Resolution 17: A Resolution Regarding Graduate Funding and Tuition

WHEREAS, Graduate students require access to the resources of the university, such as libraries and advising, in order to complete their degrees; and

WHEREAS, Graduate students in the final years of their programs can face two particular difficulties, namely the difficulty of accessing these resources and the inconsistent handling of external awards; and

WHEREAS, Median time to degree in the humanities is 7.1 years, ranging from 5.9 years in Romance Studies to 8.1 years in East Asian Literature (Graduate School Annual Report 2010–11, p. 25); and

WHEREAS, The typical funding guarantee in the humanities programs is five years, consisting both of teaching assistantships and internal fellowships; and

WHEREAS, The gap between the funding provided from Cornell and the median time to degree is therefore 2.1 years; and

WHEREAS, Students in the final years of their degrees do not typically use the full "range of university human and capital resources" (Policy 3.13, page 9) that tuition offsets, including enrolling in classes because they are working on their dissertations; and

WHEREAS, Cornell Policy 3.13 Graduate Tuition and Other Support requires that full tuition is charged for all full-time students, except those maintaining "in absentia" status (Policy 3.13, page 9); and

WHEREAS, Full research doctorate tuition is $29,500 in the endowed colleges and $20,500 in the contract colleges; and

WHEREAS, Students may take a "leave of absence," but this requires them to "relinquish access to campus facilities and services that normally accompany student status" (Code, Section V(D)(1)), including any resources requiring a netid (e.g., electronic journal access); and

WHEREAS, Students on a leave of absence must pay $200/semester to regain access to library facilities (Graduate School Form S3); and

WHEREAS, The revocation of student status while on a leave of absence forces the revocation of student visa status for international students, jeopardizing their ability to remain in the US; and

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WHEREAS, Once their student visa status has been revoked, the only visa option available to most international students is the F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT), which requires employment of at least 20-hours/week related to their major area of study and is limited to one year for humanities students ("STEM" students are able to apply for a 17-month extension); and

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WHEREAS, Students who are in absentia must provide proof that they live at least 100 miles away from Ithaca, and therefore although they retain library privileges, making use of them is impractical; and

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WHEREAS, The Graduate School Code of Legislation (Section VI(H)(2)) already requires that PhD students petition to stay in their programs beyond seven years, preventing students from staying enrolled indefinitely; and

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WHEREAS, Grants and fellowships sponsored by the federal government (e.g., by the National Science Foundation (NSF) or the National Institutes of Health (NIH)) allow for the remission of graduate tuition, as governed by OMB Circular A-21, Section J(45); and

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WHEREAS, Cornell will cover any remaining tuition should an award from the federal government, or ten other specifically enumerated agencies (e.g., the American Association of University Women or the American Council of Learned Societies), not cover the full amount (Policy 3.13, pp. 15-16); and

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WHEREAS, This leaves many external awards that do not cover tuition, especially in the humanities, for which the student must negotiate with their department for tuition remission; and

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WHEREAS, International students are often not eligible for many external awards, because many awards based in their home country will not fund study abroad, and many American awards are only for American citizens; and

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WHEREAS, The treatment of external awards across various departments is uneven: some students can have their Cornell funding deferred for the duration of the external award (or a subset thereof), with Cornell providing a tuition "top up" while others may simply lose their Cornell funding for the duration of the external award; and

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WHEREAS, This disparate treatment of external funding can take away the financial incentive to seek external awards, as students find they create difficulties; and

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79   **WHEREAS**, Six of the other Ivy League schools (Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Penn, Princeton
80   and Yale) provide some form of reduced tuition after the fourth year of study (dollar figures as of
81   Spring 2012):
82   - Brown: $2,583 (>= 4th year)
83   - Columbia: $3,392 (>= 5th year)
84   - Harvard: $2,402 (>= 5th year)
85   - Penn: $3,208 (>= 6th year)
86   - Princeton: $4,420 (>= 5th year)
87   - Yale: $390 (>= 5th year)
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89   **WHEREAS**, A reduced tuition rate for the years after a graduate student has passed his/her A
90   examination and is no longer taking classes would make it considerably more feasible for their
91   departments, or the students themselves, to afford tuition; and
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93   **WHEREAS**, creating a reduced tuition rate and new student status would allow for the time and
94   resources to enable graduate students to complete higher quality dissertations, aiding department
95   degree completion rate, improving success on the increasingly competitive academic job market,
96   and thereby also improving the factors that go into department rankings conducted by bodies
97   such as the National Research Council; therefore, be it
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99   **RESOLVED**, That the GPSA calls on Cornell University to:
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101   (1) Implement a reduced tuition scheme for upper-year students without funding, or with
102   unmatched external awards.
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104   (2) Create a new student status, or revise the existing "leave of absence" or "in absentia"
105   statuses, to permit graduate students, especially international students, to remain in Ithaca
106   beyond their funding guarantee.
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108   (3) Promulgate a clear and equitable policy for the coverage of tuition from external
109   awards from agencies other than the federal government or the ten agencies specifically
110   mentioned in Policy 3.13.
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112   (4) Strive to make Directors of Graduate Study and Graduate Field Assistants fully aware
113   of Cornell's graduate tuition policies, specifically as they relate to matching/top-ups and
114   immigration status.
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116   (5) Consider ways to reduce the median time to degree, particularly in the humanities.
117   (Median time to degree is 7.1 years in the humanities, 5.7 years in the life sciences, 5.6

118   years in the physical sciences and 6.2 years in the social sciences.) Possible ways might
119   include:

121   (a) Credit for students entering a PhD program with a master's degree;
122   (b) Innovative, collaborative dissertation projects;
123   (c) Shortened A examination time frames (i.e., complete the exam earlier, and
124   streamline the requirements);

126   **RESOLVED**, That this resolution be sent to *David Skorton*, President; *Kent Fuchs*, Provost;
127   *Barbara Knuth*, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School; *Jan Allen*, Associate Dean for
128   Academic and Student Affairs; *Sheri Notaro*, Associate Dean for Inclusion and Professional
129   Development; *Sarah Wicker*, Associate Dean for Administration.

131   **Respectfully submitted,**

133   Evan Cortens
134   Counsel to the GPSA

136   Darrick T. N. Evensen
137   Graduate Student-elected Trustee

139   Bernadette Guthrie
140   GPSA Field Representative for English

142   Kristie Schlauraff
143   GPSA Field Representative for English

145   Mia Tootill
146   GPSA Humanities Voting Member

148   Christine Yao
149   GPSA Voting Member-At-Large