October 23, 2012

Dear Deans, Directors, Chairs, GPCs and GPAs:

We have heard from many of you that Graduate School Top Scholar awards are essential to your recruitment efforts, and we are pleased to be able to offer these awards again this year. While there are no major changes to previous procedures and policies, there is key information you will need to know:

- The deadline for submitting 2013-15 Top Scholar funding proposals is **NOON, MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2012**. This is a hard deadline; in fairness to all, no late submissions will be considered. We will remind you of this deadline several times, but please remember it is a hard deadline.
- We will offer several webinar meetings to review the procedures and to answer questions.
- We will continue a biennial funding cycle for 2013-15. While we will still have to be mindful of continuing budget uncertainty, a two year award cycle is still possible and seems to be beneficial for department planning.

More information about Graduate School Top Scholar awards can be found at: [http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/fa/gsfei/topscholar.shtml](http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/fa/gsfei/topscholar.shtml)

**Purpose of Top Scholar**

To make the best possible use of our recruitment funding, we will focus on funding to help you attract the best graduate student you can. We have adapted the highly successful format used by the ARCS (Achievement Rewards for College Scientists) fellowships by focusing not on several prospective students but on just one – or at most, two or three – for each department.

**Top Scholar Options**

To provide flexibility in meeting departmental needs, we have created two funding options to choose from:

1) fellowship quarters, RA quarters, OR block grant (plus tuition waivers)
2) tuition waivers only

Why just one option? Some faculty and staff have asked us to simply supply a block of money, and let departments do whatever they need to support recruitment. We’d actually like to be able to do that, but our funding sources are multiple and cannot be mixed easily. The research assistantships are from state funds and include benefits and waivers (and this is a specific state budget that only funds RAs, nothing else). Our waiver pool is really a “credit” pool rather than a pot of money, and it cannot be converted to cash or used for anything else. Our fellowships come from endowments, some of which have very specific rules, and are paired with waivers from the waiver pool. So it’s a mix of types and
sources of funding, rules and restrictions. We have tried through the above options to make it as flexible as possible within the limitations we face.

Your own history in recruitment or desired changes in recruitment, should guide your choice of the option that serves you best. As provided earlier, our goal is to help you get one, or at most, two or three stellar graduate students. So please pick the option that you believe best helps you accomplish this goal.

**Options**

**Option 1:** You may request from three funding types (or if you wish, you may request only tuition waivers to match with departmental fellowship awards). Request **only one** of the following three options:

- **A. RA quarter(s)**
  a. May request no more than three quarters.
  b. Includes tuition and benefits coverage.
  c. Are available only for state-supported, tuition-based programs.
  d. Must provide student at least two quarters of departmental funding for each one quarter of Top Scholar RA.
  e. May divide RA quarters among multiple recipients (e.g., one quarter to three different admits).
  f. Department may choose to offer student a service or non-service RA (service option means that student works for a professor; non-service option means that the student works on his/her own research).

- **B. Fellowship quarter(s)**
  a. May request no more than three quarters.
  b. Must be awarded at the standard monthly TA/RA rate of department.
  c. Includes tuition and benefits coverage.
  d. Are available only for state-supported, tuition-based programs.
  e. Must provide student at least two quarters of departmental funding for each one quarter of Top Scholar fellowship
  f. May divide fellowship quarters among multiple recipients (e.g., one quarter to three different admits).
  g. This is a non-service appointment.

- **C. Block grant (travel and top-off fellowship awards)**
  a. Top-off awards are limited to no more than top 10 percent of admission offers using the last three years historical average.
  b. Top-off awards limited to no more than $10,000 in total.
  c. Top-off awards (per student) must be for a minimum of $1,000 and a maximum of $5,000.
  d. Top-off awards must be paired with departmental funding to student of at least one year (three quarters) at standard departmental TA/RA rate.
e. Travel awards are limited to no more than top 20 percent of admission offers using last three years historical average (at $300/student average).

f. Travel awards are only for airfare or mileage. No hotels or per diem.

g. Your request can be in an amount for both top-off and travel funding.

h. Once this award is made, you can choose to use it for travel, top-off fellowships, or a combination, whatever fits your needs at the time of recruitment.

Option 2: Request instead of the above options or in addition to the above options:

A. Tuition waivers

   a. If not requesting any of the options above, you may request a maximum of nine quarters of tuition waivers.

   b. Are available only for state-supported, tuition-based programs.

   c. If requesting one of the options above, you may request a maximum of three quarters of tuition waivers. Waivers must supplement departmental non-service awards (e.g., fellowships) paid from departmental resources.

   d. Student(s) must receive at least three quarters of funding, which can be a mix of departmental funding with Top Scholar waiver and RA/TA.

   e. Departmental funding paired with Top Scholar waiver must be a minimum of $1,000 per month with benefits. Funding at a RA/TA level will be more competitive.

Top Scholar Decision Making

In the last biennial award cycle we were able to meet all the primary requests. In the event that the 2013-15 requests are greater than available resources this year, we will use the criteria listed below in making awards. We do not anticipate severe cuts in the second year, but in the event there are additional cuts in state funding, we would potentially need to adjust the second-year awards.

Award criteria:

1. Awards will be made on a competitive basis, but we expect to provide all departments with some funding.

2. We will do our best to fund your chosen option; but given restrictions on funding and expected demand, you may be given funding from a source other than what you requested.

3. In the last biennial round of awards, we were able to provide tuition waivers only to those units that requested them as primary; we were not able to provide waivers in addition to RA/Fellowship/Block Grant awards. Until we see the requests this year, we will not know what we will be able to award for 2013-15.

4. Evaluation will be done by Graduate School staff along with input from others as needed (school/college deans, Graduate Council members, etc.)
5. Criteria will include:
   a. Performance of previous Top Scholar award recipients (GPA, time to graduation, job placement, awards, etc.). We are particularly concerned about degree completion.
   b. The kind of support (number of years and amount) that your department is able to provide to students, especially with regard to matching Top Scholar awards.
   c. Innovation of your recruitment plan.
   d. Assessment of the program by the college dean, as needed.

Information Sessions

Our staff will host online information sessions to review the process, answer your questions and discuss ways you can maximize Top Scholar funds. We invite all interested GPAs, GPCs, chairs and other pertinent department staff to attend. For information and to register, please go to: http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/fa/gsfei/tsaproposal.shtml

Although the economic climate continues to be challenging, our thinking is that by pooling Top Scholar and departmental resources, you will still be able to recruit top students to your programs.

We wish you much success in the upcoming 2013-14 admissions cycle. Although we have information sessions planned, as noted above, please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Gary E. Farris
Interim Vice Provost and Dean
UW Graduate School