Making their mark at home and abroad

Graduate students across disciplines are winning fellowships to pursue important research projects on campus and around the globe. This issue of The Graduate Post highlights these accomplishments and focuses on innovations in graduate education which are revitalizing higher education at MSU and across the country.

Fellowship winner Brandon Hespenheide is engaged in a cutting-edge research project which bridges the physical, computational and biological sciences. Story on page 12.

Doctoral student Dawne Curry spent a year in South Africa for advanced language training and cultural immersion as part of her pre-dissertation research. Curry is one of twenty-five MSU graduate students who collectively won a record number of national fellowship awards for international research. Story on page 10.
DEAN’S MESSAGE

In their book, *The Social Life of Information*¹, John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid describe Jerome Bruner’s (New York University) distinction drawn between “learning about” and “learning to be.”

They go on to describe undergraduate education as mostly “learning about” through association with a number of “learning communities” with a transition to the “learning to be” process associated with graduate education. In “learning to be,” graduate students are associated primarily with one learning community, or across a few closely related communities in interdisciplinary areas.

This focus, a closer relationship with faculty, and, for some master’s degree students and all doctoral students, the opportunity to conduct original research/scholarship, depend on being immersed in the discipline or interdisciplinary areas in order to understand the vocabulary and values and to become one of the accepted practitioners.

Part of “learning to be” is the opportunity to pursue research/scholarship in locations around the world, to learn new techniques, and to participate in disciplinary/professional society meetings to share results, theories, ideas, technology, and pedagogy with colleagues in one’s field.

Our usual feature on Graduate School Travel Grants to support broad experiences for graduate students is augmented by two special articles on graduate fellowships. These fellowships, as well as others that MSU graduate students are awarded, provide additional opportunities for broadening a learning community and encouraging the process of “learning to be.”

As an example of these fellowship winners, Brandon Hespenheide, a dual major doctoral student in biochemistry and physics, is featured on page 12. The article on the Social Science Research Council competition for International Predissertation Fellowships is featured on page 10, plus the list of MSU National Science Foundation awardees is found on pages 13.

If you have other suggestions of fellowship winners who we could feature in an upcoming edition of *The Graduate Post*, please contact the Editor-in-Chief, Patty Payette (payettep@msu.edu).

Another example of creating learning communities is the set of new master’s degree programs in the College of Natural Science featured on page 14. These programs, whose development was funded by the Sloan Foundation and organized by Associate Dean Estelle McGroarty, bring to the natural sciences a process of training and educating that includes an internship, common in other professions, and an introduction to business and communications skills through a certificate program.

These experiences, skills and knowledge are also among those discussed at the “Re-envisioning the Ph.D.” conference earlier this year. This conference was convened by the University of Washington in April, 2000. The year-long look at doctoral education culminating in the “Re-envisioning the Ph.D.” conference was funded by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to Jody Nyquist, Associate Dean of the Graduate School and Principal Investigator for the “Re-envisioning the Ph.D.” project. Wendy Wilkins, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, Ann Austin, Department of Educational Administration, and I provide a summary of a few of the highlights beginning on page 8.

One of the recommendations of the conference suggested that universities reconnect with graduates of their Ph.D. programs to find out more about what parts of their education and training were most valuable for their professional development, first careers and subsequent careers and what components should be added or subtracted.

They also suggested that alumni provide an overall assessment of the department as a graduate education unit. The University of California, Berkeley, instituted a large survey that covered alumni from 38 institutions between 1982-1993. MSU began a parallel process for eleven of our departments soon after (see article on page 4). Because the results show a surprising similarity across these disciplines in terms of suggestions for improvement, I believe that the “lessons” may be useful across the university.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *The Graduate Post*! Please do let us know if you have suggestions for articles in future editions.

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Dean of the Graduate School

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