

# APPENDIX E: SITE VISIT PROTOCOLS

## P1-Graduate Division Protocol

We want to get an understanding of the significance of NSF fellowships to the institution and identify key policies and practices that influence the **institutional context** for fellows. This protocol may also be used (in an abridged form) for other university administrators interviewed.

### *Participants*

- Dean of Graduate Studies (or Associate Dean, if the Dean is unavailable)
- Staff with fellowship and/or graduate student support responsibilities
- Possibly: data analyst who tracks patterns or conducts internal surveys of graduate students

### *Questions*

**DEAN:** How significant to the university is enrollment of NSF fellows?

**STAFF:** What has been the pattern of enrollment of NSF fellows over time and by department?

**ALL:** What would be the impact on the university if there were no NSF fellowships? [Look for evidence of institutional interest in fellows – special programs, staff, internal research.]

**ALL:** What is your perception of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship? Its strengths and weaknesses? What other graduate fellowship programs are considered better, and why?

**DEAN:** Who determines the level of support for graduate students?

**STAFF:** What are the major sources of funding, amounts of stipends, duration of support? How is the NSF “Cost of Education” allowance (currently \$10,500 per year) used? If less than tuition and fees, is it supplemented, and how? If there is a surplus, how is it used? [Note current tuition/fees.]

**DEAN:** What part do NSF fellowships play in financial planning for graduate education?

**ALL:** Does the Graduate Division encourage eligible first-year graduate students to apply for NSF fellowships?

**ALL:** Other comments on the value of NSF fellowships to the university

***Collect any data or materials that they have prepared for the visit.***

*Exit Interview*

- Raise any issues that have come up during the departmental visits.
- Clarify policies, if necessary.
- Ask for any additional data needed.
- Thank them for participating in the study; answer any questions.

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## **P2-Departmental Protocol: Faculty**

University departments have different cultures and are the institutional decision point for graduate programs including curriculum, admissions, and student support. We want to get an understanding of the **departmental context** for NSF fellows in the four disciplines that are our focus.

### *Participants*

- Graduate Program Coordinator (titles vary—this is the faculty member most directly responsible for the graduate program)
- Faculty (especially those who have worked with NSF fellows or previously served as coordinator)
- Possibly: the Department Chair [For departments with no fellows interview the Chair or Graduate Program Coordinator only.]

### *Questions*

1. What do you see as the primary benefit to the fellow of having an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship? What does it mean to the faculty that a graduate student is an NSF fellow? What other fellowship programs are considered better in this discipline, and why?
2. Does being an applicant for, or a recipient of, an NSF fellowship influence admissions decisions? How competitive is the department with other institutions for top students? Are eligible first-year graduate students encouraged to apply for an NSF fellowship?
3. Do NSF fellows complete their Ph.D.s at the same rate and in the same time as other graduate students? Are the educational experiences of NSF fellows comparable to non-fellows? If there are differences, what are they? [Look for evidence of integration into the graduate program versus isolation or independence and for whether this is advantageous to the fellow or not.]
4. What are the career aspirations of your Ph.D. students? How many accept postdoctoral appointments? How many aspire to and achieve faculty status? Do NSF fellows have different opportunities or make different choices compared to non-fellows? [If yes, explore how and why.]
5. What would happen to your department's graduate program if there were no NSF fellowship program?
6. Other comments on the benefits of NSF fellowships to department and to fellows? [Examples?]

### **P3-Departmental Protocol: Staff**

Each department will have an office devoted to graduate students. The principal staff person in this office knows a great deal about the graduate students and maintains departmental records. We want to know about departmental norms and practices and how NSF fellows fit in this department.

#### *Participant*

Usually the head of this office is a Student Affairs Officer or Student Services Officer.

#### *Questions*

1. What are the departmental patterns for the graduate program; for example, Ph.D./master's ratios, gender, ethnicity, international students? [This may have been requested in advance but ask for an explanation of data provided.] How many Ph.D. students are admitted each year? Master's students? What are the enrollment patterns for NSF fellows in the department (since 1989 if available)?
2. How are graduate students supported through the Ph.D. in the department? How many students receive full support? What is the usual level of stipend support and other assistance? What, if any, supplements are provided to NSF fellows during the fellowship? How are they supported in years they do not have the fellowship? Do NSF fellows complete the Ph.D. at the same rate and in the same time as other graduate students?
3. What are the TA and RA opportunities and expectations in the department? Do the same opportunities and expectations apply to NSF fellows as to other students? Are there better fellowships in this discipline? If so, why are they better for the student?
4. When do most NSF fellows use the three years (1-3, 2-4) of the fellowship? Are there departmental policies on use of fellowship funds? How many defer years? Are eligible first-year graduate students encouraged to apply for NSF fellowships?
5. What are the career goals of Ph.D. students? How many accept postdoctoral appointments? How many receive faculty positions? Are there different patterns of career choices between NSF fellows and other graduate students?
6. Other observations or comments on what it means to be an NSF fellow in this department?
7. Collect any data or materials that they have prepared for the visit.

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## **P4 – Graduate Student Protocol: NSF Fellows**

We want to understand the graduate student experience of NSF fellows in each department and how NSF fellows assess the advantages and any disadvantages of being an NSF fellow. For each current or former NSF fellow, collect the following information: race/ethnicity; gender; year in program; years of fellowship (1-3, 2-4); citizenship; disability status; and undergraduate institution. Form provided.

### *Questions*

1. When and how did you first learn of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship program? When did you first apply? Were you successful the first time? If not, did you receive an honorable mention? Why did you decide to reapply? Was your award a Minority GRF or Women in Engineering award? What other fellowships did you apply for, and which did you receive?
2. If you received the award as a college senior, did you enroll in the institution that you identified as your first choice on the application? If not, why did you enroll in your current institution? Did receipt of the NSF fellowship influence your decision? Have you transferred institutions? If so, why? Did having the NSF fellowship influence this decision? Have you changed degree programs, or are you considering it? If so, from what program, to what program, and why?
3. What do you think are the advantages of being an NSF Graduate Research fellow? How has it helped you in your graduate program? Are there disadvantages to being a fellow? Is the NSF stipend sufficient? [\$15,000] What benefits beyond the stipend, if any, have you received from NSF?
4. What additional support have you received during your fellowship? For the years that you are not receiving NSF fellowship support, what support have you or will you receive? Have you worked during your fellowship? If so, how many hours and what kind of work (include TA or RA work)? Do you think that this work has complemented your education? Increased your time to completion? Both? Neither?
5. Are your experiences and opportunities different from your peers who do not have NSF fellowships, for example, to TA or RA? Have you ever felt isolated from other graduate students because of your fellowship? Do you and other NSF fellows have any group identity or activities apart from other graduate students? [Look for evidence that they know or work with other fellows in the department.]
6. What were your career goals entering your graduate program? Have they changed? Have you had any professional accomplishments, such as presenting papers or publishing, as a graduate student? If so, what are they? How have faculty here influenced your career choices or assisted your early career professional development?

7. What do you think you will be doing in 10 years?

8. Other comments or observations on what it has meant to you to be an NSF fellow?

*Collect CVs from fellows.*

OMB No. 3145-0136 Expires September 2001

*NSF FELLOWS INFORMATION SHEET*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR IN PROGRAM: \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

YEARS OF NSF FELLOWSHIP: (e.g.: 1-2-3, 2-3-4, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

MAJOR: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER:     FEMALE  MALE

ETHNICITY: (choose one)             Hispanic or Latino  
    Not Hispanic or Latino

RACE: (select one or more)         American Indian or Alaska Native  
    Asian  
    Black or African American  
    Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
    White

CITIZENSHIP: (choose one)         U. S. Citizen  
    Permanent Resident  
    Other non-U. S. Citizen

DISABILITY STATUS:  
(select one or more)                 Hearing Impairment  
    Visual Impairment  
    Mobility/Orthopedic Impairment  
    Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
    None

Check here if you do not wish to provide any or all of the above information.

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## **P5-Graduate Student Protocol: Program Peers**

We want to understand the graduate student experience of non-NSF fellows in the same graduate programs and how the NSF fellowship is perceived by program peers. As time permits, encourage group discussion of the following questions and look for comments that show how an NSF fellowship is distinguishable from other sources of support. These will be 60-minute group interviews with approximately five graduate students from each department.

For each program peer, collect the following information: citizenship; race/ethnicity; gender; year in program; disability status; and undergraduate institution. Form provided.

### *Questions*

1. Why did you choose to enroll in this graduate program? Was your decision influenced by financial support available?
2. What are the sources of support for your graduate program through to your Ph.D.? Do you receive support beyond a stipend or salary? Do you work, and, if so, for how many hours, and what kind of work (include TA and RA work)? Do you think that this work has complemented your education? Increased your time to completion? Both? Neither?
3. Did you ever apply for an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship? If so, was it as a college senior or first-year graduate student? Did you receive an award? Did you receive an honorable mention? Did you reapply if you did not receive an award the first time? If you declined an NSF fellowship, what were your reasons?
4. Do you think that NSF fellows in your graduate program have any advantages that you do not? If so, what are they? Are your experiences and opportunities in graduate school different from NSF fellows, for example, to be a TA or RA?
5. What were your career goals entering your graduate program? Have they changed? Have you had any professional accomplishments, such as presenting papers or publishing, as a graduate student? If so, what are they? How have faculty here influenced your career choices or assisted your early career professional development?
6. What do you think you will be doing in 10 years?
7. Other comments or observations on your experience as a graduate student?

*Collect CVs from program peers.*

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*GRADUATE STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR IN PROGRAM: \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

MAJOR: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER:     FEMALE  MALE

ETHNICITY: (choose one)             Hispanic or Latino  
    Not Hispanic or Latino

RACE: (select one or more)         American Indian or Alaska Native  
    Asian  
    Black or African American  
    Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
    White

CITIZENSHIP: (choose one)         U. S. Citizen  
    Permanent Resident  
    Other non-U. S. Citizen

DISABILITY STATUS:  
(select one or more)                 Hearing Impairment  
    Visual Impairment  
    Mobility/Orthopedic Impairment  
    Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
    None

Check here if you do not wish to provide any or all of the above information.

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