldn’t be able to make the luncheon. Another student contacted me later in the afternoon to let me know that he had some unforeseen schedule changes and was unable to make it. After speaking with several GRS students, it appears as though the timing of the luncheon and the location was more of a challenge than originally anticipated.

In the following weeks, spring break and my own travel prevented us from rescheduling our lunch. As a second attempt to obtain feedback from SoHE GRS students, I distributed a Qualtrics survey to all SoHE GRS students with the following open-ended questions, hoping to approximate the feedback obtained by my colleagues in their conversations with students. The survey included the following three questions:
• What does receiving the AOF/GRS fellowship mean to you? Is the financial support a critical factor in your enrollment in graduate studies at UW-Madison?

• In addition to the financial support provided by AOF/GRS, are there other types of support or experiences that you would benefit from (e.g. social or professional development)?

• Do you have specific feedback or recommendations for faculty, staff and administration, related to the GRS/AOF program?

Five students responded to the survey. While the use of a survey prevented me from being able to engage with the students directly, it allowed the students the time and space to formulate deeply personal responses to the questions that address a range of topics.

All respondents identified the financial support provided by AOF as a significant, and often deciding factor, in their enrollment decision. However, students also noted that financial support alone is not sufficient – identifying culture and climate concerns, professional development opportunities, and avenues to cultivate community as essential to the development of a program that truly supports the presence and success of underrepresented students. Full, unedited responses are presented below.

Student #1:

Q1. The AOF fellowship was one of the reasons that I decided to come to UW Madison. The funding was sizable, and I appreciated the opportunity to connect with other students of color. The fellowship alone was not the sole reason that I decided to come to the university, but it did help. Other universities that I was accepted to had similar “diversity funding packages” that were very comparable to what UW Madison was offering. If I had to select two reasons for why I chose to relocate my family to Wisconsin, my answer would be the CSCR program and the opportunity to be a project assistant while receiving the AOF. The AOF is good and very appreciated but when I was notified that I was awarded the AOF I was still undecided.

Q2. I believe that if the purpose of the AOF is to support the recruitment and retention of highly qualified underrepresented students in UW–Madison graduate programs we should be more strategic about what that support would look like. Personally, I would define support as social, academic, and professional. My question to the AOF board would be how are our fellows being offered support? If I was asked what support looks like for me (besides financial) I would begin in these three areas. When I say support, I am asking how our board has created advanced opportunities for our fellows. If I was on the board I would start by measuring fellows that are presenting and attending at academic conferences, being published in high impact journals, involved in or create more student organizations, and have more job offers than other graduate students at UW-Madison. If the reason that this fellowship was created was to reverse systemic and racial disparities this fellowship has to be vigilant and intentional about reversing them.

Q3. Newsletters – what other fellows are doing, on campus activities (social and professional), organizations to join, academic conferences, publishing opportunities, internship opportunities, fellowship opportunities. This newsletter should be made specific for students who are underrepresented so it is not the same as other newsletters on campus.

Money is nice but more focus on professional development would be cool too.
Thank for this opportunity. You are doing amazing and important work and I am very thankful for this opportunity to be a fellow.

Student #2:
Q1. Receiving the AOF/GRS is absolutely critical for enrollment. I would not have been able to attend the CSCR program without this funding.

Q2. Professional development is good but it is so hard to find time. It isn't beneficial if we cannot attend due to the heavy work-loads.

Q3. I really like how I feel so supported and reassured by faculty, staff and admin in SoHE.

Student #3:
Q1. I was really excited to be awarded this funding opportunity since I knew that I could not attend school and work (which I need to continue doing)- if I needed to TA or RA. Since I have a lot of student debt from my MPH, I knew I was not going to be able to return to school unless I had financial support. This opportunity has allowed me to have to make up for my reduction in salary, due to my adjusted work time while I am at school.

Q2. In terms of opportunities, I think the range can be wide. However, in my personal circumstance (mother of 2 young children, live out of Madison, and work), even if these opportunities were available, it would be hard for me to fully take advantage of them.

Q3. I understand that this scholarship aims to provide financial support to students from underrepresented communities. Although, in my opinion, this funding should be viewed as some compensation or payback to communities traditionally left behind in the educational system, I did have the feeling (sometimes) that possible tokenism is possible to occur. I do not need to be remembered I am a student of color. I can see it. I can talk about it myself.
I feel that increasing the quota of diverse students in a primarily white school is the first step, but it should not stop there. As a student, it is hard for me to relate to many of the professors, not as people, but in terms of academic views and perspectives. I guess that asking GRS/OAF fellows to be part(as a requirement) of faculty hiring process, review course syllabus related with diversity issues, social inequalities & community-based research with underserved communities- can have the capacity to engage these future scholars in internal academic-advocacy roles, where the color of their skin, is not one of the major components that makes them fellows, but rather, their backgrounds, their outsiders-insiders life stories, and their potential to assist in the developing of a school that is more critically diverse and welcoming.

Student #4:
Q1. The Advanced Opportunity Fellowship/Graduate Research Scholars (AOF/GRS) program at the School of Human Ecology (SoHE) is a critical factor in my own enrollment as a graduate student and member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison). Tribes and tribal organizations for education are not a reliable means of financial support for new and continuing indigenous students, which is the fundamental reason why the AOF/GRS program is a critical factor.
Q2. The AOF/GRS is an important start to indigenous education at the School of Human Ecology (SoHE). UW-Madison faculty, staff and administration may assume that courting wealthier Wisconsin tribes is the best approach to gaining financial support for SoHE, but I disagree. SoHE could increase the educational benefits to indigenous students and support of faculty, staff and administration by opening a Native American Office with one FTE (full-time equivalent), phone, facsimile, travel budget, and program assistant. The proposed initiative is open for continued discussion and development.

Q3. The AOF/GRS is an excellent start in Indian education at SoHE. I suggest on-going or quarterly workshops in micro-aggressions, micro-assaults, micro-insults, and micro-invalidations. The workshops would help put indigenous or Native American students into proper perspective. For example, indigenous students are not minorities per se, but people of indigenous nations legally recognized as nations by the immigrant people of the United States. The proposed initiative is open for continued discussion and development.

Student #5:

Q1. Having AOF support was definitely a factor in enrolling at UW Madison. The funding really helped me both move to the state and settle in here.

Q2. When I first arrived I attended the campus wide dinner for AOF students and was able to meet all sorts of folks doing interesting work and supported by the fellowship. It was also really nice that it covered my segregated feeds that year.

Q3. It made taxes really confusing and majorly upped what I owed to the IRS, it would be nice for that information to be clearer and to help students plan for it.
Summary of Findings
(across Nelson, WSB, Nursing and SOHE)

Overarching Concerns
This review was conducted under the constraints of time and available human resources. Throughout the review, the need for larger campus conversations was clearly evident. For example, as a review team, we only were able listen to a few students in each of our units.

This review also uncovered evidence that for some recipients, being a GRS fellow adds to the injustice of pre-existing emotional burdens placed on underrepresented graduate students to "prove their worth". To provide funding that addresses a financial burden but simultaneously compounds a different type of burden is unacceptable. The concerning experiences conveyed by some GRS students in this report warrant immediate attention and action, both individually to redress specific student experiences and collectively to ensure that future incidents do not occur.

The information we received in this review points to the need for clarity of purpose to be agreed upon and communicated at multiple levels, including: (1) from the graduate school to individual schools and colleges, (2) from individual schools and colleges to faculty and administration, and (3) from individual schools and colleges to all prospective and current students (not just GRS eligible students).

Faculty and student buy-in is a start, but clarity of communication demonstrates a commitment to the purposes of GRS that might help address the wrong-headed attitudes and comments that contribute to the creation of unwelcoming environments for some fellowship recipients. That said, in recognizing that each community is unique, a degree of customization in the implementation of the program to meet each school's needs is suggested. As the final line of this section points out, one size does not fit all.

The findings presented in this section summarize topics for in-depth exploration and action at a later date.

Students: The importance of Getting Their Voices Into This and Any Future Reports
- In our small units, graduate students expressed gratitude for Advanced Opportunity Fellowships (AOFs), citing many reasons why they are highly important. It appears to the review team that these fellowships make a large difference in the lives of the students who receive them.
- The students indicated the need for increased awareness on the part of faculty in order for them to see a path towards the success of the program. The program will not be effective without clear buy in from faculty and an understanding of how experiences are shaped for minority students.
- Students also indicated that faculty must respond to their concerns with understanding, especially when there is little precedent diversity to guide behaviors. If not, the student experience ends up being isolating regardless of GRS.
- GRS students should have regular, ongoing, campus-wide opportunities that help them to better (1) understand the purposes and goals of the GRS program, (2) meet their responsibilities, and (3) explore the possibilities of building wider supportive communities.
The Fellowships and Their Allocations

- The AOFs positively impact the wider UW-Madison community by supporting talented students in our graduate programs.
- Three of the four of our small units could support more students as GRS if more funds were available and would welcome the opportunity to do so.
- For some units, the fellowship allocations have been shrinking. The reasons for this are not clear, leading some units to question whether the cuts are punitive in nature; that is, reallocating from those GRS programs that are not administratively viewed as effective.
- There is a sense amongst some non-GRS students that the GRS fellowship unfairly rewards minority students. As a consequence, the experience of the GRS students can be minimized. Faculty can play a big role in mitigating this perception, and some students feel more could be done on this front. It might also be helpful to have non-GRS students understand the objectives of the GRS program.

The Current Difficulties of Creating and Supporting GRS communities

- All of us are busy campus citizens, pulled in different directions with competing demands on our time. This “busy-ness” was evident at every stage of this review. For example, students signed up for lunch but then needed to cancel. We could not schedule everybody on the same day for an interview. Even those of us on the review team had to juggle responsibilities, rescheduling because of family needs (a sick child), workplace needs and personal health needs.
- Recruiting GRS eligible students should be a priority. Perhaps more could be done if schools were to officially prioritize this and better utilize the available resources – such as minority recruiting conferences and other under-utilized avenues.
- Faculty diversity, at both the junior and senior levels will help with recruiting GRS students. Of course, this might be easier said than done. However, even just increasing awareness amongst current faculty and clearly committing to supporting GRS students through their experience will itself be helpful.
- Transparent information on the financial and non-financial resources available to GRS students across the University is needed.
- The students wanted to have connection and network with other students in the department as well as in other departments, which could be a great source of social support.

The varying expertise of those in leadership roles

- Many types of expertise/experience are needed to serve as directors, advisors, and mentors to the GRS community. The qualifications all may not be found in the same person.
- Some types of expertise/experience are missing across the board at UW-Madison and thus affect the GRS community. For example, the number of faculty members of color is too low – in some cases missing entirely – for the number of students we serve currently and aim to serve in the future.
- Some faculty directors are not even aware of the GRS mandate, making it difficult for them to take on an effective leadership role.
The review itself

- The review process produced anxiety in some people.
- In our small units, some people do not feel well understood and/or appreciated by the Graduate School.
- Without more clarity in the objectives of the GRS program, buy-in from more faculty members, and training for the PhD faculty coordinators, the desired outcomes are unlikely to manifest themselves in schools that are not already predisposed to accommodating minority and disadvantaged populations.
- The schools are all very different. In the review process, one size should not be expected to fit all.
I. INTRODUCTION:

Ed-GRS is a community of graduate students in the School of Education who receive GRS Fellowships. Ed-GRS’ stated mission is to enhance the educational and professional opportunities for underrepresented graduate scholars to improve recruitment, retention, and professional growth. The Ed-GRS program serves eight departments in the SoE: Art; Counseling Psychology (CP); Curriculum & Instruction (C&I); Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis (ELPA); Educational Policy Studies (EPS); Educational Psychology (EP); Kinesiology (KINES); and Rehabilitation Psychology & Special Education (RPSE).

Academic programs are formally reviewed every ten years, but GRS programs have never been reviewed. As a result, this report is the first official review of Ed-GRS. The review team includes: Stacey Lee (Professor, Educational Policy Studies); William Hoyt (Professor, Counseling Psychology) and Percival Matthews (Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology). The central purpose of the report is to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of Ed-GRS programming and to offer recommendations for improvement. In Section II we will outline our approach to collecting data for this report. Following the description of our methods, we will discuss our findings in Section III, including a discussion of the process of funding allocation, staffing and the activities/programming offered by Ed-GRS. Section IV will focus on our recommendations.

II. METHODS:

As per the charge from the Graduate School, we examined various materials prepared by the Graduate School and Ed-GRS (e.g., self-study, Ed-GRS surveys of fellows etc.). As a committee, we interviewed Ed-GRS staff (Coordinator and Project Assistant) and two faculty who serve on the Ed-GRS advisory board. We attempted to find a time to meet with the entire advisory board, but it proved difficult to find a time when members of the advisory board could meet as a group. It is worth noting that, during our meeting with him, the Ed-GRS Coordinator remarked on the consistent difficulty he encounters scheduling meetings with the board. In our meeting with the faculty director of Ed-GRS and one other board member we asked them to discuss the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Ed-GRS programming and their understandings of the role and purpose of the advisory board. In order to gain the perspective of additional board members, we used Qualtrics to survey board members and received three responses. Questions on the survey (Appendix A) focused on the goals/functions of the Ed-GRS programming, the role of the advisory board, and recommendations for improvement. Additionally, review team
members spoke informally to faculty in their home departments who are involved in admissions and/or the Ed-GRS advisory board to gain more data.

We had hoped to meet with a diverse group of Ed-GRS, including those currently funded and those between Ed-GRS fellowship years, but due to students’ scheduling constraints, we were not successful in scheduling a meeting with students. We used Qualtrics to survey Ed-GRS students as an alternative to in-person interviews, aiming to solicit the perspectives of a range of students. We requested an email list of all Ed-GRS fellowship recipients from the last 5-6 cohorts toward which we could direct the Qualtrics survey, but it turns out that such a list does not exist. In the end, we sent surveys to 94 students whose contact information was provided by the Ed-GRS Project Assistant, and we received 31 responses. The survey (attached) asked for feedback on students’ experiences with Ed-GRS, particularly their satisfaction with the social, academic and professional support offered by the community. Additionally, the survey asked about how important the Ed-GRS fellowship had been in their decision to come to the UW.

III. FINDINGS

Administration:

Ed-GRS is administered by the Assistant Dean for Student Diversity Programs (referred to as the Ed-GRS Staff Coordinator, or “Coordinator,” below), with administrative support from a part-time Project Assistant and in consultation with the Ed-GRS Advisory Board. The Coordinator and the Project Assistant also take the lead in arranging for Ed-GRS cohort activities, to which current and former Ed-GRS recipients are invited. This is done in consultation with Advisory Board members, and sometimes other SoE faculty. The current practice is to arrange one social gathering and one professional development gathering each semester. Finally, the Coordinator and Project Assistant serve as both as points of contact and as emotional and professional resources for Ed-GRS participants. Program administrators can address questions or concerns, provide information, or suggest resources for students as they orient to graduate study at UW-Madison.

The Advisory Board includes one faculty member from each of the eight SoE departments with Ed-GRS fellows. Advisory Board members meet once each semester and are responsible for helping the Coordinator make policy decisions. Most recently, for example, the Coordinator consulted with the Advisory Board regarding changing the amount of the Ed-GRS fellowship in response to minimum stipend increase initiatives pressed by the Graduate School.

In conversations with the Coordinator and Project Assistant, it became clear that the program is constrained by staffing demands. Both the Coordinator and Project Assistant have multiple responsibilities outside of Ed-GRS such that much of their committed effort is not with Ed-GRS. This administrative bottleneck is one potential limiting factor that complicates current abilities to address problem issues.
Allocation Procedures:

The Coordinator and Advisory Board have no role in the selection of fellowship recipients. Fellowships are assigned directly to departments as described below, and departments have full discretion in determining which eligible applicants will be offered this recruitment incentive. PhD students (and MFA students in the Art Department) are generally offered two years of funding (initial and final or dissertation year); other fellowships at the master’s level are generally one (initial) year only.

As noted previously, Ed-GRS fellowships are awarded to students in eight SoE departments (those with graduate degree programs):

- Art (MFA)
- Counseling Psychology (master’s; PhD)
- Curriculum and Instruction (PhD)
- Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (PhD)
- Education Policy Studies (PhD)
- Educational Psychology (PhD)
- Kinesiology (OT master’s; PhD)
- Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education (PhD)

Ed-GRS awarded 436 fellowships to 324 graduate/professional students between 2006 and 2017. During this period, the SoE saw its percentage of underrepresented minority students increase from 11.7% to 17.7%. Ed-GRS recipients have consistently reported that securing the fellowship was critical to their recruitment and later success.

Factors Affecting Timing of Ed-GRS Offers:

Each January, the Coordinator is notified of the GRS allocation for following academic year. This allocation provides funds for recruitment of incoming students, after funds for past recipients (i.e., those now entering final- or dissertation-year status and hence eligible for a second year of funding) have been reserved. To determine the amount needed for final/dissertation-year fellows, the Coordinator sends a request to departments, often in January, to provide data on the number of fellows who will be eligible for a second year of Ed-GRS support in the coming AY. Pending receipt of department responses, current practice is to guarantee one recruitment fellowship to each of the eight participating departments in late January, with the likelihood of additional available funds once the amount to be reserved for final- or dissertation-year fellows has been determined.

By late February or early March, the Coordinator receives notice from all departments about needed final- or dissertation-year fellowships and has a good idea of the funds available for recruitment fellowships. At this time the Coordinator notifies departments of additional fellowships available to them for use in recruiting incoming students. Commonly, each department is guaranteed one additional
recruitment fellowship at this time. Up to the uniform notification deadline (April 15), the Coordinator regularly checks in with department admissions committees to ascertain whether they will use all of their recruitment fellowships. Fellowships that are unused by the original department are made available to other departments with eligible applicants, usually fairly late in the admissions process. Finally, the Coordinator requests updates for students scheduled for dissertator fellowships during the summer. In the event that a student fails to achieve dissertator status, the Coordinator makes an effort to allocate an additional first-year fellowship to one or more eligible students scheduled to begin graduate study in the fall semester.

This process has consequences for the use of recruitment funds. For many departments, admissions decisions are made in January and February, but only a single Ed-GRS fellowships is available for offer at that time. As a result, Ed-GRS eligible students in these departments often receive the fellowship offer 4-6 weeks after the admissions offer (when additional Ed-GRS fellowships become available to the department), reducing the impact of the fellowship as a recruitment tool. Unfortunately, by this point, it is not uncommon for one or more of the most qualified eligible applicants to have accepted offers at other schools. Inefficiencies in the allocation process (i.e., applicant in Department A holds offer until April 1 and declines, whereupon the fellowship is offered to an admitted student in Department B) and uncertainties about the timing of dissertator status (i.e., student anticipated to use dissertator funds does not meet requirements for dissertator status by the deadline for fall enrollment) result in a small proportion of Ed-GRS funding being allocated at a late date to eligible applicants who have already accepted the admissions offer. By definition, these fellowships had negligible impact on the student’s decision to attend UW-Madison.

Programming & Climate:

Ed-GRS regularly surveys fellows for feedback on program activities and impact. Results from an earlier survey (2009-10) indicated that fellows particularly appreciated community building opportunities and requested the inclusion of more social activities. As a result, Ed-GRS now aims to host two social events per semester. Our Qualtrics survey confirms this earlier finding with students consistently indicating that Ed-GRS provides an important social “community” for students of color.

In contrast, students expressed some confusion over whether they are part of the Ed-GRS community in the years they are not funded by Ed-GRS. Moreover, informal interviews with members of the advisory board indicated uncertainty regarding the extent to which they were to actively interface with students in non-Ed-GRS years.

Two specific examples of how Ed-GRS promotes a positive cultural climate are Diverse-OT and Writing Warriors. Diverse-OT is a UW–Madison student organization co-created by two Ed-GRS fellows in 2016-2017 following peer-peer and student-faculty tensions in class discussions in light of national racial bias events. Diverse-OT supplements the OT curriculum, addressing race and ethnicity and subsequent health outcomes. The program won the 2017 Bucky’s Award for Social Justice Advocacy from the UW–Madison.
Division of Student Life and was also recognized by the national Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity. Writing Warriors is a group of doctoral students of color who meet regularly in a writing workshop format to provide support to one another around academic writing and scholarship. Doctoral students in ELPA, including Ed-GRS fellows, created the group, but students from multiple departments regularly participate. The group has become an important source of professional support for Ed-GRS scholars.

In past surveys, students have also expressed interest in receiving more professional development offerings. For example, respondents to the 2012-2013 survey indicated an openness to a 1-credit professional development seminar and identified the need for a stronger initial orientation. As a result, a formal orientation session was instituted for the 2014-15 academic cohort and continues to this day. Generally, professional development events and orientations have been geared to help students understand the libraries, databases, and available writing resources as they began their academic careers at UW–Madison. Student interest in additional professional development opportunities also arose a few times in our survey, particularly from students who wanted more professional development opportunities for those in the arts. As this response suggests, however, the diversity of academic disciplines within Ed-GRS poses considerable challenges for establishing a suite of professional development activities and workshops that serve the needs of all fellows. The issue of developing professional development opportunities for the diverse group of Ed-GRS fellows also came up in our meeting with the two members of the Advisory Board and in our meeting with the Coordinator.

Finally, the student responses to our Qualtrics survey show that students are interested in having more faculty involvement in the program. Specifically, students reported wanting greater faculty mentorship and more opportunities to connect with faculty across the SoE. Relatedly, there appears to be some confusion regarding the role of the Advisory Board. Both the faculty director of the Advisory Board and the Ed-GRS Coordinator indicated a strong interest in having Advisory board members play a more active role in mentoring students and in developing programming. At this point, however, the Advisory Board is primarily responsible for helping the Coordinator make policy decisions.

Recruitment:

At the school level, Ed-GRS has established tuition waiver agreements with specific institutions. Additionally, Ed-GRS collaborates and recruits from programs like the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers (IRT) as well as the Summer Education Research Program (SERP) for all majors in the SoE. In reflecting upon recruitment, the self study noted several challenges:

1. The diversity of disciplines in SoE also presents difficulties for centralized recruitment efforts, as each department has its own set of norms. In an attempt to promote more focused recruitment of GRS-eligible students, seven departments submitted their first department-specific recruitment plans to the Graduate School in fall 2017.
2. In recent years, Ed-GRS 9-month fellowships provided a stipend of $15,000. In response to Graduate School initiatives to increase minimum funding levels, the
Advisory Board determined that stipend levels should be increased

3. Alongside efforts to increase the funding minimum, there is pressure to provide more funds, specifically in the form of multi-year packages. For example, approximately 40% of IRT students are interested in Education-related graduate programs, and the IRT program encourages these students to seek the most comprehensive funding packages available to them for graduate school. The new WCER Fellows program bundles funding from WCER and private donors with Ed-GRS funding to offer 4-year packages to a cohort of four incoming SOE students each year. However, the WCER Fellows program is in its first year, so we could not draw conclusions regarding its effectiveness.

The results of our survey indicate that the Ed-GRS fellowships are central in recruiting students. While a few students noted that the amount of the stipend was low, students overwhelmingly (23 out of 31 responses) reported that the fellowship was instrumental in their decision to attend UW-Madison. Typical comments were that it was a decisive factor, that without the fellowship, they would not have been able to attend, or that Ed-GRS funding was the reason for matriculating to UW-Madison vs. other institutions.

Time to degree completion:

Available data on time to degree for students completing graduate studies between fall 2012 and spring 2017 indicate that the Ed-GRS program does not appear to produce a shorter time to degree. For doctoral and master’s students, the time to degree is the same for AOF Recipients and domestic targeted minorities at 6.9 years for both groups. This compares to 6.7 years for non-Ed-GRS domestic non-targeted and 6.5 years for international students. Ed-GRS does, however, appear to enhance completion rates. Ed-GRS recipients entering between 2008 to 2011 entering cohorts completed at a rate of 50% compared to 41.7% for domestic targeted minorities.

Summary of Key Findings:

The financial support provided by Ed-GRS fellowships is key to recruiting and retaining students, and fellowship recipients graduate at higher rates than non-recipient peers.

- Ed-GRS fellows consistently express appreciation for the sense of community that Ed-GRS provides, however, students are most involved in the Ed-GRS community during the years they receive fellowships.
- There is some confusion over the role of the Advisory Board. The Coordinator and the faculty director both indicated that they would like to see board members more involved in organizing professional development activities.
- The Coordinator and Project Assistant are very much appreciated by Ed-GRS fellows, but their effectiveness is limited by the amount of committed effort each has allocated to the program.
- The diversity of the SoE units and the decentralized culture of the School of Education create challenges for school-wide recruitment efforts and for
professional development and academic programming that suits all the Ed-GRS students.

Because of the factors noted above, a relatively small proportion of Ed-GRS offers are made at the optimal time to impact applicant admissions decisions. This is particularly the case for departments with application deadlines in December and January (where initial offers may be sent out in early February).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: Optimize Use of Ed-GRS for Recruitment

The current timing of availability of GRS funds, along with the need to reserve funds for inherently unpredictable final- and dissertator-year use by past Ed-GRS recipients, results in many Ed-GRS offers each year being made to applicants relatively late in the admissions cycle. This unfortunate timing greatly diminishes the potential impact of the Ed-GRS for recruiting diverse cohorts to graduate study at UW-Madison.

In this committee’s view, a high priority should be to work toward greater predictability in the fellowship allocation process, from the standpoint of the offering departments. The goal would be to provide guarantees of fellowship availability to departments early in the admissions cycle, so that departments can include funding offers along with the initial offer of admissions. Possible recommendations in connection with these goals include:

1. Examination of the timing of GRS allocations. It is desirable that colleges receive the annual GRS allocation somewhat in advance of the time that the earliest departments in the college will be making admissions offers.

2. Flexible funding plan from the SoE Dean’s office to allow for year-to-year variations in funding for final- or dissertator-year fellows. The Ed-GRS Director should not be in a position of having to deny funding to a qualified final- or dissertator-year fellow because the GRS funds for that year have been used up (e.g., in a year with a high number of final- or dissertator-year fellows). Nor should the allocation of funds for recruitment of Ed-GRS-qualified applicants have to wait on an administrative process that will necessarily yield an imprecise estimate of the number of final- or dissertator-year fellowships needed for the following academic year.

Similar to “level billing” for utilities bills, an SoE backstop for the Ed-GRS program would supplement available Ed-GRS funds in years with a large number of final- or dissertator-year fellows and recoup these supplemental expenditures in years with a small number of final- or dissertator-year fellows. Under this “level billing” scenario, The Ed-GRS director would know exactly what sum will be needed to service obligations to the final- or dissertator-year fellows, and therefore be able to allocate remaining Ed-GRS funds for recruitment as soon as the GRS funds are received.
3. Consider unequal Ed-GRS allocations to departments, based on funding history. The current procedures are scrupulous in allocating equal numbers of fellowships to each participating department. However, the number of fellowships actually used varies in ways that are fairly consistent from year to year (see Ed-GRS self-study, appendix). As a result, departments that typically have a high number of qualified applicants make a small number of initial funding offers and make additional offers later in the process (as unused fellowships come available from other departments). This challenge will be greater as stipend amounts rise (which, unless there is a corresponding increase in GRS allocations, will necessarily mean that the number of available fellowships will fall, making efficient allocation of these fellowships an even higher priority).

We recommend that SoE study the idea of historically-based initial fellowship allocation, similar to the process used on campus for the University Fellowship. The goal is to increase the likelihood that the department that will eventually use the fellowship is able to offer it at the earliest stage of the admissions process, when the impact on recruitment will be greatest.

4. When allocating funds for outreach and recruitment, consider the relative merits of department-specific and school-wide outreach efforts. (See the three-tiered approach to program development described below.)

Recommendation 2: Take a Three-Tiered Approach to Ed-GRS Programming

Given the diversity of the SoE departments making use of Ed-GRS, one should question whether school-wide Ed-GRS events are the only or the optimal approach to program development in support of Ed-GRS fellows. Our experience of scheduling with current fellows indicates the challenges of finding common times for a substantial proportion of current fellows. In addition, some professional development activities may be highly relevant to some Ed-GRS fellows, but not too useful for others. Given the scarce resources (staff and faculty time) required for program development and the opportunity cost for fellows who are already over-scheduled with academic pursuits, scholarship, teaching, and service, it makes sense to take a targeted approach to Ed-GRS programming so that SoE is investing in programs that will provide the greatest benefit to those in attendance.

We tentatively suggest a three-tiered approach to programming, taking into account natural affinity communities within and between SoE departments.

**Tier 3: School-wide activities.** There are shared experiences and common required skills that cut across disciplinary boundaries and are common to graduate students in all SoE departments. Examples of school-wide Ed-GRS activities that have been valued by survey respondents include social gatherings and orientation activities. As members of underrepresented groups on a predominantly white campus, Ed-GRS
recipients may share experiences relative to climate and belonging that cross disciplinary boundaries. These types of shared experiences and needs provide a motivation for Ed-GRS programming at the college level.

Staffing limitations preclude the possibility that the of current Coordinator and Project Assistant might create and facilitate a large suite of additional Tier 3 professional development activities. However, the existing WCER Fellows framework provides several such activities. It might be that the SOE could coordinate with the WCER Fellows in a cost-sharing program to expand the existing Tier 3 activities so that more Ed-GRS students might benefit from them.

In order to facilitate communication, we recommend that Ed-GRS create and maintain a listserv for each cohort of fellowship recipients and a blended list of all current Ed-GRS scholars, including those between fellowship years.

However, it seems reasonable to expect that not all programming is best implemented school-wide, and that some professional development activities are better targeted to smaller Ed-GRS subgroups, such as areas or even departments.

**Tier 2: Area-wide activities.** SoE departments are organized in three areas: Arts (Art; Dance; Theater and Drama), Education (Curriculum and Instruction; Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis; Educational Policy Studies; Educational Psychology), and Health (Counseling Psychology; Kinesiology; Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education). We would argue that there are commonalities (e.g., disciplinary norms and methods; nature of inquiry; funding sources; valuation of scholarly activities) among departments in each area that are not shared with departments in the other two areas. Professional development programming addressing shared area characteristics might profitably be offered area-wide, rather than school-wide.

**Tier 1: Activities specific to academic department.** Graduate education is in part a process of socialization into the language and methods of a discipline. In their professional lives post-graduation, students will be expected to understand the history of the discipline and its current controversies and growth areas, and to contribute to the development of the field. Given the diversity of departments in the School of Education, programming for Ed-GRS fellows that is discipline-specific will be most successful if offered at the department level. Finally, we suggest that Ed-GRS make more explicit expectations for faculty who have students receiving fellowships to document concrete mentoring and research opportunities in the first year.

**Recommendation 3: The Role of the Ed-GRS Advisory Board**

Ambiguity about the role of the Advisory Board is a thread that ran through our conversations with staff, with board members, and to some extent with students. We suggest that a primary task for the Advisory Board should be to advise the Ed-
GRS staff and the SoE leadership about how best to address issues raised in the above two areas (viz., use of Ed-GRS fellowships for recruitment of qualified applicants; provision of educational programming and social opportunities to enrich connections and expand skills needed for school and career success).

Advisory Board members are familiar with admissions practices and recruitment challenges in their home departments, and can speak authoritatively about what changes in the current allocation practices would enhance recruitment effectiveness. And Board members are actively involved with Ed-GRS recipients in their own departments and can seek information about program needs and scheduling availability. They can also offer wisdom about optimizing level of intervention (i.e., what we have called Tiers 1-3 above) for given types of programming, so that efforts to supplement already intensive graduate training activities will reach the audience most likely to benefit.

Finally, the Advisory Board can consult with Ed-GRS staff about the most effective methods to document outcomes of the fellowship program. For example, it would be a good idea to compare data on fellowship acceptance rate before and after implementation of a plan that allows departments to extend fellowship offers early in the admissions process. Also, it is desirable to go beyond crude analyses that compare school-wide time-to-degree (and graduation rates) between fellowship recipients and Ed-GRS qualified students who did not receive a fellowship. Time to degree and completion rates differ between departments and degree types, and Ed-GRS participation rate likely differs by department as well. Thus, it is important to control for these inter-department differences in progress indicators, to draw valid conclusions about the impact of Ed-GRS.
Default Question Block

Dear FY2018 Ed-GRS Advisory Board Members,

Thank you for your assistance with our EdGRS program review. We are interested in your thoughts about the following items. If you have questions, please feel free to contact any of the members of the review team:

Stacey Lee  stacey.lee@wisc.edu
Percival Matthews  pmatthews@wisc.edu
Bill Hoyt  wthoyt@wisc.edu

Name

Department

Years on EdGRS Advisory Board

What do you see as the key goals or functions of the EdGRS program?

What do you see as the role (current or potential) of the Advisory Board in facilitating these objectives?
Do you have recommendations for improving how SoE uses EdGRS funds?

Are there unique considerations we should be aware of for specific departments, as we think about how EdGRS is implemented in the School of Education?

As an Advisory Board member, how often do you interact with EdGRS students in your department? With EdGRS students in other departments?

Other comments:

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Default Question Block

Thank you for your assistance with our review of the EdGRS program. If you prefer to communicate your feedback directly to the review committee members, please contact us directly.

Stacey Lee  (stacey.lee@wisc.edu)
Percival Matthews (pmatthews@wisc.edu)
Bill Hoyt (wthoyt@wisc.edu)

We are requesting your input in the following areas:

Your department:

- Art
- Counseling Psychology
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Dance
- Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
- Education Policy Studies
- Educational Psychology
- Kinesiology
- Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education
- Theater and Drama

Your degree program:

- Doctoral
- Masters

Your year in the program:

- 1st
From your perspective, what are the best features of the EdGRS program?

What would you like to see improved about EdGRS?

Was the EdGRS offer instrumental in your decision to come to UW? How did it compare to offers you received from other schools/programs?

When considering the financial, social, and professional development aspects of EdGRS, how important is each of these aspects to you and why?
Do you feel EdGRS offers you adequate professional development opportunities? Why or why not?

(For students beyond their first year:) In the years when you are not funded through EdGRS, do you still feel integrated into the EdGRS community? Please elaborate.

Please add below anything else you wish to share with the review committee about your EdGRS experience.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your input is critical as we consider what is working and what can be improved in the EdGRS program.

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