**GSGA40-R06**

**A Resolution Calling for Increased Communication Regarding Supplementary Funding for Graduate Students Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Summary:** The COVID-19 pandemic has led to serious disruptions in graduate study at the University of Maryland since March 2020, including the loss of funding for many graduate students. This has been especially challenging for PhD candidates who are nearing completion of their programs; in many cases, the pandemic has extended their time to graduation through no fault of their own. As a result, they have had to pay unexpected tuition and fees before completing their degrees. Certain University of Maryland units have rightly recognized these challenges and have indicated the possibility of funding for students who face this and similar circumstances. However, information regarding possible supplementary funding has been insufficient.

**WHEREAS,** the UMD Graduate School posted a document titled “Spring 21 Candidacy Tuition Fellowships for PhD Candidates Affected by the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic” to their website in 2020 (the document was posted by December 21)[[1]](#footnote-1), but the Graduate School has not yet informed graduate students of this fellowship opportunity via email (as of January 21, 2021), and the deadline to apply is listed as February 6, 2021; and

**WHEREAS,** the College of Arts and Humanities communicated the possibility of relief funding indirectly and inconsistently to students in the middle of January 2021[[2]](#footnote-2); and

**WHEREAS,** payment of tuition and fees can represent a significant financial burden for graduate students who have lost their funding, especially for PhD candidates who are without funding and have had to delay graduation because of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

**WHEREAS,** the COVID-19 pandemic is still severe and will continue to impede graduate study and threaten graduate funding into the Fall 2021 semester, and likely beyond;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** constituent units of the University of Maryland, including the Graduate School and colleges with graduate programs, should communicate directly, clearly, repeatedly, and in a timely manner with graduate students about any pandemic-related funding available to them; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Graduate School and other units should extend the deadlines they have set for applications for relief funding, allowing graduate students several weeks after official and formal notification of these opportunities; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Graduate School and any colleges potentially offering funding should coordinate their efforts, such that graduate students may accurately know and understand the full scope of funding for which they may be eligible and which they may receive; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Graduate School and any colleges offering supplementary funding should plan to do so for the Fall 2021 semester and any future semesters for which it is appropriate, and communicate to graduate students several months in advance as to the possibility of such funding.

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**Date and Time of Submission:** January 21, 2021

**Date of Presentation:** January 27, 2021

**Action(s) Taken:**

APPROVED

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Decision of GSG President



January 27, 2021

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Signature of GSG President                        Date

1. The document and application states: “The Graduate School will offer a limited number of fellowships for candidacy tuition and mandatory fees in Spring 2021 to students whose dissertation research was seriously interrupted by the pandemic and who have no funding that would provide for tuition remission. Costs will be shared equally between the unit, the Graduate School, and the campus—one-third each.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The information from ARHU was relayed via directors of graduate studies, e.g. in an email sent to graduate students in the Department of Art History & Archaeology on January 15, 2021. The relayed statement included: “At this time we are collecting information so that we can estimate and advocate for the funding that would be needed to provide the fellowships. We cannot guarantee that any or all will receive funding.” The email requested that interested students respond with their information by January 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)