

**March 3, 2008**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All University of Minnesota Graduate Faculty, Twin Cities and Duluth Campuses

**FROM:** Gail Dubrow, Vice Provost and Dean of The Graduate School

**SUBJECT:** Call for Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellows, Academic Years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010

**DEADLINE: FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2008**

I am pleased to announce a newly established Graduate School fellowship program aimed at faculty distinguished in interdisciplinary research and teaching. Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellowships are intended to foster and support best practices in interdisciplinary graduate research, teaching, and writing at the University of Minnesota. As Fellows, faculty will engage with each other as members of a mutual interdisciplinary intellectual community while simultaneously working to develop and teach new interdisciplinary graduate dissertation seminars. These seminars will exemplify best practices in interdisciplinary graduate education and serve as institutional models for interdisciplinary pedagogy and dissertation writing support.

Funding for the new Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellowship is part of a larger Graduate School effort to seed new interdisciplinary educational initiatives. These new interdisciplinary initiatives support the goals set by the University's strategic positioning initiative of 2005-06 and the recommendations of several Task Forces that emphasized interdisciplinary education, research and scholarship as key factors in attaining our institutional goal of becoming a top three public research university. In addition to supporting these broad institutional objectives, the Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellowship program also advances the mission of The Graduate School's Writing Initiative, which seeks to address, among other issues, the findings from the Ph.D. Completion Project indicating that only about half of Ph.D. students across the nation complete their degrees. Our initiative is intended to shorten time to degree and increase completion rates for doctoral students.

**Fellowship Description**

Up to ten members of the Graduate Faculty will be selected this spring for one-year appointments as Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellows during FY09 and FY10 (2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years). Each faculty fellow will receive a fellowship award in the amount of \$5,000 during their fellowship appointment.<sup>1</sup>

Fellows will be expected to develop and teach an interdisciplinary graduate dissertation seminar that has the potential to prepare University of Minnesota students to make ground-breaking contributions to interdisciplinary research, scholarship and creative work. The seminars will be open to advanced graduate students from across the disciplines, and will specifically target those students whose work is explicitly interdisciplinary and whose intellectual and scholarly development at the dissertation-

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<sup>1</sup> The fellowship appointment year (FY09 or FY10) will be determined based on the semester during which the fellow proposes to teach the interdisciplinary graduate dissertation writing course.

writing stage would be enhanced through engaging with faculty and graduate students from other disciplines on topics of common interest.

Seminars should achieve the goal of bringing together students to: (1) expand their knowledge of the dissertation/research subject across disciplinary lines, and (2) help them make progress on their dissertations in an intellectually supportive, interdisciplinary environment. It is expected that the seminars will include a limited number of readings that offer outstanding models of interdisciplinary research and writing, while concentrating on the students' own productivity in relation to their dissertations.

Fellows are encouraged to propose seminars that emphasize an area of their own intellectual interest defined broadly in order to attract graduate students from a wide array of fields who are writing their dissertations on a related topic. Fellows can propose seminars organized around period, place, theoretical or methodological approach, or another unifying theme. Seminars must be open to advanced graduate students from across the disciplines; however, prior permission from the fellow leading the seminar will be required for enrollment in order to allow faculty discretion in determining whether students' dissertation topics fit the seminar's theme and whether individual students are at an appropriate stage to benefit from participation in the seminar. Each seminar will be expected to enroll approximately 8-10 graduate students.

Fellows will form a cohort over the course of their appointment, which will require participation in a limited number of gatherings coordinated by The Graduate School. They will also participate in an intensive curriculum development workshop prior to the academic year in which they are scheduled to teach in order to prepare their seminar syllabi. Curriculum development workshops will be offered in summer and fall (2008 and 2009).<sup>2</sup> Fellows will also gather periodically for the purpose of sharing approaches to and experiences with the interdisciplinary graduate seminars, identifying model syllabi, and formulating recommendations on the adoption of best practices in supporting the development of interdisciplinary dissertations. An expert in leading productive writing groups will facilitate the workshops and the ongoing cohort meetings, and will also assist fellows in identifying additional resources as needed.

### **Conditions of Award**

Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellows will be expected to:

- Participate in the initial cohort curriculum development workshop
- Participate in the occasional cohort gatherings
- Teach the interdisciplinary graduate dissertation seminar at least once during the period between fall 2008 and spring 2010.
- Make an effort to integrate the seminar into their program's regular offerings to advanced graduate students.

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<sup>2</sup> Fellows scheduled to teach the seminar during the 2008-2009 academic year will participate in the workshop during summer 2008 or fall 2008. Fellows teaching the seminar during the 2009-2010 academic year may choose to participate during either academic year.

## Eligibility

I invite letters of interest from all University of Minnesota graduate faculty interested in working closely with dissertation writers from multiple disciplines on interdisciplinary topics. Eligible faculty must be scheduled to teach a graduate seminar between fall semester 2008 and spring 2010, and must be willing to offer one of their scheduled graduate seminars during this period as an interdisciplinary dissertation writing seminar.<sup>3</sup>

## Letter of Interest

To apply for consideration as an Interdisciplinary Graduate Faculty Teaching Fellow, interested faculty should submit a letter of interest **no longer than 2 pages in length** to The Graduate School that includes the following information:

- the proposed intellectual focus of the seminar;
- the proposed approach to integrating best practices in interdisciplinary pedagogy and dissertation writing into the seminar;
- additional resources/expertise needed to successfully mount the seminar;
- the approximate number of graduate students with whom the faculty member has had contact who might have an interest in the proposed seminar topic;
- the year(s) and term(s) during which the proposed seminar will be offered during the period of fall 2008 and spring 2010;
- the department(s)/program(s) through which the seminar will be offered;
- the course the faculty member is currently scheduled to teach and which he or she proposes to convert into a dissertation writing seminar; and
- the likelihood that the department/program will support the fellow in offering the seminar as part of his or her regular course offerings in the future (dependent on student interest).

## Submission of Materials

**Letters of interest are due in The Graduate School on or before Friday, March 14, 2008.** Letters of interest should be submitted as an e-mail attachment (Word file or PDF document) to [cvoight@umn.edu](mailto:cvoight@umn.edu). Faculty selected as Fellows will be notified in early April 2008. The Graduate School will schedule an initial meeting with Fellows in before the end of spring semester to further discuss the program and their proposed graduate dissertation seminar.

Please direct questions to [cvoight@umn.edu](mailto:cvoight@umn.edu) and/or visit The Graduate School Web site for additional information (<http://www.grad.umn.edu/>).

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<sup>3</sup> The dissertation writing seminars offered between fall 2008 and spring 2010 will be offered under the existing course designator and number assigned to one of the graduate seminars the faculty member is scheduled to teach during that period.