February 26, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The PhD Excellence Bridge Committee continues to work on generating guidelines for allocating PhD funding to departments. Since our last communication in late October, we have had twelve committee meetings. In addition, last December we had a general meeting between CAS faculty and the Bridge Committee.

Our committee has discussed several areas that might be critical when thinking about graduate training, PhD excellence, and the distribution of TA-line funds. After considering several proposals from sub-groups within the committee, we have moved closer to finalizing a formula based on a department's performance in domains we believe important to furthering the excellence of our PhD training programs. We have identified four primary candidate domains:

- Post PhD Outcomes

- Time to Degree

- Attrition

- Diversity

We are defining and refining these domains, gathering and verifying data on these variables for each department, and discussing how these variables can be combined to assist decisions about allocation of graduate funds. A draft of the funding formula, data used as input to the formula, and a description of potential implications of the formula will soon be distributed to departments for comment and feedback before we present our recommendations to the College.

The Committee has also devoted some time to the resources side of the funding equation. We have had briefings about the financial operations of the College, and we are waiting for additional data about the distribution of money within the Dean's office. The Committee will make recommendations to the College regarding the total allocation of funds to our graduate training mission.

The Bridge Committee continues to interact with the PhD Excellence Initiative Curriculum and Teaching Committee. We appreciate the many comments that have been sent to us from various faculty, and we will carefully weigh any suggestions we receive.

Sincerely,

Stephen Tiffany, PhD
Bridge Committee Chair

PhD Excellence Bridge Committee Members:

Rachel Ablow (English)
Michelle Benson (Political Science)
Craig Colder (Psychology)
Jonathan Golove (Music)
RJ Haq (Graduate Student Representative)
David Herzberg (History)
Matthew Xu-Friedman (Biology)
David Watson (Chemistry)
Krzysztof Ziarek (Comparative Literature)