

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **GAPSA Announces Successful Advocacy on Behalf of Ph.D. Students**

The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) is pleased to announce successful advocacy for positive changes to the Rules Governing all Ph.D. Programs at Penn. These welcome changes come in addition to the increase in the minimum stipend levels for 2008-2009 and the recent standardization of Ph.D. student tuition across the University.

The Graduate Council of the Faculties has updated the Rules, which may be found at <http://www.upenn.edu/grad/rules.html>, to include the following requirements which will shorten time to degree and improve supervision of Ph.D. students:

- Faculty will be required to evaluate Candidacy Exams and Dissertation Exams and promptly within 30 days of the exam or proposal presentation date.
- Students will be required to advance to Degree Candidacy within 5 years of matriculation.
- Upon advancement to Degree Candidacy, each student will be provided with a Dissertation Committee consisting of at least three faculty members.
- The Dissertation Committee will be required to meet with the student annually, at minimum, to review the student's progress and provide feedback concerning the student's research.
- Faculty will be required to provide feedback on Dissertation Committee Reports, within 30 days of the Dissertation Committee meeting.
- Beginning in 2010-2011, the University's maximum time limit for completion of a Ph.D. is ten years after matriculation.

"We're excited that the University has institutionalized these minimum standards already practiced by so many of our successful graduate programs," GAPSA Chairman Andrew Rennekamp comments, "and we're confident that these changes will lead to welcomed decreases in time-to-degree statistics across the University."

In addition, the Graduate Council of the Faculties has voted unanimously to approve the following extensions of the Childbirth Leave Policy for Ph.D. students:

- The childbirth leave time-off period (over which stipend support is continued) will be extended from six to eight weeks.
- The policy will be extended to include paternal time off for student fathers.
- The policy will be extended to include cases of adoption.



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According to Rennekamp, “Penn’s progressive stance on accommodations for student parents places the University at the forefront of its peers and reveals an important understanding on the part of our academic community - that the welcoming of a new child into a family is more than just a clinical event.”