

Important Message from Dean Schulze
Email to all CAS faculty and Chairs
September 25, 2019

Dear Department Chairs and Members of the CAS faculty,

I have received requests from faculty across the College to rethink the stated pause in PhD student recruitment. In response to so many voices, I'm happy to take a step back and discuss further with all concerned. I'm sorry for the missteps.

Here again is the context in which I am working. Faculty around the College have been key in advocating for more support for our PhD students. As many have noted, graduate student stipends in some departments in the College of Arts and Sciences at UB are not competitive. Schools around the country, particularly in the AAU, have raised stipends in an effort to attract the very best students to pursue graduate work. In order to support the success of our current students and continue to attract the very best new students, the deans unanimously agreed that we needed to raise the minimum floor for our PhD stipends.

In response, the College has committed, as have the other decanal units, to raising the PhD stipend floor to \$20,000. A one-year pause in PhD recruitment in 2019 (entrance year 2020) will allow the College to work the new stipend floor into the CAS budget. The Provost has committed one-time funds to bridge the College, but CAS is ultimately responsible for assuming the cost of the raise. The handful of departments the College authorized to recruit new students in 2019 for entrance in 2020 are those with which the College had preexisting commitments related to sponsored research—PhDs written into start up packages and support for research projects.

The decision for what to do in relation to 2019 recruitment for entrance 2020 was financial. We have Provost funding to cover 100% of the raise for one year—2019-2020, 50% for year two, 25% for year three. The stipend raise goes into effect, retroactive, next month, October 2019. It was this date that led me to move forward with urgency. I'm sorry to have moved too quickly. We clearly need time to discuss.

I need to be fiscally responsible to the whole of the College. I need to maintain focus on building the research excellence of the CAS faculty. Every department in the College is anxious and eager to hire new tenure line faculty. We hired 20 tenure-line faculty across 13 departments who have started in the College either this fall or will start this spring. We have authorized an additional 28 tenure-line searches to begin this fall across 17 departments. We have leveraged every possible relationship to make these hires happen. We have secured the hire of two EIP women for the College, a first at SUNY.

At the same time, we are still fighting our way out of a structural deficit, buying time year by year.

I know, absolutely, that moving forward any decisions about the allocation of PhD stipend dollars for 2020 recruitment, entrance 2021 must be made by a broad spectrum of faculty. To be clear, I have made no decisions about future allocations. I need to engage the whole of the faculty in these vital conversations. I need all faculty engaged in efforts to conceive of and implement programmatic changes around the College that will enhance both current and future students' experiences at UB and help our

students achieve **successful outcomes**. **It is critical that all faculty read the foundational documents related to this initiative, dated [June 18, 2019](#), [July 23, 2019](#), and [August 19, 2019](#).**

To start, I have assembled a broad interdisciplinary committee under the leadership of Associate Dean for Graduate Education David Johnson, Professor of Comparative Literature, comprised of faculty, associate deans, and department chairs to consider how best to distribute College resources for TAs and RAs across the College in order to attract the very best PhD students to the College and ensure the very best outcomes. I have asked the committee to consider how Presidential and Schomburg Fellowships will be awarded.

In addition, I will be convening a second committee of faculty from across the College under the leadership of Associate Dean for New Programs, Sean Bennett, Professor of Geography, to do the hard work of improving PhD outcomes through a variety of means. The PhD Excellence Initiative calls on all PhD granting departments in the College to develop plans to improve PhD completion and time to degree and align all program-level PhD curriculum with intended program outcomes. It calls on all departments to develop plans to improve PhD diversity and inclusion. This second committee will work with each department to implement these plans.

It will also take on the pressing, and very real work of imagining the future. How can faculty work together across disciplines within the current constraints to imagine that new programs and models of PhD training that will position us to be acknowledged leaders in new forms of PhD training critical to the future the academy? How do we make sure that the forms of academic expertise that we produce, the PhD students in which we invest so much time and energy and passion, continue to have the impact we want and need them to have both in the academy and beyond? How can we develop PhD students who have both deep disciplinary grounding and the ability to contribute to solving present problems? How can we make sure that diverse voices are heard?

I believe absolutely that we need to support our PhD students better and recommit to the ideal that they are co-investigators vital to the university's success as a research institution. We need to reduce the instructional burden on our PhD students. We need to make sure that every instructional opportunity we create for them is designed to enhance their success, not merely serve our instructional needs.

So, how do we do all of the above given the constraints that we, and so many other institutions face? How do we address the declining demand for scholars in critical fields that is tied to the declines in demand for particular majors in universities across the nation? How do we ensure that all forms of knowledge absolutely critical to solving present problems find voice in the academy and beyond? I know I need the input of as many people in the College as possible to answer these questions and make this work. The move that I have attempted to get us on secure financial footing is obviously not the right one for the faculty. I apologize for moving too quickly. Please, please help me design a process that works for all in the current budget environment.

I will close by saying that I am a humanist. Just and lasting solutions to problems begin with the understanding of how people perceive the world in which they live. They begin with an understanding of cultures and patterns of thought, beliefs and shared narratives. They begin in the knowledge of how we got to where we are so that we can all move forward together. Our mission for the twenty-first century is not to talk only to each other about what we have discovered in order to advance scholarship for scholars. Our mission is to talk to everyone else, all the time, about how what we know is crucial to

making life better right here, right now. How can the faculty in this College help to make that happen?
What can the College do to help?

I appreciate everything that you all do for the College, every day.

Robin Schulze