



Research Council Final Report on Ph.D. Stipends

Please refer to Appendix A of this document for updated information (03/19/08)

Introduction

December 5, 2007

Shortly after she became President of the University in 2004, Dr. Amy Gutmann announced that the University of Pennsylvania minimum stipend for Ph.D. students would be increased by 11 percent to \$17,500, starting 2005. Dr. Gutmann noted that the increase placed Penn “among the national leaders in supporting graduate education,” and stated, “we will take the necessary steps to stay there.”¹

It is our conclusion that three years later, Penn has not taken the necessary steps to maintain a competitive edge over our peer institutions. The minimum stipend for Ph.D. students is currently \$18,000 – or \$16,825 in 2005 dollars taking inflation into account.² Thus, the purchasing power of the stipend has dropped since 2005. As far as we can tell, last year, Penn was the only member of the Ivy League that did not raise its minimum stipend, which now ranks among the lowest in the League.

Others have also noted the disparity between the President’s aspirations and current reality. Trustee and Chair of the Board of Overseers of the School of Arts and Sciences Christopher H. Browne (C’69) remarks, “Unfortunately, I have also seen how the lack of resources has hindered the School’s progress: when key faculty are lost because of poor facilities, or the best prospective doctoral students turn down offers of admission to go to schools that provide larger fellowships, or innovative new programs are passed by so that the School can continue to offer adequate undergraduate financial aid.”³ Additionally, the case statement of the *Making History* capital campaign states, “Penn has long lagged behind its peer institutions in its ability to provide competitive support packages. While we have enjoyed some gains recently, we have a long way to go to ensure that we remain an institution of choice for talented graduate students.”⁴

Ph.D. incentives affect the University community in many ways, and stipend levels can either propel our institution to the forefront of graduate education – from “excellence to eminence,” in the words of the Penn Compact – or they can negatively affect our academic community. Inadequate stipend packages often force students to obtain outside jobs, which impact their academic progress. For example, a student on a \$18,000 stipend from the School of Education told us: “Since we do not receive summer funding (or enough overall funding to cover summer costs), I have to teach all summer and thus am not able to do research work over the summer.”⁵ Beyond that, stipend levels affect the quality of undergraduate teaching, the ability of faculty to

¹ University Almanac, Vol. 51 No. 16, Jan 11 2005, p. 1

² All inflation figures in this report were calculated using the Bureau of Labor and Statistics Inflation Calculator, at <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>. The CPI inflation calculator uses the average Consumer Price Index for a given calendar year. This data represents changes in prices of all goods and services purchased for consumption by urban households. For the current year, the latest monthly index value is used.

³ http://www.sas.upenn.edu/home/campaign/campaign_browne.html

⁴ http://www.sas.upenn.edu/home/campaign/financial_aid.html

⁵ For privacy reasons, we have granted anonymity to the students that responded to our inquiries.

do research and leave academic legacies, the ability of the University to recruit and maintain a world-class faculty, and finally, whether or not future graduate alumni will choose to support graduate education at Penn.

We have noted the positive efforts of the fundraising campaign to raise awareness of the current state of graduate education, as well as the goal of \$323 million for graduate and professional student education. While we appreciate this commitment, it may take several years until the first effects of this fundraising impact the University's operating budget. Other institutions are likely to continue to increase graduate financial support, and therefore we advocate for immediate action on the part of the central administration in raising the minimum stipend level.

Penn's minimum stipend is among the lowest in the Ivy League

When compared to other Ivies, out of all institutions that responded to our inquiries, Penn has the lowest minimum stipend level in Fall 2007. In addition, Penn is the only institution that did not raise its minimum stipend level this year. The raises offered by other Ivy League universities are closer to matching inflation, if not rent increases. The following figures have been confirmed with the administrations of the respective institutions. The only Ivy University not included is Brown, whose administration declined to disclose stipend information to us.⁶

Minimum Stipends through the Ivy League

University	2007-08 Stipend level	Number of Months Funded	Dollar Increase from 2006-07	Percent Increase from 2006-07
Princeton ⁷	\$24,000	12	\$2,500	11.6%
Yale ⁸	\$23,700	9 to 12	\$1,200	5.3%
Dartmouth ⁹	\$22,464	9 to 12	\$864	4.0%
Columbia ¹⁰	\$21,000	9	\$1,000	5.0%
Cornell	\$20,000	9	\$640	3.3%
Harvard	\$19,700 ¹¹	<i>unknown</i>	\$700	3.7%
Average excl. Penn	\$21,811		\$1,151	5.5%
<i>Penn</i>	<i>\$18,000</i>	<i>9 to 12</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>0%</i>

⁶ Brown administrators instead referred us to the current survey by the National Research Council, which is due out in Spring 2008. See <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/resdoc/> for more information.

⁷ The figure indicated in the table is for the humanities. In the natural sciences, Princeton's 10-month stipend of \$21,000 is complemented by a research contract. Princeton's Office of Budget and Administrative Affairs estimates that the majority of students in the sciences secure a contract around \$5,000, (thus bringing the total stipend up to \$26,000), though summer funding can be as high as \$7,800 in some departments.

⁸ Yale offers a five-year fellowship under the following terms: Yale minimum stipend levels are as indicated in the table during three years. During that time, they are distributed across 12 months. For two more years, the stipends are distributed across 9 months. During that time, students get \$19,000 (2006/07) resp. \$20,000 (2007/08). This corresponds to an increase of \$1,000 or 5.26%. Students decide themselves in which years they want to work for 9 and for 12 months.

⁹ Dartmouth is the only Ivy League School known to us which does not cover its students' basic health insurance. The Dean's office reports that no student needs to pay more than \$148; the remainder is subsidized by the school.

¹⁰ At the time of writing, we were able to confirm these figures with Columbia administrators for the humanities and social sciences only.

¹¹ At the time of writing, we were able to confirm these figures with Harvard administrators for the humanities departments only. The Harvard graduate student government reports that stipend levels in the other areas of study are at least as high.

No increase in the Penn minimum stipend for the first time in years

With two exceptions, the minimum stipend has been increased annually, albeit erratically, over the last ten years. Of note is the 12% increase in 2002, which was accompanied for the first time by full payment towards the health insurance premium.¹²

Penn Minimum Stipends¹³

Acad. Year	Stipend Level	Increase	Percent Increase
1998/99	\$10,800		
1999/00	\$12,000	\$1,200	11.1%
2000/01	\$12,000	\$0	0%
2001/02	\$12,500	\$500	4.2%
2002/03	\$14,000	\$1,500	12.0%
2003/04	\$15,000	\$1,000	7.1%
2004/05	\$15,750	\$750	5.0%
2005/06	\$17,500	\$1,750	11.1%
2006/07	\$18,000	\$500	2.9%
2007/08	\$18,000	\$0	0%

Students' purchasing power has decreased for two years in a row

Adjusting for inflation, we found that some of the annual increases did not outpace inflation levels. In these years, students' financial support actually waned. The following table is adjusted to reflect November 2007 dollars, and the percent increase has been recalculated.

Penn Minimum Stipends, Adjusted for Inflation

Acad. Year	Stipend level (Nov 2007 \$\$)	Increase in buying power	Percent Increase
1998/99	\$13,843.61		
1999/00	\$15,049.41	\$1,205.80	8.7%
2000/01	\$14,560.00	-\$489.41	-3.3%
2001/02	\$14,747.04	\$187.04	1.3%
2002/03	\$16,259.61	\$1,512.57	10.3%
2003/04	\$17,032.83	\$773.22	4.8%
2004/05	\$17,420.55	\$387.72	2.3%
2005/06	\$18,721.86	\$1,301.31	7.5%
2006/07	\$18,655.00	-\$66.86	-0.4%
2007/08	\$18,000.00	-\$655.00	-3.5%

¹² Almanac, Vol. 47, No. 27, March 27, 2001

¹³ Source: The Office of the Provost

Past stipend raises do not appear to take cost of living into account

When assessing the competitiveness of stipends, the cost of living must be taken into account. It is cheaper to live in West Philadelphia than Cambridge or Manhattan. But the small raises in Penn's stipend in recent years have not been enough to keep pace with increasing cost of living in Philadelphia. We chose rent in West Philadelphia as an indicator of cost of living for graduate students, and were conservative by not accounting for basic utilities, which have seen a 30-50% increase (depending on the type) in Winter 2006 alone, and another 15% increase in Winter 2007.¹⁴

According to the Office of Off-Campus Living, more than 50% of graduate students currently live in single units. The following data track the average rent of such a unit since 2003. In Fall 2006, by far the most popular locations for graduate students living were West Philadelphia and Center City west of Broad Street. In the table below, we chose a West Philadelphia (39th to 49th Streets and Powelton Village) one-bedroom unit to be representative of a graduate student housing. For convenience, the following table contains both 9-monthly and yearly figures.¹⁵

Rent to Stipend Ratio, Adjusted for Inflation (November 2007 Dollars)

Acad. Year	Stipend	9 Months Rent	9m. Rent to Stipend Ratio	12 Months Rent	12m. Rent to Stipend Ratio
2003/04	\$17,032.83	\$7,216.47	42.4%	\$9,621.96	56.49%
2004/05	\$17,420.55	\$7,484.94	43.0%	\$9,979.92	57.29%
2005/06	\$18,721.86	\$7,633.53	40.8%	\$10,178.04	54.36%
2006/07	\$18,655.00	\$7,694.82	41.2%	\$10,259.76	55.00%
2007/08	\$18,000.00	\$7,875.00	43.8%	\$10,500.00	58.33%

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines “affordable housing” as housing that costs no more than 30% of a household's monthly income before taxes. As the table shows, even in those departments that distribute a minimum stipend over 9 months, and even under the assumption that students in those departments will find summer employment with an income that will cover their living expenses over the summer, a typical graduate student's apartment does not represent affordable housing.

¹⁴ All information related to rent and utilities was provided by the Office of Off-Campus Living (OCL). We would like to commend OCL for their ongoing and extensive documentation of rent data on their website, <http://www.business-services.upenn.edu/offcampusliving>.

¹⁵ OCL's official average for 2007-2008 rent in West Philadelphia is \$850 (9-monthly: \$7,650; 12-monthly: \$10,200; <http://www.business-services.upenn.edu/offcampusliving/rentingstep/rates.htm>). However, this average included cheaper West Philadelphia regions (ie, between 49th and 50th streets). Earlier averages did not include this area, but rather included University City to 49th and including Powelton Village. Therefore, this new average was not deemed comparable to those calculated in earlier years. In general, the Office of Off-Campus Living has documented a 3-6% rent increase for the 2007-2008 academic year in University City to 49th and including Powelton Village.

Graduate group chairs are increasingly concerned

Many graduate group chairs – in conversation with student government officers, sometimes publicly – express concern that the low stipends are hurting the competitiveness of their graduate programs to attract prospective students.

For example, the then-Graduate Chair of the English Department, Dr. Amy Kaplan, told the Daily Pennsylvanian: “When Amy Gutmann came in as president and one of the first things she did was to raise the stipend to make us competitive, we were thrilled. (...) This is kind of a downer - to do that once and not to keep it up sends a slightly demoralizing message both to students and faculty.”¹⁶ The current chair, Dr. David Kazanjian, told us that the prospective students the department loses almost always cite financial reasons for going elsewhere.¹⁷

Dr. Susan Lindee, Graduate Chair for History and Sociology of Science, told us: “We believe that money played a very large role in recruitment issues over the last couple of years - especially last year, when some of our potential admits were offered up to \$5,000 more per year.”

Dr. Rita Copeland, Graduate Chair for Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, wrote to us that “those students who talk about money as an issue (often students from abroad who calculate the relative prestige of American universities in terms of wealth differentials among universities) seem to be especially attracted to Stanford (...) [W]hen prestige-as-money is an issue, I don't seem to be able to win candidates over from Stanford.”

The minimum stipend falls short of the expected graduate student budget

Each year, Penn's Student Financial Services determines the expected cost of living for a graduate or professional student attending Penn, excluding taxes. This budget is based on federal guidelines and assumes a modest, yet manageable, living allowance. While the demographics of Ph.D. and other graduate or professional students are likely to differ somewhat, we currently do not have the data to quantify these differences. We do, however, judge from personal experience that the figures in this budget are indeed a good approximation of a typical Ph.D. student's expenses excluding taxes.

To estimate the expenses incurred by a Ph.D. student on a minimum stipend, we therefore took this budget, added taxes, and subtracted the healthcare subsidy paid by Penn to Ph.D. students. We included a \$200 allowance for copay and deductibles. As the table shows, there is a significant difference between the minimum stipend level, \$18,000, and the expected budget, \$20,953.

¹⁶ “GSAC takes measures to improve stipends”, Daily Pennsylvanian, May 11 2007

¹⁷ Dr. Kazanjian told us: “By financial reasons I mean specifically the amount of our yearly stipends, the availability of sixth year stipends with benefits, benefits after the sixth year for students and their families, and summer funding.”

Category	SFS budget	Ph.D. student
Room	\$10,200	\$1,133 / month
– Rent		\$925 / month ¹⁸
– Utilities		\$178 / month
– Insurance		\$30 / month
Board	\$4,200	\$467 / month
Books/Supplies	\$1,200	\$200 / course
Health insurance	\$2,468	<i>paid</i>
– Deductibles and copay	<i>not included</i> ¹⁹	\$200 ²⁰
Miscellaneous	\$2,682	\$298 / month
– Transportation		\$78 / month
– Laundry		\$40 / month
– Telephone/Cell		\$60 / month
– Cable/Internet		\$60 / month
– Personal		\$60 / month
Federal Tax	<i>not included</i>	\$2,133 ²¹
PA State Tax	<i>not included</i>	\$0 ²²
Philadelphia City Tax	<i>not included</i>	\$338 ²³
FICA/Medicare Tax	<i>not included</i>	\$0 ²⁴
Total	\$20,750	\$2,306/month

Note that tax rates would need to be recalculated yearly not only dependent on the stipend increase, but also on any changes in the payment schedule. For example, U.S. citizens and Resident Aliens in service years may be subject to significantly higher taxation on summer funding as compared with the yearly stipend, as Social Security and Medicaid taxes apply in addition to federal, state, and city taxes.

¹⁸ Note that unlike the \$850/month figure we cite elsewhere in this report, this figure is not an estimate of a 1-bedroom unit in West Philadelphia, but an estimate of an average graduate student's rent. It is therefore likely to reflect an average in which, for example, Center City rates are included.

¹⁹ That the Student Financial Services budget does not include deductibles and copay can be seen from the Student Health Services Insurance Office website, which lists the current premium as \$2,468. (<http://www.vpu1.upenn.edu/shs/insrates0708.html>).

²⁰ Estimate based on personal experience. We have contacted Chickering for a more exact estimate and were still expecting a reply at the time of writing.

²¹ All tax figures apply to a single, full-time graduate student on an \$18,000 stipend with no additional sources of income. We assume that the student is in a service year as a "Research Fellow" or "Teaching Fellow", a position in which equivalent work is required of all Ph.D. candidates as a condition for receiving such a degree. This position is often referred to as Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant, and is common in Ph.D. programs throughout the University.

For the federal tax estimate, see IRS booklet "1040 instructions 2007", p.63, According to IRS Publication 970 (2006), p. 4-5, all expenses listed in the expected budget are taxable, except for books and supplies, as long as they are required of all students in the course. We therefore assume a total taxable amount of \$16,800.

²² According to the Office of the Comptroller, the stipend of a "Research Fellow" or "Teaching Fellow" is **not** subject to Pennsylvania personal income tax. See <http://www.finance.upenn.edu/comptroller/tax/appointments.shtml>.

²³ According to the Office of the Comptroller, one-half of the stipend of a "Research Fellow" or "Teaching Fellow" is subject to Philadelphia city wage tax. We assume that the student is considered a nonresident for Philadelphia tax purposes, which is the case if the student has his or her domicile in Philadelphia (see the City of Philadelphia's Ordinance on Income Tax Regulations, http://www.phila.gov/revenue/pdfs/Rev%20PDFs/income_tax_regs.pdf). While we do not have data on residency, this is the more conservative assumption since Philadelphia wage tax rates are higher for residents than for non-residents. The non-resident city rate is 3.7557% in 2007; the resident city rate is 4.26%. (Philadelphia Revenue Department, http://www.phila.gov/revenue/Wage_Tax.html)

²⁴ According to the Office of the Comptroller, the stipend of a "Research Fellow" or "Teaching Fellow" is exempt from FICA/Medicare tax.

Adverse effects of low stipends

The \$2,953 gap between the minimum stipend and graduate students' expected budgets affects their lives in many respects. We highlight some of them here:

Academic Performance. Many students work on the side to make ends meet, making it hard to focus on their coursework and research. One student told us, "I started my first semester this year (...) I have had to continue working my old job to be able to afford transition costs, books and other significant expenses. This has made it *extremely* difficult to keep my head above water in classes and have any type of confidence in the work I am doing (...)" Many report problems financing conference travel and research trips. One student wrote, "I had to work over the summer in order to pay my rent/mortgage. Because I had to work two jobs, I was unable to take the necessary language course or conduct any of my own research. This is really problematic given that during the year, especially with my teaching load, I am also unable to conduct outside research."

Safety and Housing. Graduate students are increasingly at risk of being pushed out of "safe" neighborhoods such as Center City and West Philadelphia by increasing rent and utilities. The lack of affordable subsidized graduate housing at Penn is well known. University City is becoming increasingly unaffordable for graduate students on the minimum stipend, while Center City has long been so. For example, one graduate student couple, both on a \$18,300 stipend, described to us how the financial burden the minimum stipend is placing on them forces them to live in Brewerytown, North Philadelphia, a region with a high incidence of homicides and shootings.²⁵ The couple is worried about their safety, but they see no financial alternative.

Credit Card Debt. Inadequate stipend levels often push graduate students to use credit cards to finance their educational and living expenses. This is particularly true in the month of September, when expenses associated with the start of the semester collide with the fact that the first stipend payment of the academic year does not arrive until the end of the month.²⁶ For example, one student told us: "When I first got to Philadelphia, I did not get a paycheck until basically Oct 1st. (...) Over several years of a similar lack of money every September, I have accrued substantial credit card debt that I am still struggling to pay back." Another student wrote: "I have \$9000 in credit card debt because I want to take advantage of the summers to do research. It is expected that we develop our dissertation projects during the summer, but there is not enough money to do it, so we have to pay out of pocket."

A national survey done by Nellie Mae, a government-chartered student loan company,²⁷ has found that the median credit card debt among graduate students across the nation is \$3,874 in 2006. The study was based on data collected from credit bureau reports and complemented by a voluntary survey in 2006. Credit card debt increases as you proceed along in your studies. First year students have a median debt of \$3,048, which more than doubles to \$6,922 by their fourth year in graduate school. Older students (30-59) have a much higher median debt than students between age 22 and 29 (\$5,378 to \$3,542).

²⁵ According to crime statistics from the Philadelphia Police Department, via <http://www.philly.com/inquirer/special/violence/>.

²⁶ For students paid on a 9 month schedule.

²⁷ "Graduate Students and Credit Cards, Fall 2006: An Analysis of Usage Rates and Trends." Nellie Mae Corp., August 2007. (http://www.nelliemae.com/pdf/cstudy_2006.pdf, accessed 11/12/07.)

Financial Burden for Students with Dependents. Unlike faculty and staff, Penn students with dependents are not offered the reduced “assisted rate” available at Penn’s daycare center. A further fee-assistance program is made available only to University employees.²⁸ Of special concern is the situation of international students with dependents, as their spouses typically do not have employment permits in the U.S., and their children are not eligible for either state or national healthcare programs for the poor.²⁹ Such students must therefore finance their families exclusively by means of their fellowships and by the salary they may get when working as Penn employees. Even students who are U.S. citizens cannot always rely on their partner’s income and financial security. For example, one student respondent whose wife is a freelance artist and in a precarious health situation writes: “while we manage to scrape by on my stipend [...], she has been without health insurance for several years [...] We are just one accident or serious illness short of financial ruin and my possibly having to drop out of school.” The impact of stipends on families can be quite direct. As one student told us, “my children got sick since I cannot afford to heat my house all day.”

Graduate stipends are a University-wide issue

Throughout the University, there are programs and entire schools that do not pay their students much more than the Penn minimum. These include the Schools of Design (\$18,300); Nursing (\$18,500); Social Policy and Practice (\$18,000); most programs in the School of Arts and Sciences (\$18,300); and even some doctoral programs in Wharton (\$18,000).³⁰

As mentioned above, a student’s actual stipend level (barring any external funding sources) is the result of the combined minimum levels set by the university, school, and program administrations. The central administration sets the minimum university-wide level in consultation with the graduate deans. This means that the responsibility for the actual stipend levels is shared across all tiers of this University’s administration. However, we have learned that most schools that adopt a low minimum stipend use SAS as a reference when it comes to setting their own minimum levels.³¹ As for SAS, Ph.D. stipends represent such a significant part of the budget that even moderate increases are not possible unless the central administration backs up this decision financially. For example, from 2001/02 to 2006/07, the SAS minimum stipend level has actually been identical to the overall Penn minimum stipend.³² It is for this reason that the present issue requires the attention of the central administration.

²⁸ <http://www.business-services.upenn.edu/childcare/tuition.html>

²⁹ See e.g. <http://chipcoverspakids.com/>

³⁰ Source: School administrations; confirmed by the Office of the Provost

³¹ University administrators, personal communication to student government officers.

³² SAS stipend data recorded by GET-UP (Graduate Employees Together – University of Pennsylvania).

Conclusion

Based on the information gathered and presented within this report, we put forth the following recommendations for consideration by the central administration:

- **Restore Penn's competitiveness by increasing graduate stipends to the average level of the rest of the Ivy League.** Based on the numbers available to us, this figure is \$21,811 for the current academic year. Assuming an increase corresponding to last year's average rate of 5.5%, we project next year's average to be of \$23,010. For Penn, this would correspond to a \$5,010 stipend increase.
- **Ensure that future stipend increases are reflective of the Student Financial Services projected budget for graduate students, taking tax into consideration.** Penn already employs a mechanism for calculating annual graduate student cost of living; these figures ought to be uniformly regarded throughout the University.
- **Consider different taxation rates when implementing stipend increases.** For instance, summer funding may be subject to Social Security and Medicaid taxes, unlike stipends paid over the academic year.
- **Ensure that all students receive early notification of annual stipend changes.** Applicants receive this notification from the departments in their admission letter, but current students often have to wait until they receive their September paychecks. Because early budget planning greatly reduces financial stress, we recommend early communication to all students, including those who have already matriculated.

Acknowledgements and contact details

This report would not have been possible without the substantial help of the Office of the Provost, in particular the Associate Provost for Education, Dr. Andrew Binns and the Assistant Director for Education, Karen Lawrence; the Chair of the Faculty Senate, Dr. Larry Gladney; the SAS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, Dr. Jack Nagel; the Office of Off-Campus Living; the Office of the Comptroller; GSAC; SASgov; GET-UP; SAS Representatives to GAPSA, Lucas Champollion, Roger Turner, and Leslie Warden; GAPSA Vice Chair for Research Students, Andrew Rennekamp; and University administrations across the Ivy League. Parts of this report are based on a previous report approved by the Graduate Students Associations Council (GSAC) on April 29th, 2007.

In addition, we would like to thank the Trustees of the University, President Amy Gutmann; Provost Ron Daniels; the deans of the 9 graduate schools with Ph.D. students, specifically SAS Dean, Dr. Rebecca Bushnell; GAPSA Chair, Dan Grabell; and all others involved for their hard work in making the 2008 increase in the minimum stipend possible.

*For questions on this report, please contact the GAPSA
Vice Chair for Research Students, (gapsa.research@gmail.com)*

Appendix A

Response and follow up to the report

(added March 19, 2008)

On February 14, 2008, in response to the GAPSA Research Student Council “Report on Stipend Levels,” President Amy Gutmann and Provost Ron Daniels announced that the minimum stipend for Ph.D students who receive nine-month fellowships will be increased by 6.7 percent from \$18,000 to \$19,200 starting in September 2008³³. In addition to the University-wide minimums, Dr. Gutmann encouraged individual schools and graduate programs to establish higher stipend levels, “asking each school to do as much as it can to increase support.”³⁴ Shortly thereafter, the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), home to the largest number of Ph.D. students at Penn, announced that it will be increasing its minimum stipend for Ph.D students on “package” programs³⁵ by 14.75 percent from \$18,300 to \$21,000³⁶. This was implemented as a full additional month's worth of funding annually, in addition to an increase in the monthly amount, which will rise from \$2,033 to \$2,100. SAS also announced “additional actions to enhance the competitiveness of our Ph.D. programs, improve the well-being of our doctoral students, and speed their progress toward successful completion of their degrees.”³⁷ SAS officials said these steps “may include more 12-month fellowships and more fellowships that do not require teaching or research.”³⁸

Overall these announcements have been well received by Ph.D. students.³⁹ After two years where inflation has outpaced low stipends, we are delighted the University administration and the school deans have recognized the financial challenges research students face.

Assuming that the stipend levels across the Ivy League continue to rise at the same rate as in the past, this new minimum stipend of \$19,200 will be \$3,800 lower than the Ivy average in 2008-2009; the SAS minimum stipend of \$21,000 will be \$2,000 below the average. However, we project that minimum Penn stipends will no longer be among the lowest across the Ivy League. Given the constraints of the endowment and the resources of the University, we consider the current increase fair and equitable and an excellent step in the right direction.

We will continue to advocate for a transparent mechanism of annual stipend level assignment which ensures that stipend levels keep pace with cost of living and remain competitive with our peers, and we hope that the University will continue to devote the necessary resources to do so.

³³ Memorandum to graduate deans by the Office of the Provost, February 14th, 2008. The full text of the email is included in Appendix B.

³⁴ “U. announces increase in grad student stipends”, Daily Pennsylvanian, February 15 2008

³⁵ “Package” programs such as the Benjamin Franklin and William Penn fellowships are the typical funding situation for Ph.D. students in the great majority of SAS departments.

³⁶ Email to graduate chairs by the SAS Dean’s office, February 14th, 2008. The full text of the email is included in Appendix C.

³⁷ Email to graduate chairs by the SAS Dean’s office, February 14th, 2008. The full text of the email is included in Appendix C.

³⁸ “U. announces increase in grad student stipends” Daily Pennsylvanian, February 15 2008

³⁹ “Grads praise stipend increase” Daily Pennsylvanian, February 21 2008.

Appendix B

MEMORANDUM

To: Deans and Graduate Deans

From: Amy Gutmann, President; Ronald J. Daniels, Provost; Andrew N. Binns,
Associate Provost for Education

Date: February 14, 2008

Subject: Increase in PhD Stipends

We are delighted to announce that, effective September 2008, Penn will increase the University-wide minimum stipend for PhD students who receive nine-month fellowships by 6.7%, to \$19,200.

In the past four years, the base university stipend has risen by 22%. This increase reflects the importance of graduate education to Penn's mission, ensuring that we will continue to train tomorrow's leaders in research, scholarship, and a wide range of fields and professions.

As resources permit, we encourage individual schools and graduate programs to establish still higher stipend levels, so that Penn's programs can remain competitive with their peers around the world.

Increasing access and aid, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, continues to be one of our highest priorities, especially as part of the ongoing Making History campaign.

We are immensely grateful for the leadership of the Schools and our ongoing partnership with GAPSA on this issue. We look forward to working together on other initiatives that will keep Penn at the forefront of graduate education.

Appendix C

MEMORANDUM

To: SAS Graduate Group Chairs
SAS Department Chairs

From: Rebecca W. Bushnell, Dean
Jack Nagel, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

Date: February 14, 2008

We are grateful to President Gutmann, Provost Daniels, and Associate Provost Binns for their leadership concerning the support of Ph.D. education at Penn. They have encouraged the schools to strengthen the support of graduate education, which is a critical part of our mission and have been instrumental in increasing the revenue from restricted funds to support graduate education.

With this encouragement, SAS will take additional actions to enhance the competitiveness of our Ph.D. programs, improve the well-being of our doctoral students, and speed their progress toward successful completion of their degrees.

We are pleased to announce that for the SAS 'package' programs, which include the great majority of our graduate groups, the basic stipend for 2008-2009 will be \$21,000 for a ten-month period. This represents a 14.75% increase in total support.

We will also take other steps to enhance further our programs' ability to compete for the very best candidates for Ph.D. study. The details of these steps will vary among the 32 diverse graduate programs in SAS, but they may include more use of 12-month fellowships in programs that do not already routinely make such awards, and more fellowships not requiring service in programs that now offer only research and teaching fellowships.