



Council of Graduate Schools

Support for Graduate Education in the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Arts

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Introduction

For over a half century, the United States has reaped the benefits of its commitment to graduate education and research. U.S. graduate schools have been the jewel in the crown of our education system, attracting top domestic and international students by creating dynamic programs that foster research, scholarship, collaboration, and scientific discovery.

Graduate education has produced the innovative scientists and engineers whose discoveries have led our nation in the advancement of science, technology and related fields. There are numerous policy proposals under consideration now to enhance support for education at all levels in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Little attention, however, has been given to the support of graduate education in the humanities, social sciences and the arts.

The Role of the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Arts

In proposals targeted at enhancing U.S. competitiveness in the 21st century global economy, the contributions of the humanities, social sciences and the arts have been ignored. These disciplines play a vital role, however, in contributing to innovation, adaptation, and our quality of life. The major issues facing the twenty-first century – whether familial, local, national or global in scope, from school board controversies to the cultural roots of international terrorism – all include dimensions of cultural expression and understanding that cannot be comprehended and addressed effectively without the contributions of the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. Leaders in these key fields are needed to think critically, interpret events, and help provide solutions to global problems that are increasingly associated with differing perspectives and values. Producing the next generation of scholars in the humanities, social sciences and arts must be a priority to ensure that our future leaders benefit from the crucial vantage points created through the study of history, foreign language and area studies, political science, sociology and psychology, among others.

Nearly a quarter of the doctoral degrees awarded in 2004-05 were in these fields (*Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 1986 to 2005*, Council of Graduate Schools). In response to increasingly complex societal and global challenges additional federal funding to support students pursuing graduate education in these key disciplines is critical.

The Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program

The Jacob K. Javits Fellowship program is one of the few federal programs to provide multi-year support for graduate students pursuing a doctoral or master's degree in selected fields of arts, humanities and social sciences.

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This competitive program is currently funded at just under \$10 million annually. Although the program was authorized at \$30 million in 1998, appropriations have never reached that level. In FY 2006, when funding supported 60 new fellowships, there were 762 applicants, a clear indication of the demand for these highly sought after awards.

Strategy to Increase Support for Graduate Education in the Humanities, Social Sciences and the Arts

- Urge the U.S. Department of Education and key members of Congress on Labor–HHS-Education Appropriations Committees to increase funding for the Jacob K. Javits Fellowship program to provide more awards for graduate students in the humanities, social sciences and the arts. In 2006, 60 new fellowships were awarded, and 192 students were on continuing fellowships.
- Request that the Javits program be funded at no less than \$17 million in FY 08. This would allow for funding over 100 new fellowships, which would still be less than 20% of the number of applications expected.
- Encourage other federal agencies, specifically, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), to establish a traineeship program to support graduate students pursuing degrees in the humanities. This agency has had experience in administering a graduate dissertation program that was in existence from 1993-1995 to support humanities graduate students.
- Bolster funding at NEH, which has been declining for decades, and make investments in the humanities that are essential to helping our country address the many challenges we face, including educating our own citizens about American history and culture and the principles of a civil society. The Administration’s current budget request would reduce funding for NEH grant programs by \$1.3 million. The overall FY 2006 level of \$136.3 million reflects the steady declines experienced since 1979 when the funding level peaked at \$386.5 million.
- Maintain and enhance support for National Science Foundation programs and initiatives that support graduate education and research in the social, behavioral and economic sciences including the Graduate Research Fellowship, the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeships, the GK-12 program and the Directorate for Social, Behavioral , and Economic Sciences. NSF plays a crucial role in developing the next generation of researchers and leaders capable of operating at the intersection of disciplines. The National Academies report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* recommended a balanced research portfolio in all fields of science and engineering and cautioned against a *disinvestment* in important fields including the social sciences and life sciences.

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 475 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 doctoral degrees and over 75% of the master’s degrees in the U.S. The organization’s mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.