



Council of Graduate Schools

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Comments submitted to the United States House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor

Recommendations for amending the Higher Education Act of 1965

April 13, 2007

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is pleased to provide comments to the Committee on Education and Labor regarding recommendations for amending the Higher Education Act of 1965.

CGS is an organization of over 480 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. CGS member institutions award more than 90% of the nation's doctoral degrees and over 75% of its master's degrees. CGS' mission is to improve and advance graduate education; it is the only national association dedicated solely to representing the interests of graduate education.

The Council of Graduate Schools offers comments in the following areas:

- Authorization for the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program
- Authorization for Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program
- Needs Analysis for GAANN and Javits programs
- A new initiative - graduate fellowship component for the TRIO McNair program, enhanced support for Hispanic Serving Institutions, and creation of a new program assisting students to enter the professoriate.
- International Education programs

Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN)

GAANN provides vital financial support for graduate students of superior ability and financial need to pursue the highest degree available in fields designated as areas of national need, in order to enhance the nation's teaching and research capacity. These fields are determined annually by the U.S. Secretary of Education, and currently include biology, chemistry, computer and information sciences, engineering, mathematics, nursing, and physics. The GAANN program makes competitively awarded grants to academic departments and programs, which are selected according to quality and must

provide 25 percent matching financial support.

Despite GAANN's critical role in our graduate schools' ability to prepare the knowledge creators and innovators of tomorrow, funding for the program has remained stagnant or declined and the number of students supported by GAANN funds has declined. Appropriations have not reached authorized funding levels for a number of years.

Providing adequate numbers of fellowships and adequate stipend levels are crucial to sustain the vitality and effectiveness of the GAANN program and in direct support of national efforts to enhance U.S. competitiveness and innovation. Therefore, CGS recommends that Congress strengthen its commitment to graduate education by:

- Authorizing increased funding for the GAANN program. Specifically, CGS recommends that sufficient funding be authorized to support, at minimum, an annual total of 1,200 GAANN fellowships, including 400 new awards each year. We believe this level of investment will reinvigorate GAANN at a time when it is needed to help produce the highly-skilled workforce needed to maintain our nation's competitiveness in the 21st century global economy. (Title VII, Sec. 716)
- Maintaining the current "designation of areas of national need" provision, which directs the Secretary of Education to consult with appropriate federal and nonprofit agencies and organizations in order to designate areas of national need. (Title VII, Sec. 712 (b))

We strongly urge the Committee to strengthen the nation's investment in graduate study in areas of national need.

Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program

The Javits Fellowship program awards portable fellowships to students of superior ability who are seeking a doctorate or a Master of Fine Arts in the arts, humanities, and social sciences; it is the only federal program that supports graduate students in the arts and humanities. Eligible fields of study are determined annually by a board appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Education; current fields include a number of less-commonly taught languages critical to our national security. The Javits Fellowship is one of the most competitive federal graduate fellowship programs: in 2006, there were 771 applications for the 60 new fellowships available. For the 2007 competition, 811 applications have been received.

Similar to the GAANN Program, funding for the Javits Fellowship program has declined over a number of years. Supporting adequate numbers of fellowships and adequate stipend levels is important to sustain the vitality and effectiveness of the Javits Program. Therefore, CGS recommends that Congress strengthen its commitment to graduate education by:

- Authorizing increased funding for the Javits Fellowship program. Specifically, CGS recommends that sufficient funding be authorized to support, at minimum, an annual total of 400 Javits fellowships, including 100 new awards each year. We believe this level of investment will reinvigorate the Javits program at a time when our nation

needs experts in a wide spectrum of fields to understand different cultures, languages, and religions. (Title VII, Sec. 705)

We strongly urge the Committee to strengthen the nation's investment in graduate study in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Needs Analysis for GAANN and Javits

Since the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, applicants for GAANN and Javits have had to demonstrate financial need as determined by Title IV, Part F. While CGS supports efforts to ensure that only those students in need receive federal support, the reality is that nearly all GAANN and Javits fellows, as full-time, independent graduate students, demonstrate need. The formal FASFA process creates an abundance of unnecessary paperwork and delays in processing applications. CGS, therefore, recommends that:

- The reference to Title IV, Part F needs analysis as a requirement for GAANN and Javits be removed, and be replaced with the provision used prior to the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, so that institutions are allowed to determine graduate students' need on their campuses.

New Initiatives

Graduate Fellowship Component for the TRIO McNair Program

The Council of Graduate Schools recommends that the United States Congress add a graduate fellowship component to the TRIO Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement program. The goal of the McNair program is to increase the attainment of doctoral degrees by college students who are low-income, first generation and underrepresented in graduate education. The McNair program awards grants to institutions of higher education for projects designed to prepare participants for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. While McNair helps to prepare students for doctoral study, the program provides no financial aid for these students at the graduate level. McNair students frequently cite the lack of financial resources as a key reason for not pursuing graduate education. Adding a graduate fellowship component to McNair will help students overcome this obstacle and help safeguard the nation's investment in McNair students.

Support for Hispanic Serving Institutions

According to the U.S. Census, one in four Americans will be of Hispanic origin by the year 2050. Between 2000 and 2015 the college age population will increase by 2.6 million. 80% of the increase will occur among underrepresented minority groups and 50% of that increase will be attributed to Hispanics. Thus, increasing access and completion rates of Hispanic students at the graduate level must be a priority. The Council of Graduate Schools supports enhancing efforts to expand and improve

opportunities to increase access and improve rates of graduate degree completion of Hispanic students.

Preparing Future Faculty

We also recommend the creation of a new graduate education program that would provide assistance to graduate students from underrepresented groups who wish to enter the professoriate.

International Programs

In an increasingly “flat” world, the need for strong international and foreign language education programs has never been greater. There is currently a shortage of professionals skilled in the less-commonly taught languages that are increasingly critical to our national security. America’s graduate schools play a critical role in educating foreign language experts as well as the future faculty who will teach critical foreign languages to undergraduate and graduate students.

Title VI funding supports a significant portion of foreign language training: higher education institutions that receive money under this title comprise 3% of all colleges that offer language programs, but enroll 56% of graduate students in the less-commonly taught languages. A report issued last month by the National Research Council found that funding for Title VI programs has not kept pace with the expanding mission and need. Funding for key international education programs is lower than it was 40 years ago: 33% fewer Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships were awarded this year than in 1967.

Another Title VI program, the Institute for International Public Policy, increases the participation of students from underrepresented groups who pursue careers in international affairs. The capstone of the multi-year program, focused at minority-serving institutions, is support for students to complete a master’s degree in international relations. Increasing the size of this program would allow an expansion of the program’s capacity, in order to further tap our domestic talent pool and diversify our foreign service. Therefore CGS recommends:

- Increased funding authority for Title VI, in order to increase the number of Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships and expand the Institute for International Public Policy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Please contact Patty McAllister, Vice President of Government Relations and External Affairs at 202-223-3791 or by email at: pmcallister@cgs.nche.edu if you would to discuss these comments and recommendations.