

# **REPORT OF THE SSD DOCTORAL EDUCATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

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**Mark Philip Bradley, Chair (Deputy Dean)**

**Ufuk Akcigit (Economics)**

**Marc Berman (Psychology)**

**Paul Cheney (History)**

**Julie Chu (Anthropology)**

**Joel Isaac (Social Thought)**

**Eric Oliver (Political Science)**

**Kristen Schilt (Sociology)**

**Richard Shweder (Comparative Human Development)**

## INTRODUCTION

This report provides a systematic review of doctoral education in the Division of the Social Sciences and offers a series of recommendations to strengthen and deepen divisional and departmental support of its doctoral students.

The Committee was constituted by Dean Amanda Woodward in the fall of 2018 with faculty representation from each SSD department. The charge for the committee was to (1) assess the barriers that influence timely degree completion, the quality of doctoral student research and eventual career success, and (2) to generate recommendations concerning departmental best practices, divisional policy and support for students and their research that reflect and support the needs of the diverse disciplines and fields across the division. In doing so the Committee was asked to be attentive to issues of financial support and the ways in which doctoral programs may need to adapt to changes in academic fields and markets.

Throughout the fall and early winter, the Committee intensively consulted with departments, faculty and doctoral students about the experience of doctoral education in the division. The Committee sought the input of doctoral students in multiple ways: it worked closely with the Dean's Advisory Council, which is made up of student representatives from each SSD doctoral unit; held a series of open offices for students to meet directly with members of the committee; and offered an online confidential anonymous comment form. All three mechanisms generated thoughtful responses. The Committee also gathered data on time to candidacy and degree, current doctoral student teaching configurations, available write-up fellowships and placement information as well as best practices around doctoral education in the social sciences across the division and in peer institutions.

The University of Chicago has played a leading, and arguably central, role in the development of the social sciences since its founding in 1890. Doctoral education has always been at the center of those efforts, with the formation of the Division of the Social Sciences in 1930 providing a structure for fostering interdisciplinary work. Today the division's 9 departments, comprised of 200 faculty members and nearly 800 doctoral students, are among the most highly ranked in the world in recognition of their intellectual creativity and the rigor of their research.

The Committee's recommendations, which are set forth below, touch on central aspects of the institutionalization of intellectual life as they relate to graduate training. Ambitious scholarly enterprises require exceptional financial resources; a complex but flexible division of intellectual labor; and the ability to attract and cultivate talent. But institutional encouragement of scholarly excellence should not be confounded with the thing itself. The scholarly enterprise relies most fundamentally on the vocation of individuals working in their chosen discipline; and the scholarly life, while deeply fulfilling, is a demanding one. Particularly in the humanities and the social sciences, material rewards often bear scant relation to the prodigious amounts of time scholars invest in their teaching and research. For those who envision such effects, the practical benefits of scholarly work do not always materialize when or in the manner they are anticipated. Truly groundbreaking scholarly work is usually long in gestation and, even when it is periodically sustained by collegial discussion as it must be, requires deep inner conviction in order to bring it to fruition. As in any human endeavor that relies so heavily on creativity, outcomes are not reproducible based on strict models; diligence is no guarantee of success. Universities should never allow themselves the luxury of complacency when the evidence indicates that they can improve how they train and professionally place their graduate students, but the nature of the scholarly enterprise suggests that some elements of graduate students' experiences are more susceptible to improvement than others.

Since 2008, the landscape of doctoral education at the University has changed substantially. The coming of the Graduate Aid Initiative (GAI) a little over a decade ago resulted in substantial increases in financial support for doctoral students. It provides students with five years of full tuition scholarship and stipend support along with four summers of research funds. The size of the stipends and frequency and size of summer support has steadily grown over the ten years of the GAI. The GAI stipend in 2007 was \$19,000. Today it is \$27,000, an increase of 42%. At the beginning of the GAI, students on average had one and one-half summer grants totaling \$4,500. Today students have on average 4 summer grants totaling \$16,000. The university covers five years of health insurance with additional coverage available in the sixth and seventh years for students who are ABD and not covered by another fellowship. More recently a

relaunched Chicago Center for Teaching and the establishment of UChicagoGRAD in 2015 seek to provide doctoral students with support for pedagogical and professional development.

This report offers the first major review in SSD of doctoral education since the institutionalization of the GAI. It identifies five major areas that require attention: 1) structural and financial support for doctoral education before and after candidacy; 2) doctoral student teaching and pedagogy; 3) placement and professionalization; 4) advising and mentoring; and 5) doctoral student quality of life.

The Committee believes that new resources and a willingness to think quite differently about how we approach the period after candidacy and doctoral teaching are needed to fully address these areas of concern. While new resources are vital, they are not in and of themselves sufficient without a shared set of substantive commitments by the division and departments to advance the quality of doctoral education. Among the highlights of our recommendations are:

- Reassess the current structure of doctoral support with attention to resources that address the post candidacy period and post-GAI funding. Among the financial models for doing so, the Committee recommends expanding the pool of available write-up fellowships with goal of making them broadly available to SSD students who demonstrate measurable progress toward departmental requirements for degree completion;
- Put into place new structures of accountability between students, advisors, committees and departments around post candidacy mentoring and dissertation completion;
- Identify areas where additional resources for pre-dissertation research would better leverage external funding to help ensure dissertation field research is supported outside of GAI stipends;
- Reimagine how teaching and pedagogical training best works for students during their first five years of doctoral study, reconsidering current GAI teaching requirements and existing relations between pedagogical experience and financial support;
- Expand opportunities, pedagogical training and financial support for post-GAI teaching and increase the size of the Social Sciences Teaching Fellow program;
- Encourage deepened levels of professional development and support for mentoring across the departments, including efforts to open up new career paths in and out of the academy and to more fully engage alumni in these efforts;
- Continue to engage in university wide efforts to improve the quality of life for doctoral students and to ensure the division's practices of doctoral education reflect its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In our review the Committee was struck by the pressing concerns articulated by SSD doctoral students. Our work was also informed by what we have come learn about best practices emerging in departments across the division over recent years around doctoral education. We were impressed by the number of converging issues that emerged across units as well as within particular areas of study, as we detail below. At the same time we are sensitive to the diverse local disciplinary and sub-disciplinary ecologies of the division. The calibrations of necessary changes, for example, might not be the same for Economics or Psychology as they are for History or Anthropology. At the same time concerns about doctoral training and their solutions in individual subfields might at times be more similar to those in subfields outside of their own home departments. Figure 1 and Table 1 below illustrate some of this diversity within the division, capturing faculty and student sizes by department in fall 2018 and median time to degree by department respectively.

The Committee believes it is imperative to collectively engage across the division to implement new forms of doctoral support in ways that speak both to shared structural issues around doctoral education and to needs that are more locally based. In framing its recommendations, the Committee has consciously favored modes of implementation that are adaptive, flexible and responsive to departmental needs and variations across divisional units in an effort help all SSD doctoral students succeed and flourish.

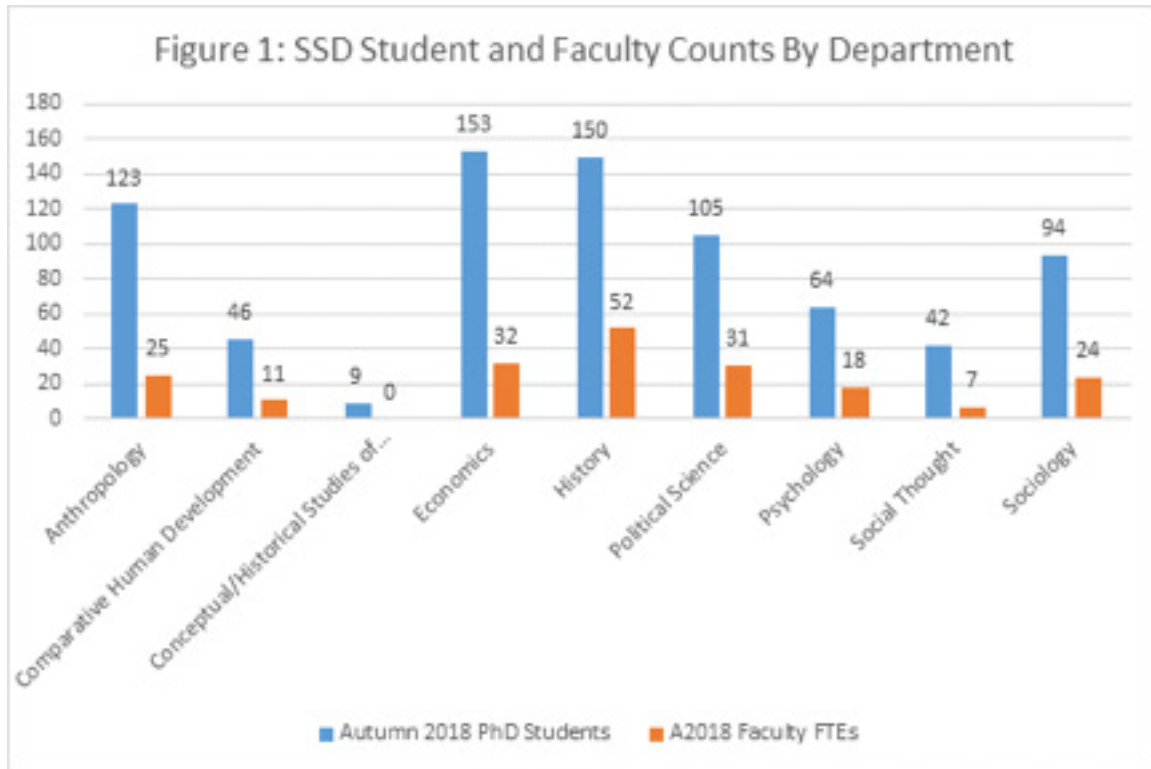


Table 1: Median Time to Degree by Department (2007-11 and 2012-17 graduates)

Program	Median TTD 2007-11	Range 2007-11	Median TTD 2012-17	Range 2012-17
Anthropology	8.75	5.5 - 12	8.25	5 - 12
Comparative Human Development	8.00	5 - 11.5	8.25	4.75 - 12
Conceptual/Historical Studies of Science	N/A	N/A	6.75	6 - 9.25
Economics	5.75	4.75 - 9	5.75	2.75 - 12
History	8.00	5 - 12	8.25	5.5 - 11.75
Political Science	7.25	4.75 - 11.25	7.63	3 - 11.25
Psychology	5.50	4.5 - 11.25	5.75	4.75 - 9
Social Thought	8.75	5.75 - 10.75	8.63	5.75 - 11
Sociology	8.00	4 - 12	8.00	3.75 - 12

# SUPPORT FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION BEFORE AND AFTER CANDIDACY

## Before Candidacy

Most departments in the division have undertaken substantial reviews of their pre-candidacy curriculum and requirements over the last several years aimed at getting students to candidacy and into the research dimension of their programs in a timely fashion. They have also sought to make more legible the nature and purposes of early coursework and in some cases to recalibrate how exams serve to drive future research and teaching. Departments are continuing to discuss clearer pathways to the thesis proposal and, in programs that require it, moving more seamlessly from the defense into field research. Specifically, Economics undertook a series of curricular changes several years ago in order to effectively move students into independent research, including a new third year seminar mentored by two faculty members in which students produce a research paper. Anthropology's third year proposal preparation seminar combines enhanced faculty mentoring with a paper requirement that serves as a foundation for the dissertation proposal. In a similar vein, Sociology has put a new "pro-seminar" in place and a mandatory writing seminar in years two and three. Psychology and Political Science have each reconfigured and streamlined some course requirements aimed to move students more quickly into thesis research. History is beginning discussions about its required first and second year seminars and how they might more fluidly serve as a pipeline to the thesis. Many departments are now using annual reviews more consciously to ensure students are moving toward ABD status expeditiously and to better flag students who are not thriving in the program for additional mentoring and in some cases to help them find alternative career paths that better suit their interests and skills. Although it is too early to measure the impact of these reforms on time to candidacy, the committee's conversations with faculty and students offered qualitative evidence that these reforms are beginning to work as intended.

A particular gap felt most acutely by faculty and their students with global projects, and one sometimes also shared by students doing field research in the United States, pivots around the nexus and timing of candidacy status, proposal writing and external grants. It is not that SSD students do not win prestigious external grants like Fulbright, SSRC, Wenner-Gren or NSF. They do, and in the case of Fulbright in numbers that exceed many of our peers. But when a student does not catch the grant cycle at just the right point their research progress can be delayed by as much as a year. This has emerged as a serious problem for students as they balance pre-candidacy programmatic deadlines and sometimes undertake teaching commitments that effectively delay research progress. Among the increasing numbers of international students in SSD doctoral programs, eligibility requirements on external fellowships such as Fulbright or NSF can make external funding for field research more challenging. Further, students without external funding for field research sometimes have to rely on GAI support while they are away from campus, compounding their financial stresses and problems when they return to campus.

Some departments report that current funding for pre-dissertation research in the division, departments and centers is not adequate for their students to fully develop their thesis proposals and win competitive external funding proposals. Faculty and students also suggest there are too few systemic efforts within departments to assist students in writing successful external funding proposals or that adequately prepare them for making the transition to work in the field. In our discussions with departments only Anthropology regularly offers dedicated courses around fieldwork and proposal writing in the second and third year, respectively, to help students navigate this fraught moment in their doctoral career. The courses offer useful guides for the directions other departments could take to better advance student proposal writing and entry into research. The Mellon-funded Social Science Research Council Dissertation Proposal Fellowship Program provides another model that combines interdisciplinary training in proposal-writing with summer field research that could potentially be scaled to meet the cross divisional needs of field work heavy subfields in various departments.

The Committee believes the division and departments should work to ensure that SSD doctoral field research is supported outside the GAI stipend. Doing so will require putting new attention and resources toward initiatives that help successfully put students in the field with external sources of support.

**Recommendations:**

- Departments should continue their efforts to move students toward candidacy and into research, especially around the timely completion of thesis proposals. They should put in place practices that help doctoral students undertaking field research write successful proposals for external funding and better prepare them for undertaking the research phase of their doctoral careers.
- The Division should make a thorough analysis of existing resources for pre-dissertation research grants and identify places where further divisional support is necessary to allow students to better leverage external research funding and fellowships. The goal of these efforts should be to ensure that SSD doctoral field research is supported outside the GAI.
- The Division should consult with departments on the efficacy of establishing a division-wide interdisciplinary workshop for SSD students on grant writing and field work potentially situated in the Center for International Social Science Research.

**After Candidacy**

The period after candidacy remains something of a black box for SSD’s doctoral programs. By contrast to robust pre-candidacy discussions and on-going reforms, most departments report that conversations are only beginning to address the critical bottlenecks students face as they move from candidacy to the successful defense of their theses. Our discussions with students suggest the intellectual and financial precarities of these years in the program are among their deepest concerns. They manifest themselves in different ways and with varying intensities throughout the division, less so in departments like Psychology and Economics where time to degree is under six years and more in departments like Sociology, History and Anthropology where time to degree often extends to seven or more years. The absence of institutionalized support for progress toward degree after candidacy is a common concern across the division, and funding beyond the fifth year is seen as vital in some, but not all, departments.

The Division of the Humanities and the Divinity School have recently announced a guaranteed sixth year of funding for its students. This Committee agrees substantial additional post-GAI support is necessary for our doctoral students to flourish but sees a uniform sixth year as too much for some SSD units and not enough for others. It is an average that does not necessarily solve core problems, and opens the possibility of additional teaching requirements that would further extend time to degree.

New structures to support SSD students must be sensitive to divergences in departmental and disciplinary norms across the social sciences. As Table 1 above suggests, the need for targeted interventions reflecting the diverse nature of doctoral study across the division, in contrast to one size fits all solutions, emerges in part through departmental data on median time-to-degree. Departments should be full partners in designing the contours of the new systems that will support and educate their students post candidacy.

The Committee proposes a set of recommendations to support doctoral students in the social sciences that would significantly advance dissertation completion, offer new forms of pedagogical training and professionalization and reduce financial pressures on students. They are designed to be adaptive, flexible and responsive to departmental needs and variations across the division. These recommendations in part call for a significant review of how doctoral student teaching in the core and in departments is constituted along with the expansion of the Social Science Teaching Fellows program, and they are discussed in more detail in the next section of this report. Here we focus on the major structural and financial precarities facing SSD doctoral students after candidacy around dissertation completion, and our recommendations for addressing them.

Structural Precarities. Policies and practices around support for thesis writing remain largely ad-hoc among advisors, committees and departments. Students frequently report the year after fieldwork can be a lost year as they struggle to make the transition from research to writing. There are few departmentally mandated check-in points during this late period of doctoral study, and levels of support can vary considerably by advisor and committee. This Committee

appreciates there is variability in research practices, timing and advising across fields and disciplines. But the absence of broader departmental structures is concerning. In the course of this review the Committee has learned of practices within the Division, some of them already institutionalized at peer institutions, which could begin to inform best practices across SSD. Economics instituted annual faculty meetings to discuss each student who is in the fourth year or above aimed at reviewing student progress and calibrating faculty support. Political Science has recently added annual post candidacy reviews of its doctoral students to monitor proximity to completion. In what is an episodic rather than regularized initiative in some departments, thesis committees gather on a yearly basis after the student returns from the field to comment on draft chapters in hand, develop and review a plan for thesis completion and engage the full committee in student planning for the job market. Faculty and students report favorably on the outcomes of these annual meetings, suggesting such collective discussions can work do different kinds of work than one-on-one meetings with advisors and protect against what can sometimes be infrequent contact for students with other committee members. At peer institutions such as Yale, where annual committee meetings have become institutionalized, requiring written feedback from the committee in discursive or checklist form has become normative so that progress toward degree is more transparent to the committee, student and department.

The workshop system, established at the recommendation the 1982 Baker Report on Graduation Education to foster intellectual community and advance time-to-degree, continues to be an important source of support in the late stages of doctoral study. But while the consciously interdisciplinary nature of the workshops continue to make essential contributions to intellectual formations, many faculty and doctoral students report the workshops do not substitute for more disciplinary attention to the writing process. What it means to write a thesis, how it should be constructed and the modes of argumentation that drive it inevitably have disciplinary particularities. Many students across SSD report they often don't know how to begin writing when they come out of the field. For some, the process of getting started can add as much as six months or a year to time to degree. Students in part get there in improvised ways as they find their own voices and through conversations with their advisors and committees. But they also believe there are important discrete initiatives that departments could undertake with divisional support that would productively advance their writing and time to degree. They include the establishment of intensive, short term write-ins, which some students tell us they have informally organized themselves and were an important catalyst in moving from research to writing. Also important are spaces for establishing writing groups to combat the isolation students often feel at this stage of dissertating. Faculty in several departments advocated more regularly convening disciplinary based events that focus on the craft of thesis writing, including bringing back recent alums to share their own successful practices of thesis completion.

The lack of workspace for doctoral students has been identified as a pressing problem for some departments. This is an area where we are at a considerable disadvantage with peer institutions. Space needs vary across the disciplines from laboratory space for research and data collection to office space for writing. Students report that the absence of spaces to write can be a significant obstacle for them. Many departments see additional student workspace as a central issue not only for time to degree but for initial doctoral student recruitment purposes too. Ultimately student progress in research is dependent on access to and inclusion in intellectual communities, and physical space is a key part of that equation. The Committee believes we must find ways to accommodate students in the scholarly communities in which they are working, whether it be departments, centers or institutes.

**Recommendations:**

- Departments should establish regular practices appropriate to their disciplines for yearly check-ins between students and their full thesis committees in the period after candidacy. These should include some form of annual written feedback for the candidate that will also be shared with department. This should be a minimum starting point for each department's efforts to establish stronger mentorship procedures for post-candidacy students.
- Each department should develop a comprehensive post candidacy mentoring plan for its students, one that provides clear benchmarks to facilitate and support departmental efforts to advance thesis writing and dissertation completion.
- While university space constraints make the provision of doctoral student office space a significant challenge, the division should renew conversations with departments about what kinds of spaces would be most generative for doctoral students and how those needs could be realized. Peer institutions often situate these spaces outside of the departments in institutes, centers and libraries, suggesting a set of productive conversations around these issues could be

had with SSD centers, university wide initiatives such as the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation and the Stevanovich Institute for the Formation of Knowledge, and the Regenstein Library.

Dissertation Funding Beyond the Fifth Year. If structural issues impede student progress to degree after candidacy, the absence of guaranteed funding beyond the fifth year only deepens their impact. Without question financial precarity in the period after GAI stipends end is the single most important concern SSD doctoral students expressed to this committee. The funding pressures are most acutely felt in departments where time to degree extends beyond well beyond five years. Students consistently report that earning money to live beyond the fifth year involves heavy teaching commitments that slow down progress to degree. So too does the substantial time it can take in a largely decentralized system to apply for teaching and write-up opportunities and the more generalized anxiety that year-to-year uncertainty about finances produces. For students who are away from campus for as long as twelve to eighteen months doing sustained field research, existing requirements around eligibility for some write-up divisional fellowships can put those critical sources of late career support out of reach. If students relied on the GAI while in the field, they return to campus with more limited resources and heightened financial pressures.

The Committee believes making additional write-up fellowships available for students who are making measurable progress toward departmental requirements for the degree would significantly begin to address the financial precarities around thesis completion. At the moment the division can meet approximately half of the need for write-up fellowships. There are variances in the distribution and terms of these awards, and the demand for them does vary by department. There is also considerable variance in what is offered for particular write-ups, including the size of stipends and whether or not tuition, health insurance and fees are included. In general divisional write-ups are the most generous but carry tighter rules around teaching and future university financial support.

Write-up fellowships can only achieve their larger purpose if departments closely monitor student progress. As the Committee recommends above, departments should be required to provide the division with a plan for how they will mentor the progress of their doctoral students after candidacy. They should also establish discrete mentoring protocols and expectations for the period of the write up fellowship itself. Any expansion of write-up fellowships for SSD students should also involve discussions about standardizing the terms for existing and newly created write-ups. Ideally the minimal terms ought to match existing levels of GAI stipend support, and provide tuition and fee waivers along with health insurance. The terms should also provide a field work eligibility provision for students whose programs require considerable time in the field and are in good standing with their departments.

**Recommendations:**

- The Division should expand the pool of available write-up fellowships with goal of making them broadly available to SSD students who demonstrate measurable progress toward departmental requirements for degree completion.
- The Committee urges the division and departments to think flexibly about the year in which students can hold a write-up fellowship, allowing them to be held in the sixth, seventh or eighth year depending on the norms and practices of individual departments.
- Departmental post candidacy mentoring plans should include a set of transparent benchmarks for students who receive write-up funding.
- The terms of write-up fellowships should provide uniform support for stipend, tuition, health insurance and fees; and offer eligibility criteria that accommodate students in field work heavy programs.
- In departments where time to degree is under six years, such as Economics and Psychology, the Division should engage in discussions with them about the utility and best forms of support beyond the fifth year.



## TEACHING

The effort of doctoral students as teaching assistants, preceptors and, in some cases, as lecturers, is essential for their pedagogical training. But the Committee believes the current GAI model of five teaching points and the structure of the post GAI teaching market present significant challenges for students that do not always advance sound pedagogical development and student financial well-being.

There are tensions between the five teaching points and time to degree, with students taking on more teaching than they otherwise might to deal with broader financial stresses and further slowing their progress to degree. There have been some teaching bottlenecks, especially departments like Anthropology, History and Social Thought with smaller majors and longer periods of field research, which can interfere with being on campus in the years when GAI teaching is scheduled. The distribution of support across stipends versus payment for teaching remains confusing for many students and the reduction in the stipend portion during teaching years is experienced as a loss even when teaching makes up the difference. For some departments, notably Economics and Sociology, the teaching requirements as currently conceived appear to reduce incentives for students to apply for external funds with those departments reporting that students are not able to “buy out” of teaching as they are at some other institutions.

More fundamentally the Committee believes the current teaching system is broken. The committee surveyed the forms of teaching undertaken by doctoral students in recent years to fulfill their five GAI points, and discovered the vast bulk of it is in departmental teaching assistantships and Core internships. It is the unusual doctoral student who is able to teach their own stand-alone course, departmental or Core, while they are on the GAI. This strikes us as problematic at several levels. The value added of multiple teaching assistantships, while serving the needs of departments and programs, inevitably diminishes over time for doctoral students. Moreover, students report highly uneven practices of TA training and note there are few departmental or divisional mechanisms for mentored teaching more generally. Core internships do offer a pathway to future lectureships and can (though not always) provide more mentored teaching experiences, but even here multiple internships are likely to have a declining utility for SSD students. The current system is contributing to longer times to degree without a substantive return to doctoral students.

Our teaching survey suggests more students have the opportunity to teach stand-alone lectureships beyond the GAI, but here too there are significant challenges and limitations across the division. In large discussion-based Core sequences such as Self, Power and Mind there are disproportionately greater opportunities for SSD students to serve as lecturers. Civilization sequences offer fewer lectureships as many of their non-Western variants are large lecture courses that require teaching assistants rather than doctoral lecturers. Most departments offer opportunities for prize lectureships but in aggregate they remain limited in number across the division. Students report that teaching after the fifth year often involves trade-offs that affect time to degree. The structure of the post-GAI teaching market means students are by necessity often holding multiple teaching appointments, even as they sometimes simultaneously hold write up fellowships. Neither dissertation completion nor sound pedagogical development is well served in this system.

The Committee urges the division to engage in conversations with the College and departments aimed at decoupling teaching from the GAI stipend. In its place, we propose that SSD require a series of mentored teaching opportunities as a part of the requirements for graduation. We are hopeful that changes in the university’s budgeting model, shifts that have fundamentally altered the ecology of teaching throughout the university from the era when the GAI was first implemented, can make these potentially transformative reforms structurally and financially possible. The Committee understands they would be a potentially seismic change to existing practice, and will inevitably present new staffing challenges for departments and the College core. In setting the number of required teaching opportunities for graduation we believe departments should retain some discretion. The division should establish a minimum threshold but leave each department to determine the appropriate number and their exact configuration. These configurations would include conventional teaching assistantships and lectureships, but they could involve involvement in pedagogy seminars or external internships. There might also be teaching assistantships with heavier responsibilities that could receive extra weighing to meet graduation requirements. We encourage the division to explore teaching waivers for students who have won external grants that enable them to reduce their teaching, following best practices at many peer institutions.

At the same time, the Committee believes a full review of post-GAI teaching is in order with a focus on deepening the pedagogical training of doctoral students and opening up new teaching opportunities. We can envision a variety of new formulations here. Among them:

- Expanded opportunities for faculty and doctoral students to co-teach courses;
- A new by-application prize lectureship program in which selected students from across the division meet weekly in a one quarter Chicago Center for Teaching-led workshop for sustained discussions of course design and then teach their vetted courses in a subsequent quarter;
- The establishment of a new year long teaching fellowship beyond the fifth year that would provide students with intensive and immersive teaching experiences in the core and their own home departments mentored by faculty and the Chicago Center for Teaching. Beyond their pedagogical value to doctoral students, the year long teaching fellowships if offered in sufficient numbers would further support the financial stability of students after their fifth year. The Committee believes these new teaching fellowships could be attractive to donors and institutionalized in part through named endowment gifts.

The Committee recommends the establishment an Ad-Hoc Divisional Committee on Doctoral Student Teaching to formulate concrete recommendations on how these new teaching opportunities during and after the GAI would be constituted and implemented.

The Committee also urges expansion of the Social Sciences Teaching Fellows (SSTF) program, with the aim of increasing the number of fellows to as many as 30 over the next three years. At a time when the job market remains very challenging (see the fuller discussion of placement below), this program offers the kind of bridging spaces for recent SSD PhDs that have been more common at peer institutions. The two-year tenure of the program allows participants time to deepen their research portfolios while gaining additional teaching experience and professionalization for the job market supported by departmental mentors and the Chicago Center for Teaching. In the first SSTF class the majority of fellows secured tenure-track appointments or a second postdoctoral appointment.

The Committee urges the division to expand the programmatic and professional development opportunities available to SSTFs. The recent creation of a new position of Faculty Director for the program is a promising step in those directions. The Committee also recommends a change in the name of the program as many faculty and students report the SSTF moniker does not make clear on CV lines that it is in fact a post- rather than a pre-doctoral fellowship.

Taken together, the Committee believes new department protocols to advance student progress after candidacy, write-up fellowships for all students who need them, innovative teaching configurations that provide new opportunities for mentored and stand-alone teaching, and an expanded SSTF program would allow the division and its departments to provide unprecedented levels of support for our doctoral students.

**Recommendations:**

- Re-evaluate the current GAI teaching requirement and the structure of financial support that accompanies them. An ideal model would be one in which student fellowship stipends are consistent year-to-year and we establish a series of new mentored teaching opportunities as a part of SSD graduation requirements. The division should establish a minimum level for teaching in consultation with departments but allow units to determine the appropriate number and configurations that best advance doctoral pedagogical training in their fields of study. We also encourage the division to explore teaching waivers for students who have won external grants that enable them to reduce their teaching in keeping with best practices at peer institutions.
- The Division should establish an Ad-Hoc Divisional Committee on Doctoral Student Teaching to recommend how these teaching shifts would work in practice in ways that will advance and deepen the pedagogical training of our students. The committee should explore with departments the efficacy of establishing a required disciplinary based pedagogy course as a gateway to or in parallel with any new teaching requirements for graduation.

- The Ad-Hoc Divisional Committee on Doctoral Student Teaching should also conduct a full review of post-GAI teaching practices with a focus on opening up new stand-alone teaching opportunities for students and exploring the establishment year-long teaching fellowships to offer advanced students new immersive and mentored teaching experiences.
- The Division should work to expand the size of the SSTF program to as many as 30 fellows over the next three years to further support the pedagogical and professional development of recently graduated SSD doctoral students. The program should deepen programmatic and professional opportunities for fellows, and the name of the program should be changed to the Social Science Postdoctoral Fellows Program to better reflect its purpose.

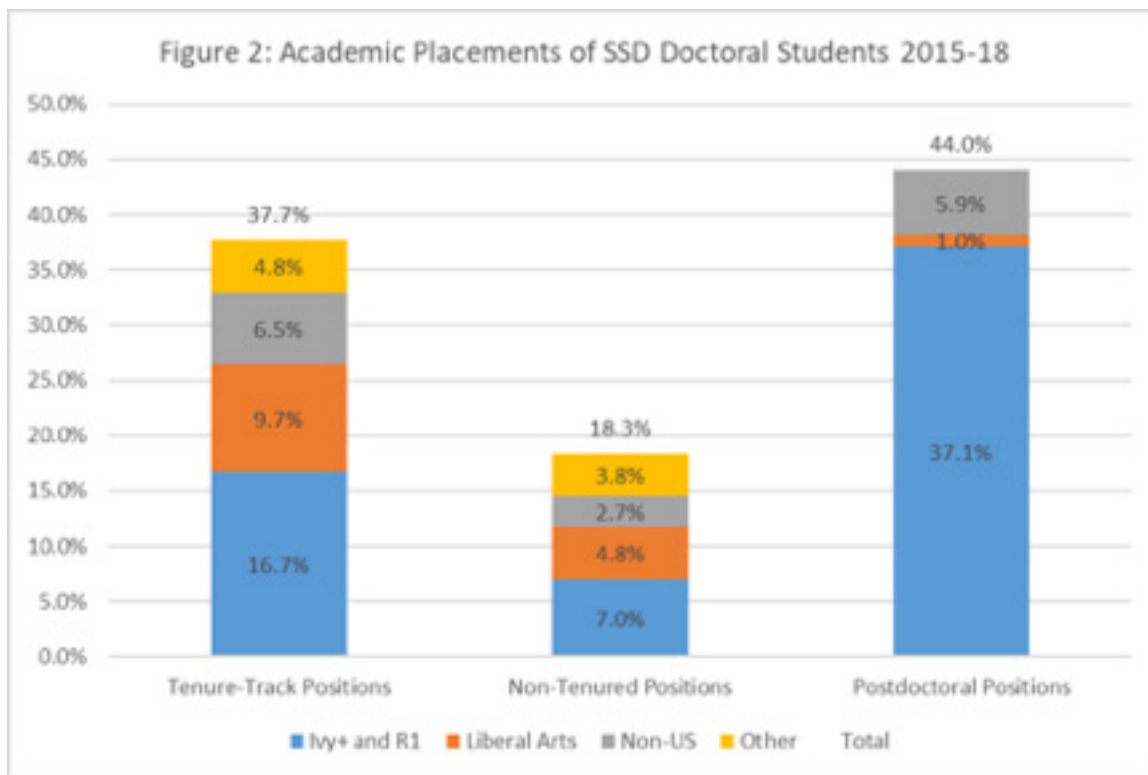
## **PLACEMENT AND PROFESSIONALIZATION**

The Committee carefully reviewed existing data on placement of the division’s students. Across SSD departments, the most focal indicator of success is the traditional one, placing doctoral students into tenure track faculty positions. At the same time, awareness of opportunities outside of academia is growing in several departments and well established in others. Until recently, neither the division nor the university systematically tracked the placements of PhD alumni, though some departments have maintained meticulous records. In 2013 the Career Advancement Office commissioned a study of the current (2013) job placements of PhD alumni across a 15-year span. Based on these data, and similar data collected by the Provost’s office for new doctoral students in two focal years, placements of PhD doctoral students into academic positions remains at high levels even given the continuing tight post-2008 market. Aside from Economics and Psychology, where PhD’s find frequent opportunities in finance and industry, 70-90% of doctoral students from SSD departments between 1997 and 2013 were in academic positions, and most of these placements were at national universities.

The Committee built upon the findings of this 2013 study to track placement across the division over the last four years, asking departments to provide us with their placement data from 2015-18 (see Figure 2 below). While data collection does vary across the departments, the findings offer a reasonable snapshot of the current placement situation across the division. Most notable is the extended period of postdocs and visiting assistant professorships that are an increasingly common pathway for SSD students before they attain a tenure track job. This shift broadly mirrors national trends. Among professional organizations in the social sciences only the American Historical Association has carefully tracked these developments across the discipline since 2008. It reports that the average time to a tenure track job in History is now four years after PhD in hand, making one to two postdocs or Visiting Assistant Professorships (VAPs) the norm for recent doctoral students.

Outside of Economics and Psychology, the trajectories of students in other departments in the division appear to follow these patterns but our conclusions here remain provisional as we lack hard data on the progression from first placements through to tenured positions. What the existing data does confirm is a very sharp uptick in postdoctoral appointments for SSD students, itself mirroring the broader proliferation of postdocs in the academy since 2008. In the period 2015-18, some 44% of our doctoral students were placed in postdoctoral positions. Another 18% received VAPS or untenured position, meaning 62% of students were placed in non-tenured appointments over the last four years. In this same period 38% secured tenure track appointments.

The majority of tenure track placements continue to be at Ivy+ or R1 institutions. Liberal arts colleges are the next most common placement, followed by international and other universities and colleges. The division does have some comparative data with Ivy+ peers around placement in highly selective liberal arts colleges for the humanities and the social sciences. On the whole their success is greater, with as much as 30% of their overall placement portfolios in liberal arts colleges. One notable shift in the academic landscape over the last decade is the growing number of international start-up universities, especially in the Middle East and Asia, where the demand for newly minted PhDs can be very intense. Along with British and other European universities where SSD students have been successfully placed for some time, the Committee believes the rapid growth of these new institutions offers important opportunities for placement that the division can help to facilitate.



Outside of academic job market, there is less data about placement. The 2013 Career Advancement Office Survey made clear that Economics and Psychology place more of their students into jobs into non-academic positions. But in conversations with departments it is clear that non-academic placements have become a growing if still comparatively limited option for students in other disciplines. For instance Sociology has placed students in private and public big data projects, some Political Science students enter government service and the non-profit sector, and some History students have become higher education administrators or worked in public history.

From a broader perspective, however, the academy is clearly rethinking the lines between the academic and the non-academic in PhD training. In one local example, History was among four departments nationally who received Mellon funding for a recently completed three-year pilot program Making History Work that developed professionalization opportunities outside the academy for historians, among them internships with local non-profits and government, and fostered new courses that developed skills in more public facing forms of history. In the California system, some humanities and social science departments are now encouraging the addition of a practitioner to thesis committees for projects that seek to move between theory and practice. The larger sensibility underlying these efforts is to move away from perceptions of non-academic positions as a kind of consolation prize, something students turn to only after prospects for a tenure track job wane. Rather, these projects seek to make more fluid the borders between the worlds of scholarship and practice in ways that productively inflect research and teaching long before students reach the job market. The insights doctoral students can gain from working in these liminal spaces are potentially quite generative, among them producing novel research questions and engaging with more public facing platforms to disseminate the creation of new knowledge. These new skills sets are likely to advance student job prospects in and out of the academy.

In Committee conversations with SSD doctoral students, deep anxiety if not panic over the job market hovers over all of their perceptions of doctoral education. And rightly so in a post-2008 environment in which fundamental structural adjustment in the academy rather than what in the past had been the cyclical ups and downs of the job market is now the new normal. For some students, extending their time to degree has become an increasingly frequent path for coping with the long tail of the job market. Students who take that route acknowledge the precarities and anxieties that come with it, and eagerly look to the division to develop alternative structures and practices. Here the Committee

believes the expansion of the Social Science Teaching Fellows program offers one important step forward as it provides two years of financial stability, opportunities for new pedagogical and professional development and time for students to advance their research agendas with PhD in hand.

Navigating the job market itself brings significant frustrations and anxieties, and the majority of SSD students are keen to have departments and the division play larger and more structured roles in their professionalization. In the early phases of their careers, most students report that the resources of UChicagoGRAD were helpful in learning the ABCs of the job search including the genres of cover letters and CVs. They also praise the Chicago Center for Teaching for offering direction in assembling effective teaching portfolios and helping them write the diversity statements now increasingly required in many job postings. At the more local level, students rely on departmental efforts to host mock interviews and job talks although they sometimes report these initiatives could be more regularized in the life of the department. Economics brings in an external job coach each year who spends one-on-one time with candidates on improving self-presentation for the market.

More broadly, students believe the division could play a larger role than it does in their professional development by bridging between the universal mission of UChicagoGRAD and the local worlds of the department. Among the most pressing needs students mention here is assistance in navigating the complexities of the postdoctoral market where interdisciplinarity and thematics rather than one's own disciplinary practices are often most salient. Students and many faculty are also especially keen for the division to help open up new avenues into academic and non-academic forms of professionalization, including best practices for applying to liberal arts colleges when students (and their advisors) often don't know them, fostering courses modeled on Making History Work that introduce public facing platforms for the dissemination of their work, regularly bringing in social science alums in academic and non-academic jobs to campus for formal and informal networking, and making available internships and externships outside the academy that have a strong social science core. The Committee believes these are all productive interventions in which the division could play a catalytic role in partnership with departments, UChicagoGRAD and the Chicago Center for Teaching.

**Recommendations:**

- The Division should support departments to better institutionalize efforts to prepare SSD doctoral students for the job market, ensuring that all departments regularly offer workshops to introduce students to the particularities of the market in their discipline; facilitate the writing of disciplinary based research, teaching and diversity statements; and provide opportunities for mock interviews and job talks. It should foster the sharing of best practices across the division on job market preparation, especially on self-presentation and public speaking for job candidates.
- The Division should make funds available to departments to bring recent alums in academic and non-academic jobs back to campus to share their own experiences on the market and potentially to vet the job materials of current students.
- Given the centrality of postdoctoral fellowships for first jobs in many social science disciplines, the Division should facilitate efforts to better prepare students for success on the postdoctoral market. The cross disciplinary and thematic nature of most postdocs allows the Division to play a uniquely productive role in this regard. At a minimum it could make available on the divisional website an up-to-date annotated list of postdoctoral opportunities in the social sciences as well as collect and share successful past applications. More ambitiously the Division could convene sessions led by faculty from several departments for students to develop and workshop applications for prestige postdocs.
- The Division should work with departments to increase the number of successful placements in highly selective liberal arts colleges in partnership with UChicagoGRAD, which has built out a network of liberal arts faculty and administrators. It should also work to help students understand best practices for success in applying for tenure track positions in universities outside the United States, particularly the growing numbers of newly established international universities in the Middle East and Asia.
- The Division should deepen its partnership with the Chicago Center for Teaching, beginning with providing additional resources to make the Center's popular and oversubscribed teaching portfolio seminar accessible to more SSD students.

- The Division should work with departments to undertake new initiatives that bring non-academic forms of practice into the experiences of our doctoral students by organizing and funding new internship opportunities, encouraging the creation of cross-disciplinary workshops and courses that focus on developing public facing methods and skills, and facilitating more vigorous on campus engagement with alumni in non-academic positions.
- The Division should help departments establish more regularized practices for record keeping of job placements for their students, one that allows tracking from what are often commonly now first placements in postdocs and VAPS through to tenured positions and that is attentive to non-academic placements as well.
- The Division should work to establish a database of alumni that is easily accessible to both departments and SSD students to foster new forms of networking and mentorship.
- The Committee believes that greater engagement with SSD alumni will open up new opportunities for seeking out philanthropy to support doctoral education in the division, including initiatives that advance new forms of pedagogical training and non-academic forms of practice.

## ADVISING AND MENTORING

Many SSD students report that the intellectual relationship with their academic advisors was the most positive part of their doctoral experience. But this is not always the case, and the Committee heard from a substantial minority of students whose relationships with their advisors were less satisfying. Most students recognized that their own individual experience, whether good or bad, was not easily generalizable across their departments. Students did report that the academic training they received from their advisor and committee could be incomplete in some areas, such as in creating a teaching philosophy, publication advice and creating a research agenda beyond the dissertation. These gaps are reflected in the Committee on Doctoral Education 2018 survey of doctoral students from across the university who were less satisfied with their faculty’s advice about teaching and careers than they were around intellectual matters.

Students in every department, except for Psychology due to its laboratory orientation, pointed to a lack of clarity about the role of the dissertation committee apart from the chair. Many students believe that the role of the committee as a whole was often not communicated clearly and that too often departments did not encourage students to approach advising holistically. Students across SSD felt departments could better institutionalize more frequent points of formal contact with advisors and committees, particularly after candidacy. URM and first generation students reported the deepest frustrations with existing departmental practices around mentoring and advising. This sentiment was also reflected in the Committee on Doctoral Education survey in which only a third of students from underrepresented backgrounds expressed satisfaction with the support they were receiving from their departments.

The recommendations made by the Committee earlier in this report advocating mandated yearly check-ins with thesis committees and the institutionalization of departmental post candidacy mentoring plans are designed in part to address some of the unevenness that students experience in advising and mentoring. Similarly Committee recommendations on placement and professionalization seek to expand the ways in which students can be mentored in these vital areas. Still the conversations with students suggest that considerable gaps remain between how faculty see themselves as advisors and mentors and the expectations of students. The Committee urges departments to convene conversations around good mentoring between its faculty and students, discussions that the division could support by providing concrete examples of best mentoring practices across the division and the university. These conversations will be especially important as departments work to develop transparent post candidacy mentoring plans for their students.

Students are also keen to develop more robust forms of peer mentoring. Over time most departments have engaged in these initiatives, which often take the form of a more senior doctoral student getting together on a semi-regular basis with a first year student. Those connections often prove valuable for individual students but as broader programs they can be episodic and are sometimes driven by students without adequate support from departments. A notable exception is Anthropology where a senior doctoral student is selected to work along side the Director of Doctoral Study as a paid Doctoral Student Mentor who helps students navigate the program and informally advise around grievances.

**Recommendations:**

- As part of the process to develop post candidacy mentoring plans, Departments should convene conversations to promote good mentoring between faculty and students. The Division should support these discussions by providing departments with concrete examples of best mentoring practices across the division and the university.
- To help forge new avenues of networking for students, the Division should encourage and support departmental efforts to bring alumni back to campus for formal and informal meetings with students.
- Departments should ensure post candidacy mentoring plans are attentive to the concerns of underrepresented students.
- SSD should encourage practices of peer mentoring. Departments should work with students to help regularize forms of peer mentoring best suited to the demands of their program, and be encouraged to explore whether the more formal structure of a paid senior doctoral student mentor is a useful one in their departmental context. The Division should offer financial support when needed to advance and deepen these departmentally based initiatives.

**DOCTORAL STUDENT QUALITY OF LIFE**

The charge to this Committee was to review the ways in which the Division and its departments support the doctoral education and intellectual formation of SSD students. But in Committee conversations with students, they reported an additional set of concerns that many believe deeply affect the quality of their lives as doctoral students at the university.

Students expressed concerns about the absence of tuition support and paid health insurance coverage beyond the seventh year. Many are also dissatisfied with what they perceive as gaps in health plan coverage, including the size of deductibles and the absence of paid dental and vision insurance. Most SSD students have a negative view of the Student Life Fee, expressing concern over the lack of transparency in how the fee is justified and whether it is used for initiatives that benefit them. SSD students with families report additional concerns about health insurance coverage, existing levels of support for child care and the absence of dedicated lactation rooms in the division and the university.

The committee believes these concerns are also shared by doctoral students beyond the Division, and ultimately require attention at the university level. We want to signal here that the Committee has heard them, and encourage the Division to be fully engaged in wider conversations across the university about how they can most effectively be addressed.

An additional divisional-specific concern emerged in Committee conversations with SSD doctoral students. Many are keen to make more representative the ways in which they engage with divisional leadership through the Dean’s Advisory Council (DAC). The council was established as an advisory body for consultation between the division and its students. Two students from each department make up DAC, which meets several times a quarter with the Dean of Students and senior leadership in the division. DAC has been instrumental in the division’s efforts to deepen support for underrepresented students, including the establishment of a new Assistant Dean for Student Advancement and Diversity position in the division last year, and most recently in facilitating discussions around best practices for mentoring.

Students agree that DAC has started to bring them into more consultative processes within the division, but believe there is a need to make DAC a more representative body going forward. At present members of the committee are selected by the Dean of Students in consultation with departments and current members of the council. SSD students, including current DAC members, believe membership on the council should be by student election rather than administrative appointment. The Committee agrees. The important contributions DAC is making to the life of the division in its advisory role would be more even effective with the transparency of democratic elections for membership.

**Recommendations:**

- The Division should fully engage in cross-university conversations aimed at improving the quality of life for SSD doctoral students, including students with families.
- The SSD Dean of Students should change the practices by which the doctoral student members of the Dean's Advisory Committee are chosen, from appointment to direct election.