



OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Voted & Approved by the General Council: 12/9/2019

To: Vice-Dean Matthew Roller
From: GRO General Council (GC)
GRO Co-Chair Eugenia Volkova
GRO Co-Chair Elliot Wainwright
Cc: Dean Beverly Wendland
Assistant Dean Christine Kavanaugh
Director Renee Eastwood
Date: 12/13/2019
Subject: Follow-up and Further Questions Regarding WGS Changes

Dean Roller,

We realize that the issue of cutting the WGS fellowships is very much on your radar, but wanted to formalize and make you aware of some decisions that the GRO has made recently regarding the issue:

At the GRO GC meeting on Monday 11/18/2019 the GC passed the following motion: **“There is a motion that we circulate the [WGS] petition, open letter, and JH Newsletter article ASAP; that the Advocacy Chairs draft a letter to Dean Matt Roller on this matter, and that the chairs raise this issue with Dean Matt Roller at their next meeting.”**

This letter was summarily sent on 12/2/2019 and a response was provided by you, which we appreciated. However, there are several specific questions that went unanswered in that response.

At the GRO GC meeting this past Monday 12/9/2019 the GC passed the following motion: **“There is a motion that the e-board and GC members who have been highly involved in assessing [the WGS] issue and preparing letters for the GRO aid in providing talking points and information [to the Co-Chairs], with direct responses to Dean Roller’s comments and how they are inadequate in addressing the relevant issues.”**

We have been hearing repeated reports from across our constituency regarding the WGS fellowship cuts and the subsequent town hall that the electronic responses to the concerns raised therein are inadequate in satiating the concerns, fears, and other questions posed by graduate students. As a result, it is incumbent on us Co-Chairs to continue to raise these issues to you and continue the conversation in our forthcoming meeting(s).

Below is an enumerated list of concerns which have been generated based off your response to the GRO via email on 12/4/2019. We hope to work through them with you point-by-point in person at our meeting on 12/17/2019 and beyond, if needed.

- **The future of the program is not in jeopardy. The Dean’s Office recognizes and values the intellectual contributions of the program, and has made large investments in recent years to build and sustain the program.**
 - Would it be possible to include representation from graduate students (i.e., the GRO or other organizations and student stakeholders) in these discussions and meeting before such decisions are made? We, the GRO, feel that if graduate students had been involved in the planning and

discussions regarding all of the changes that many of these issues and concerns may have been avoided.

- **Besides hiring a number of faculty whose work contributes to the mission of WGS, the School is currently conducting a search for a tenure-stream faculty member to be shared between WGS and History, whose teaching and research is explicitly to support the program.**
 - We have been informed that the job posting, as it currently reads, states that while someone with some specialty in WGS related issues is desired, the job posting does not *explicitly state* that this position is for a WGS faculty member. Can this be modified to reflect the intent of the position?
 - It is our understanding that this search happened three years ago and failed, and that this faculty member would, in practice, only be part of the History department and WGS would have no sovereignty or control over that faculty member and therefore there is no guarantee that such an appointment would ensure that WGS courses are taught. Thus, is there a way to *guarantee* that the host departments provide an adequate number of faculty required to teach the 5 courses currently offered each semester?
- **The structure of the WGS Teaching Fellows Program does not provide support to its fellows at the baseline level that the School requires. It is standard practice in the School of Arts and Sciences that full-time faculty, not doctoral students, deliver the core undergraduate courses for our majors and minors. There is now a sufficient number of full-time faculty involved in WGS that faculty should resume leadership in this regard.**
 - While it is good that there is faculty available to spearhead the coursework, this change limits and potentially removes funding opportunities for graduate students. At this point, the only way these courses could be taught is if both the WGS program and a graduate student's home department approve of a course application to a DTF (doubling the requirements and hurdles) *and* that it is funded. Will there be any changes in the DTF to account for these difficulties?
 - This may particularly affect students beyond their 5th year in KSAS which have no guaranteed source of funding. What are the current and planned selection criteria and priorities for DTF selection w/r/t WGS courses? We would like to see pathways unique to WGS courses in particular.
 - In addition, because WGS is not a department, there is no required teaching load for faculty. Without the personal will and commitment of certain faculty, the courses would not be taught. Is there way to require faculty to engage with this program?
- **Doctoral students have robust opportunities to teach WGS-related courses at equitable stipends, with full tuition remission and health insurance, through the Dean's Teaching Fellowship and Dean's Prize Fellowship programs.**
 - It is our understanding that DTF's can only be awarded to a single graduate student a single time. Thus, with a finite amount of graduate students in this relatively small program the ability for them to participate multiple times is limited, which dampens the ability to re-teach popular courses and puts the long-term viability of the program at risk.
 - Further, many people want to be specifically associated with and supportive of the WGS program.
- **The budget for programming and all non-teaching activities in WGS is unaffected by this change**

Other concerns that have been raised are:

- We have received reports that the group TRU has gathered data that fewer than 50% of DTF applicants receive the fellowship, despite your statement that all applicants were funded. A presentation of data on these acceptance rates and other DTF statistics would be helpful.
- Would it be possible to have the DTF program guarantee that some number of grants would be set aside for WGS? When this question was raised previous is was noted that the DTF program could not be modified in this way. Why is this the case?

- What is the timetable of these changes coming into effect?

We look forward to continuing the conversation with you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

All the best,

The GRO