

To the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA),

On the formation of the Ad-Hoc Committee to Investigate Graduate and Professional Student Emergency Funds, the committee was formed and charged to report to the GPSA by the final meeting of the 2010-2011 year as follows:

- 1) report what emergency grant funds are currently available to Graduate and Professional Students, and the source of those funds;
- 2) report what emergency grant funds are available to other members of the Cornell community that Graduate and Professional Students do not have access to;
- 3) describe the purposes and distribution guidelines of any funds identified for items 1 and 2; and
- 4) provide a recommendation for appropriate actions to ensure that all graduate and professional students have access to grants similar to those provided to undergraduates by the existing Students helping Students fund.

To fulfill our charge, the ad-hoc committee contacted the following individuals:

- Brenda Wickes, bw32, Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Life and Career Advising (the Graduate School);
- Katherine Edmondson, kme2, Assistant Dean for Learning and Instruction (the College of Veterinary Medicine);
- John DeRosa, john-derosa@lawschool.cornell.edu, Assistant Dean for Student and Career Services (the Law School);
- Amanda S. Shaw, afs6, Director of Student Services (the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management); and
- Gretchen Ryan, glr5, Associate Director of Customer Service and Community Relations in the Office of Financial Aid and Student Employment

The committee received responses from Brenda Wickes, Katherine Edmondson, and Gretchen Ryan. Though we do not believe that the information we have learned is complete, the committee has obtained the following information:

1) Funds available to graduate and professional students:

College of Veterinary Medicine (K. Edmondson):

“Yes, the Vet College does maintain an Emergency Loan Fund for Vet students. I believe there is also a separate, endowed fund for students who face extreme circumstances. The best person for you to contact about these is Carol Gary ([csp4@cornell.edu](mailto:csp4@cornell.edu)). She is the Director of Student Financial Planning. You can certainly publicize her name as the contact person (these funds would be restricted to vet students), and the fact that emergency funds are available to those who need them.”

Graduate School (B. Wickes):

“Each of the professional schools and the Graduate School have “contingency funds” that their students can apply to in times of need. Each is administered differently and certainly revenue streams are different in each case. The Grad School fund is capped at \$1000 loan or grant per student per academic year. This fund is generally used for non medical issues. Additionally, there is a special fund administered via Jo Ann Molnar Kieffer in SHIP for graduate student medical charges beyond the specified coverage of the policy, which offers reimbursement of medical overages at up to 50% out of pocket. A third source that we access for international students exists in ISSO, though I don’t know their guidelines.”

2) Funds available to other members of the Cornell community:

Undergraduate Students Helping Students Fund (G. Ryan):

“Our fund was established specifically for registered undergraduate students, and has been funded largely through the undergrad student activity fee.” ... “the fund was established specifically with undergraduates in mind and has been funded almost exclusively through the undergrad student activity fee since the 1988-89 academic year. This leads me to believe that it will not be possible to open this fund for graduate students.”

The “Cornellians Aiding and Responding to Employees” fund:

information available at [http://hr.cornell.edu/life/support/care\\_fund.html](http://hr.cornell.edu/life/support/care_fund.html) -

“a program offering financial assistance to faculty and staff who have experienced a non-recurring sudden or emergency-related financial hardship due to an unforeseen or unavoidable event. CARE is administered confidentially through the Office of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion (WDI) in conjunction with the university’s Faculty and Staff Assistance Program. Financial assistance provided through the Fund is intended to assist faculty and staff with immediate, essential expenses by providing one time funds to address the faculty or staff member’s emergency financial challenge. The CARE Fund program is not designed to address ongoing financial challenges and is not a loan that requires the funds to be reimbursed. The CARE Fund program is funded through the generous donations of faculty, staff and others who are interested in supporting faculty and staff who are in financial need due to an unplanned circumstance.”

3) Purposes and distribution guidelines for above funds:

Each varies - some are loans, some are grants - but they are targeted to specific members of the Cornell community. Each is intended for emergency assistance.

4) The Committee’s recommendation for appropriate actions for the GPSA to take to ensure that all graduate and professional students have access to grants, similar to those provided to undergraduates by the existing Students Helping Students fund include, takes into consideration that Graduate Students may already be eligible for multiple funds (i.e. international student and graduate student funds). However, these funds are administered by various offices with minimal coordination without a broader campus knowledge of these different opportunities. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

- a. the GPSA educate and inform graduate and professional students about the already existing funds (multiple options include providing appropriate web links in

the email, inclusion of the resources in the Orientation Guide and/or the Student Advocacy Resource List, or a notification email for the GPSA Field Representatives to disseminate);

- b. the GPSA remain in contact with the administrators identified in the report; and
- c. the GPSA Communications Committee and Student Advocacy Committees be notified of these resources and take appropriate action as deemed fit.

This report dutifully and accurately reflects the activity of the Ad-Hoc Committee to Investigate Graduate and Professional Student Emergency Funds while fulfilling the charge and objective of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Ben Heavner  
Physical Sciences Voting Representative

Cresten Mansfeldt  
Physical Sciences Voting Representative

Miriam Edelman  
Student Advocacy Committee Member