

**Annual Report of the
Recruitment, Admissions, and Financial Aid Committee (RAFA)
2003-2004**

Chair: Anne Stright

Members: Suzanne Eckes, Elizabeth Boling, Paulette Dilworth, Sandy Strain, Curt Bonk, Dawn Whitehead, Peg Sutton, Larry Mikulecky

Ex-Officio: Mary Howard-Hamilton

Ex-Officio: Ghangis Carter

Recorder, Ex-officio: Kimberly Frazier

The committee identified lack of graduate student funding as a major problem for recruitment and retention of graduate students in the School of Education. Several projects were undertaken during the year to address this area of weakness.

Underrepresented Graduate Student Funding (African-American, Latino/Latina, & Native American)

The number one priority of the committee was to examine current underrepresented graduate student funding and to try to improve future funding of underrepresented graduate students. Examination of minutes from several years of committee business indicates that underrepresented graduate student funding has consistently been one of the major focuses of the committee's concern.

The first step was to examine student records in the Graduate Studies Office to gain a better understanding of underrepresented graduate student funding. Questions are: Are underrepresented graduate students being financially supported adequately? Are we losing prospective underrepresented graduate students because of lack of funding in the first year? Examination of the records should be completed by fall 2004. Follow-up interviews of underrepresented graduate students will be completed during the fall semester.

Second, the committee and Associate Dean Mary Howard-Hamilton proposed that a portion of the Beechler Fellowships for the academic year 2003-2004 be given to the Director of Recruitment and Retention, Ghangis Carter, to be used for recruitment of qualified underrepresented graduate students. However, because of other funding cuts, the Beechler Fellowship funds were used by the School's department chairs this year for graduate student travel to present at conferences. In the final meeting of the year, the committee voted to use Beechler Fellowship funds for the 2004-2005 academic year to recruit, support, and retain underrepresented graduate students.

Funding of First-Year Graduate Students

Another problem area is the funding of first-year graduate students.

First, the committee met with Sarah Baumgart, Director of External Relations in the School of Education, to explore ways to increase funding and to increase the effectiveness of using the funds already available. She presented information about the current fundraising campaign. The problems of funding for international students were discussed.

Second, in an effort to support departments in using the privately funded fellowships most effectively, the committee, Sarah Baumgart, and the Office of Graduate Studies under Associate Dean Howard-Hamilton created guidelines for awarding privately funded graduate

fellowships. The guidelines provide a time line for awarding fellowships (to ensure that fellowships are awarded in a timely manner) and a chart for each department indicating the donor intent. The new guidelines are designed to help departments make awards by March 1st and to make awards of at least \$1,000 for fellowships with sufficient funds.

Third, the committee will revisit the issues of privately funded fellowships next year to try to develop ways to better use these funds to support new graduate students in their first year. One possibility discussed this year is to combine larger awards to create full one-year fellowships to top applicants.

Fourth, next year, the committee plans to examine ways to reorganize the School of Education's timelines for the distribution of funding (fellowships and assistantships) in order to better facilitate the recruitment and financial support of top applicants to the School's graduate programs.