New Funding Opportunities for Graduate Students

There is good news about funding for graduate students and graduate programs. The provincial government announced in March that it would provide funding to cover the cost of adding 2500 new graduate spaces to the four research universities in British Columbia. SFU can expect to be allocated about a quarter of these spaces over the next four years, with $20,000 per FTE being added to the University’s budget. As a result of this increase, more than $1 million has been added to the University’s graduate scholarships budget for 2007/2008. The money will be used to increase the number of entrance scholarships, to establish a new fund for travel awards, and to increase significantly the number of graduate fellowships. The value of most awards has also been increased by about 4%.

In addition to the budget increase, the province has announced a number of direct funding programs. The most important of these is the Pacific Century Graduate Scholarship program, valued at $10 million. SFU has received 202 of these $10,000 awards, to distribute over the next four years. We intend to use these strategically to increase our ability to provide timely financial offers to students who have applied to our graduate programs.

The province has also established a $10 million fund for university/industry internships. Administered through MITACS, the internships are worth $15,000, of which half is contributed by industry and half by the province. The internships will encourage collaborative research between professors, students and external partners. Although the primary goal of the program is to fund partnerships between the universities and the private sector, the definition of “industry” is quite broad, and can include a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

A more specialized program is the Pacific Leaders fund, which provides one or two years of funding to a small number of graduate students who are undertaking research of interest to the province. At $20,000 per year these are generous awards, and successful candidates will be expected to work for the provincial government following the completion of their studies.

We also note that the federal government has committed more support to graduate scholarships, and we expect that this will also result in greater success rates for our students in national competitions.

Overall this is very good news, and we are particularly pleased to see that thoughtful and responsible lobbying of the provincial government by university presidents and graduate student organizations has resulted in a set of decisions that allow B.C. universities to compete more effectively with other universities for highly qualified graduate students.

The Supervision Task Force Reports

Jon Driver
Dean of Graduate Studies

The Task Force on Graduate Supervision has issued its draft report for comment from the university community (for a copy, please visit http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/surveys/SupervisionTaskForce.html). Backed up by an extensive survey of graduate students and other documents, the report provides seven draft recommendations. On the whole the recommendations suggest relatively minor changes to existing practices, and focus on getting “best practices” implemented more widely.

The first four recommendations are concerned with better communication between students, their senior supervisors, and their graduate programs. Graduate program administrators are urged to ensure that students receive active supervision as soon as they begin their programs, and to make sure that progress is properly assessed on a regular basis. The draft report also recommends that students and their supervisors develop a written
plan for program completion, and a written plan for mutual expectations, particularly with regard to intellectual property, funding, and meeting schedules.

The fifth recommendation is that the supervision by faculty members should be evaluated and recognized during salary review, tenure and promotion.

The last two recommendations concern the role of the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is suggested that the Dean should appoint someone who could provide advice to individuals about supervision, as well as develop programs and resources to improve supervision practices across the University. In addition, the Dean should ensure that future surveys of graduate students are undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the recommendations.

Responses to the task force report have been received from faculty members and students. Generally, these have been supportive, and some individuals have contributed thoughtful essays that provide the task force with new ideas as the final report is drafted.

I was particularly struck by the responses of a number of faculty members who pointed out that graduate student supervision is a complex process, varying from discipline to discipline, and changing as the student’s career moves through a number of stages. One contributor suggested that we should distinguish between supervision of research and supervision of students, pointing out that the former focuses on a well-defined outcome, whereas the latter can cover a wide range of topics, such as career goals, skill development, networking, writing and so on.

Other contributors brought up a topic that the task force has wrestled with – how to avoid bureaucratizing a relationship that is inherently idiosyncratic and personal. As an academic administrator I am probably biased in favour of bureaucratic solutions! However, I believe that we should try hard to implement processes that respect disciplinary differences and the unique nature of each supervisory relationship. As an example of how we can do this, I will highlight the recommendation that supervisors and students should have a written agreement about issues such as intellectual property and funding. I think it is reasonable that students entering a relationship that will last many years, will affect their career, and will cost them a lot of money, should have some form of written understanding about the mutual expectations of each party. However, it is also reasonable to expect the University to implement guidelines (rather than prescriptions) for this practice, and to provide examples and templates of such agreements, so as to cut down the work needed to construct them.

We will be working to complete the final report in the next couple of months, and will then begin to implement its recommendations in the 2007/2008 academic year.

Current and Past Students in Southeast Asia

In February 2007, I represented the University at the annual meeting of institutions involved in a CIDA-funded project in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Under the management of Continuing Studies, SFU is assisting Chulalongkorn University and its students.
University, Royal University of Phnom Penh, and the National University of Laos to develop continuing studies programs.

Under the leadership of Colin Yerbury (former dean of continuing studies) the multi-year program has two major tasks. First, centres for continuing studies are either being developed or upgraded in each partner institution. Second, CIDA has provided funding for about 30 graduate students from the three partner countries. Most of these students are taking a specialized Master of Education program, developed by the Faculty of Education under the direction of Alan MacKinnon. The others have entered SFU’s Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs. Most students are undertaking research that is linked to the implementation of continuing studies programs in their home countries.

The M.Ed. program has an unusual format. Because all the students are working at their home institutions in continuing education offices, they meet for a month at a time to take an intensive program of graduate course work. They then return to work, and four months later engage in another intensive period of coursework. The location of the courses moves from Bangkok to Phnom Penh to Vientiane, and the students will be in Burnaby for summer 2007. I was fortunate to meet the cohort on the last day of classes in Phnom Penh. I gave a talk on internationalization at SFU, and participated in an animated discussion about internationalization projects in North American universities. I also attended a lecture given by Michael Ling (the cohort’s instructor in spring 2007) to the faculty and students at Royal University of Phnom Penh. His lecture described the program, and was followed by poster presentations by students, engendering another lively discussion. We wound up the visit with a class dinner on the banks of the Mekong River.

I then travelled to Vientiane, where I represented SFU at the opening of the new centre for continuing studies at National University of Laos. NUL has been very active in new program development, and the new centre will provide a better physical home for the new programs. One of the highlights of the ceremony was planting a tree for each of the four partner countries outside the centre, making a further contribution to what is already a well wooded campus.

As the hosts for this year’s annual meeting of project participants, the National University of Laos arranged for the group to meet in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Luang Prabang. Although distracted by the scenery, architecture, markets and food, we managed to evaluate the project’s progress and, ably assisted by Annette Santos of Continuing Studies, to keep budgets, work plans and student research on track for the next year.

Travelling back through Bangkok, I had the great pleasure of hosting a dinner for SFU alumni. It was attended by 25 people, two of whom had been charter SFU students. The success of the dinner can be judged by the fact that it ran from 7 to 10.30, and that discussions then continued for half an hour on the steps of the restaurant!

2006 Awards Recipients

Like their acclaimed predecessors, this year’s SFU graduate students were very successful in winning external awards. For the 2006 competitions, our internal success rate in the SSHRC Doctoral competition was 71%, for NSERC Postgraduate Scholarships 66%, and for the Michael Smith Foundation Awards in Health Sciences 40%. In the SSHRC Doctoral competition, of the 24 SFU graduate awardees, 10 are receiving SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships ($20,000) and 14 are receiving Canada Graduate Scholarships Doctoral ($35,000). For the Canada Graduate Scholarships Masters (SSHRC) competition, SFU’s success rate was 100%, with all 39 candidates receiving an award. Of the 5 CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarship applications put forward in 2006, 3 received an award. This is the same success rate (60%) as in 2005. Congratulations to all award recipients!

The following list shows the external and internal award recipients that were not included in our Fall 2006 newsletter.

External Award Recipients

Canada Graduate Scholarship Doctoral (SSHRC)

Richard, Norann (PSYC).

Canada Graduate Scholarship Doctoral (NSERC)

Miller, Nathan (REM).

Canada Graduate Scholarship Masters (SSHRC)

Higgs, Joan (SA).

Canada Graduate Scholarship Masters (NSERC)

Gibson, Eli (ENSC).

NSERC Industrial Postgraduate Scholarship

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Canada Graduate Scholarship Masters (NSERC)

Gibson, Eli (ENSC).

NSERC Industrial Postgraduate Scholarship
Herdy, Kenneth (CMPT); Qadoumi, Zena (CHEM).

**NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship**

**Doctoral**

Farrell, Lindsay (BISC).

**NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship**

**Masters**

Lo, Simon C.K. (CMPT); Wong, Edwin (CHEM).

**Julie Payette – NSERC Research Scholarship**

Verspoor, Jan (BISC).

**Michael Smith Foundation in Health Research Trainee Awards – Masters & Doctoral Studentships**

Shin, Ji-Hyung (STAT)

We regret that Heesun Shin’s name was incorrectly listed.

**Internal Awards Recipients**

In addition to external awards that graduate students can apply for, SFU administers many internal awards. The following graduate students were successful in the 2005 and 2006 internal awards competitions.

**Professor Thelma Finlayson Fellowship**

Woodbury, Nathan (BISC).

**C.D. Nelson Memorial Graduate Scholarship**

Fong, Vai Hong (KIN); Gibson, Richard (MATH); Hunt, Rodney (SAR); Morrison, Kyle (BISC); Ristic, Danijel (CRIM); Rushmere, Andrew (EDUC); Sterk, Tristan D’Estree (SIAT); Vincent, Kyle (STAT); Wheler, Brett (EASC); Wolinetz, Michael (REM).

**Scott Paper Limited Bicultural Graduate Entrance Fellowship**

Vigouroux-Caillibot, Nathalie (EASC).

**SFU Alumni Association Graduate Entrance Scholarship**

Peters, Jodi (PSYC).

**Simons Foundation Doctoral Entrance Fellowship**

Cerny, Lesley (SA).

**Canwest Global Graduate Fellowship in Communications**


**COGECO Graduate Scholarship in Communications**


**Ethel Barbara Tuck Graduate Scholarship in Education**


**Garfield Weston Foundation / B.C. Packers Ltd. Graduate Fellowship in Marine Sciences**


**Gary Brent Global Asset & Wealth Management Scholarship in Business Administration**


**Temple Maynard Graduate Scholarship in English**

Keating, Erin (ENGL). Ruloff, Heather (ENGL).

**William & Ada Isabelle Steel Memorial Graduate Scholarship**

Badenhorst, Shaw (ARCH).

**William F. & Ruth Baldwin Graduate Scholarship in History**

Cummings, Anne E. (HIST).

**TCG International Graduate Scholarship in Business Administration**

Mazvihwa, Judith (BUS).

The SFU internal awards listed above are generally valued at $10,000+ for one year. The Dean of Graduate Studies Office also administers fellowships and scholarships from the SFU university budget, valued at a lesser amount, but made available to a wider number of graduate students. In 2006, there were 32 Special Graduate Entrance Scholarships awarded to incoming graduate students, valued at between $2000 and $7000. During the academic year 2006-2007, there were 525 Graduate Fellowships awarded, valued at $6,000 for one semester.

**Graduate Student Support**

SFU graduate students are supported by generous donors who contribute to endowment funds in many programs. If you would like to make a contribution to help students in a particular field, or if you would like further information about any aspects of making a donation, please contact Wanda Dekleva at (604) 291-3093 or at wdekleva@sfu.ca. Many options are available for giving, including one-time donations, regular contributions, or planned giving. Many different payment options can also be arranged. Between now and 2008 the Burnaby Mountain Endowment Fund will match any gifts to scholarship endowments of $50,000+, creating a wonderful opportunity for student support.

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