

Dean's Address to the Graduate Faculty State of the Graduate School

*Lisa A. Tedesco
April 14, 2009*

Good afternoon and welcome to all of you. I thank you for taking the time out of the busy end of the semester to join me for this annual address – the third one I have the privilege of delivering.

* * *

This time, we come together at a moment that has been, and that continues to be, a difficult one. The economic climate change that began in late 2008 happened quickly, and for a time its effect on the financial capacity of Emory and other universities seemed to grow almost by the day. Like other universities, and like nearly all other economic actors, we at Emory saw our resources diminish, and needed to make difficult decisions in a short amount of time. In the end, as you know, we had to reduce our student stipend support commitment by about 13 percent.

In the Graduate School, we decided to protect the quality of our programs by retaining graduate student financial support at its generous and robust levels. We are maintaining a competitive stipend level, continuing to subsidize health insurance at a generous level, and sustaining our commitments to strong professional development programs, including the Professional Development Support funds that underwrite graduate students' conference travel, supplemental training, and research expenses.

In order to maintain this level of support, we had to reduce the number of students we admit for the fall of 2009. Making that decision was difficult, but given the circumstances it was the best of the available alternatives. At Emory we commit to each and every one of the students we admit, so reducing the amount of funding available per student was not an option. We are also keenly aware that our students need strong support for professional development, so reducing the amount of funding for these programs was not an option.

For the Graduate School, for our current students, and for our new students, this one-time reduction in admissions will allow us to sustain our commitment to intellectual excellence and

professional preparation, and will best position us to maintain our trajectory of growth with excellence into the future. We fully anticipate that admissions for fall 2010 will return to near the 2008 level.

* * *

This is a good opportunity to take a moment to look at where we are, from a bit of a distance, and against a longer time frame.

The nature of graduate student stipend commitments meant that a 13 percent reduction in student stipend support, implemented in a one-year time frame, effectively had to come from one place and one place only: the entering cohort of graduate students. That, of course, has magnified its impact on our lived experience.

Assuming, for a moment, that we face a flat budget for stipend support, over time the same size reduction will be spread over more and more cohort years, so each cohort will absorb less and less reduction. In other words, even if budgets stay flat, we will be able to increase the size of our first year cohorts, until we reach a situation where we admit 87 percent of the number we admitted for the fall of 2008.

And let's also remember that we are absorbing this up-front reduction against a backdrop of persistent growth in graduate education at Emory. We can see this persistent growth if we look at enrollment numbers comparing fall of 2003 with the fall of 2008. Overall, our 2008 enrollment was 113 percent of our 2003 enrollment.

When we break the overall number down, we find some unevenness, but no shrinking: depending on how one breaks the numbers down, some areas are flat, and some are growing. For example, the 2008 enrollments as percentages of the 2003 enrollments by division are, for humanities, 98 percent; for social sciences, 103 percent; and for natural sciences, 130 percent. Comparing the same two years, looking at programs by unit where faculty predominantly hold their appointments, gives us this view: Business, 200 percent; College of Arts and Sciences, 98 percent; Graduate Division of Religion,¹ 104 percent; Health Sciences,² 141 percent. (Appendix A shows these numbers as tables and graphs.)

Using 2003 as the comparison has special significance: the subsequent year saw the implementation of the Arts and Sciences funding plan, when almost all humanities and social science programs reduced enrollment in exchange for higher stipends and a health insurance subsidy. One would expect to see that those programs shrunk between 2003 and 2008.

¹ Candler School of Theology and College of Arts and Sciences

² Rollins School of Public Health, School of Medicine, and Woodruff School of Nursing

In fact, when we look at those programs on their own, we see that the Arts and Sciences enrollment has recovered to 2003 levels. In 2008, those programs as a group enrolled 99 percent of their 2003 cohort. (In 2003, those 14 programs enrolled 697 students; in 2008, they enrolled 692.) This recovery is not entirely even, so some programs are still smaller than in 2003 while others are in fact larger. But overall, against the background of the Arts and Sciences reduction, the flat curve to 2008 represents growth.

My message here is simple: graduate education at Emory has a history of growth. That growth does not always come with fanfare and big announcements, as far as I know, no one proclaimed that the Arts and Sciences reductions ended, yet growth is a continuous and persistent fact. It reflects an abiding and unwavering commitment to a core activity of any major research university: the training of new generations of scholars and intellectual leaders.

* * *

Of course we are not as interested in looking back as we are in looking ahead. As universities consider how to adapt to new economic realities, many are starting to talk about “getting back to 90 percent” – about planning for a future where the institution will be 90 percent of its size before the economic changes of late 2008. Emory may be one university that needs to think this way.

Does this mean doctoral education should strive to “get back to 90 percent”? I will argue “no.” Becoming somewhat leaner overall, as a university, does not mean shrinking every part equally. It does mean paying even closer attention to how we use university resources to get the most strategic value. And in that consideration, doctoral education has a distinctive place in a research university. Vibrant doctoral programs are fundamental to the university’s intellectual identity and reputation, essential to the recruitment of faculty across all units, and crucial to meeting needs for instruction and research assistance.

I would not be standing here as the Dean of the Graduate School, and you would not be sitting here as graduate faculty, if we were not committed to the centrality of doctoral education to the mission of Emory. We don’t need convincing. But we do need to make our case, by articulating clearly all that doctoral education accomplishes for and contributes to Emory, and by sustaining a level of excellence in our programs that exemplifies the best that doctoral education can be.

For the foreseeable future, we – the Graduate School, Emory University, higher education – will be operating in a context where the pressure on resources is greater than it was before, and where it is incumbent on us to protect our resources and to strengthen the foundations that will enable us to capture more resources.

* * *

So how do we maintain and exceed 90 percent?

First, we must understand clearly that graduate education is a partnership, between the central university leadership, the Graduate School, and the units that collaborate with us to offer doctoral programs. Last year, I devoted a large part of this address to the funding of doctoral education, and to the new funding structures designed to support doctoral programs and graduate students, and you have heard more about that during the course of this year.

This year's reductions in admission are a painful lesson that the change we began to phase in this year was long overdue. We cannot delay the full implementation. Our situation is not simply a matter of funding amounts, though that is important, but more fundamentally a matter of planning and priorities. Doctoral education in all its facets must be an integral component of the strategic and budgetary planning across the units that seek to sustain vital graduate programs in their areas.

Second, we must explore and exploit ways of funding graduate students that can augment the stipend support budget. The chief source of such funding is grants, and we lag behind our peer institutions. We need to fund more students through research grants, training grants, and other external sources.

It is clear that external funding supports growth. Our 2003 versus 2008 comparison shows that in programs that do not use external sources to support graduate students, our 2008 enrollment is 99 percent of our 2003 enrollment – essentially flat. In programs that do use external sources to support graduate students, our 2008 enrollment is 127 percent of our 2003 enrollment, a substantial amount of growth. (See Appendix A.)

In fact, let me take this opportunity to thank those faculty members who have worked to obtain grants and to fund graduate students using those grants. Their hard work deserves recognition for the contribution it makes to the growth of graduate education at Emory, and their commitment to graduate students in the current climate of uncertainty about future funding is especially salutary. These colleagues work predominantly in the natural and life sciences, but there are exceptions. The Graduate Division of Religion is funding a number of students on a grant, and both the Art History program and the Division of Educational Studies did the same over the course of several years.

Aside from grants of different types, we must consider how we might capture new revenue streams that can be used to support doctoral education. Modest commitments to master's programs are an option in some areas, and more uniform capture of **non-PhD** tuition is another.

These changes are neither quick nor easy. But they are essential to creating the kind of robust funding structures that will enable graduate education at Emory to thrive in a climate of increased pressure on resources.

* * *

We will also need to increase the pace and intensity of our self-reflection: are we doing what we need to do in the best way possible? How can we realign resources, and dedicate new resources, to build on our strengths and address our weaknesses?

This is a task that involves all of us. To help, I have created an advisory committee composed of faculty from across the segments of schools and departments that collaborate with the Graduate School in operating doctoral and masters' programs. That committee will provide guidance for future directions, especially those that will require meaningful and significant involvement of faculty in planning and policy directions that may ultimately require decisions made through the Graduate School Executive Council. As higher education reshapes itself and as research universities project themselves budgetarily smaller for the future, how we at Emory grow in stature, size, and contribution is crucial to our own competitive edge. This group will come together to critique ideas about our common future within and among fields. How ideas for planning in one area might influence other areas of the Graduate School will be important considerations. We will principally examine the Graduate School budget, outcomes data for planning purposes, and innovative approaches to ensure our distinction going forward. (The members of the committee are listed in Appendix B.)

Let me be specific about two things that will be on the table.

In the process of deciding how to implement the reductions in the incoming class, we met with DGSs and department chairs from nearly all our programs. The conversations focused on a range of program data, but circumstances made the collection and examination of the data not as thorough as necessary for future, long term, planning. From this spring's reduction planning exercise, we all learned we need an established set of indicators that we can all refer.

Consequently, one important item on our agenda is to develop a working set of indicators on the capacity, quality, and health of our graduate programs.

Capacity indicators will provide evidence for judgments about how many graduate students a program can and should train. These indicators may include examinations of:

- faculty time and commitment to enable sustained leadership for graduate students and program management;
- research-active faculty members, with an appropriate distribution of expertise, to serve as mentors and advisors to advanced graduate students; and
- faculty members, with an appropriate distribution of expertise, to cover both required courses and seminars.

Quality indicators will provide evidence for judgments about the level of excellence in graduate training a program sustains. These indicators may include examinations of:

- faculty scholarly productivity and professional prominence;
- program alignment with broader University resources and opportunities; and
- level of success in recruitment, including diversity recruitment, and placement.

Health indicators will provide evidence for judgments about how well programs function as educational units. These indicators may include examinations of:

- student progress, considered in terms of timely achievement of appropriate markers of success;
- internal review and assessment processes; and
- professional development resources for students.

Developing this set of indicators will undoubtedly come up against knotty problems and will face limitations. Programs in different fields will surely need somewhat different sets of indicators, and no set of indicators will tell the whole story about any program. Nevertheless, this is an essential task – central to sustaining the transparency and predictability we all need to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

Another important issue will be to consider the organization of graduate education.

In large part, Graduate School programs map one-to-one onto departments in other units, from Comparative Literature to Epidemiology. But this is not the only model, and we know that programs can work in other ways as well. The GDBBS and the GDR are two outstanding examples. We also know that many of our faculty and students find their intellectual homes in and through cross-departmental programs, ranging from Jewish Studies and the Center for Mind, Brain and Culture to the Computational Life Sciences initiative and the Center for Health, Culture and Society, a program both we and the Rollins School of Public Health remain committed to.

Existing structures raise an important question. How do we recognize, in administrative structures, the fact that the intellectual life of graduate education is often not compartmentalized into the departments/programs we now have?

This year, we worked with faculty in the Jewish Studies program to pilot a new kind of fellowship that recognizes this fact. The Jewish Studies program proposed to us to suspend their master's degree program, and instead use their funding to support top-up fellowships in Jewish Studies, both for incoming students and for students already here. This is a new model for Emory, one that ties regular graduate student funding, as opposed to a completion fellowship, to a substantive area of inquiry that is not itself a degree granting program.

We need to broaden the thinking that led to this pilot project. We need to consider, quite broadly, whether the one department/one program model is the best use of graduate education resources,

both from an efficiency and stewardship point of view, and from an intellectual vitality point of view. How do we best organize the processes of admissions, funding, and education in a way that comports with the intellectual resources, opportunities, and vitality that make Emory what it is?

The 2008-09 advisory committee will be a first step in considering these large questions. We will undoubtedly ask many who are not members of the committee to contribute their expertise and experience. These are, again, thorny questions, but also, again, questions we cannot postpone asking.

With commitments from our partners, with a willingness to consider creatively how we do business, and with guidance and involvement from faculty, we will ensure that Emory continues its trajectory of growth in graduate education.

* * *

This leads me to one further issue, one component of the motivation for asking questions about the organization of graduate education: intellectual community. How do we promote, sustain, enhance and nurture the intellectual communities we do have as well as the ones we aspire to have. Intellectual community should always be a primary concern of any graduate school or program, and it is raised with special urgency when a cohort is smaller and critical mass becomes an issue.

I can't resist reading a short passage from a column published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on – of all days – April 1, purporting to be a memo written in 2020, looking back at the changes brought about by “the great crash of 2009.”

Universities stopped paying for conference travel. After a wave of armed protests, professors began talking with their colleagues at nearby universities. Study groups formed. Now, instead of performing their work at a national meeting for an audience of 10, professors find themselves in heated discussions with people from the college across town — people they never would have met under the old system. Regional schools of thought have formed. New ideas are being generated. The only Thai restaurant in Grinnell, Iowa, now thrives, packed with academics who can no longer afford to fly halfway around the globe to eat with similar colleagues in similar Thai restaurants in Boston and London. (Angela Sorby, “Looking Backward: How the humanities survived the great crash of 2009”, http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2009/04/2009040101c.htm?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en)

Pretty funny stuff! I highly recommend the rest of the column – you'll enjoy it.

I don't mean this as a flippant response to concerns about intellectual community, and the passage contains a note of seriousness we need to consider. I for one am not thinking that it would be a good thing if Emory stopped paying for conference travel, and I am well aware that today's academic

communities are international in nature. That is a good thing, and we must protect our ability to maintain such connections.

But I believe we have, right here at Emory, in Atlanta, and in the region, a high degree of resources for intellectual community.

We have, sometimes, more students than we think in our programs. Only, once they reach the candidacy stage they sometimes drift away into library carrels and remote studies. Indeed, even in the sciences, there are intellectual community challenges as students move from coursework to laboratory focused activity. How do we engage our students in intellectual communities that span the spectrum of their careers at Emory?

I am confident that some among us, some programs, some centers and institutes, do this and do this well. But I also hear this voiced as a concern, especially this year. So how can we make our intellectual communities a more central focus of concern, and share the practices that work well to sustain them?

We have, in programs that share some substantive focus and methodological concerns, a good number more students at similar stages of their training than we might realize. Crossing the boundaries created by fields and disciplines to connect in fruitful ways requires creativity, patience, and a willingness to take a chance on something new. How do we engage each other – as faculty and as graduate students – in intellectual communities that connect small islands of shared concern into greater communities that embrace both similarities and contrasts?

Once again, I am sure that some of us do this, successfully. Let's work together to share those successes and build more vibrant, cross-disciplinary communities. Working within a context of diminished resources, and striving nevertheless to establish a case not only for maintaining all that we have but even for growth requires, **first** of all, making the best creative use of what we have.

* * *

Here I come to one more abiding lesson from this winter and spring.

If it was not clear before, it is abundantly clear now, that we have a faculty that is passionately committed to graduate education. It is clear that graduate education is at the core of the professional identity of a large cadre of faculty members from around the university. Even in your other capacities, as undergraduate teachers, researchers, health care providers, artists, and so on, your role as teachers and mentors of graduate students is a defining presence.

I feel your passionate commitment every day. In fact, there are days I wish I didn't feel it quite so much.

Frankly, at times this spring I felt that commitment mainly as an agonistic presence. I think I understand why – I am the Dean, you are the faculty. I have, this year, the unpleasant task of figuring out how to meet a significant budget shortfall in a context of at best marginal flexibility. You have an impulse and an obligation to fight for the programs and commitments and projects that live in your hearts. In the end, I don't think you enjoy the agony any more than I do.

But it is time to turn a corner. With all that passion and commitment, and with all the talent and expertise and sheer intellectual power that goes along with it, surely we can think together, creatively, about the valuable work of graduate education at Emory.

Emory is, even in the context of new economic realities, a place of extraordinary resources and opportunities. Just in the past year, we have seen distinctive new developments.

- The establishment of Molecules to Mankind – an exciting new program, funded in part by Burroughs-Wellcome, that will provide ways for PhD students to combine laboratory science and population science in their doctoral research. This program places Emory at the forefront of the training of a new generation of investigators who can tackle some of our greatest health challenges, scientific and social, with a unique combination of breadth and depth.
- The launch of Slave Voyages – a database and web interface that allows scholars and the public alike to grapple with the nature and legacy of one of the great stains on our nation's past. This project is an outstanding example of scholarship that is at once rigorous and public, that speaks both to the exacting standards of academic research and to issues that command the attention of our society at large.
- The Project on Scholarly Integrity – a new Graduate School initiative, funded by a recently awarded grant from the Council of Graduate Schools. This project will help transform our many distinct efforts to teach our graduate students about ethics in research and scholarship into a shared conversation designed to prepare future intellectual leaders with the tools to engage the full spectrum of ethical issues raised by their intellectual work.

These projects, and many others, like the events surrounding the publication of the first volume of Beckett's letters, the recognition of the Winship Cancer Institute with a National Cancer Institute designation earlier this week, build on Emory's traditions of innovative and publically engaged scholarship, traditions that continue to make Emory a vibrant place to live our passion for intellectual inquiry and for teaching and mentoring new generations of scholars.

Thank you for all your contributions to graduate education at Emory. I look forward to the future we are creating together.

Appendix A: Tables and Graphs

Table 1: Overall Enrollment, Fall 2003 and Fall 2008

Year	Enrollment (for degree)
2003	1586
2008	1793

Overall Enrollment

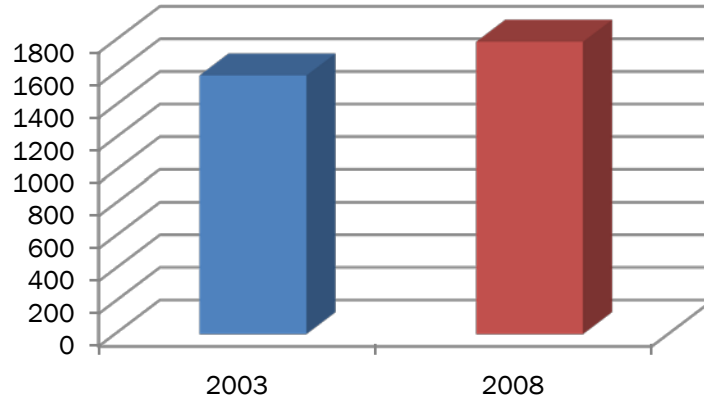


Table 2: Enrollment by Division, Fall 2003 and Fall 2008

Division	2003	2008
Humanities	542	533
Natural Sciences	687	891
Social Sciences	357	369
Total	1586	1793

Enrollment by Division

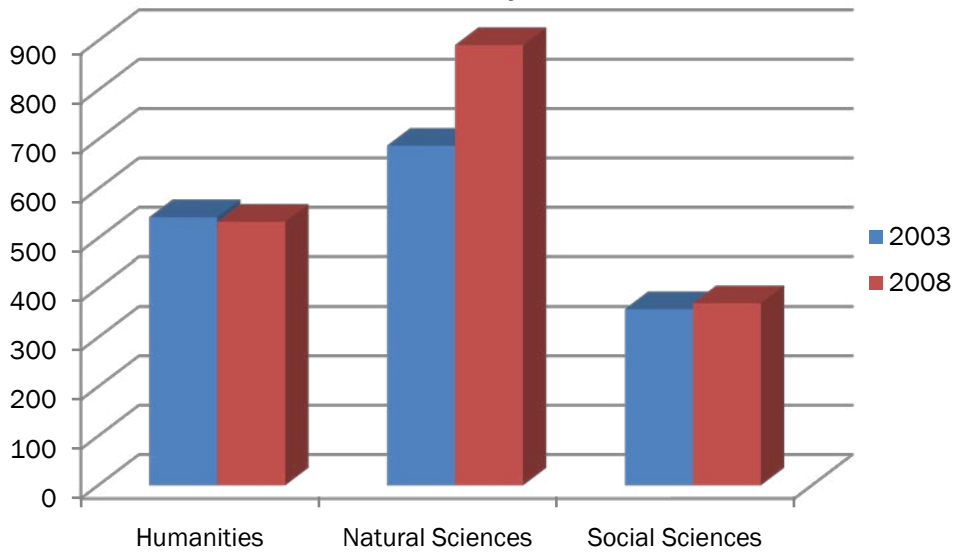


Table 3: Enrollment by Unit of Faculty Appointment, Fall 2003 and Fall 2008

Unit	2003	2008
Business	21	42
College of Arts and Sciences	940	921
Graduate Division of Religion	141	147
Health Sciences	484	683
Total	1586	1793

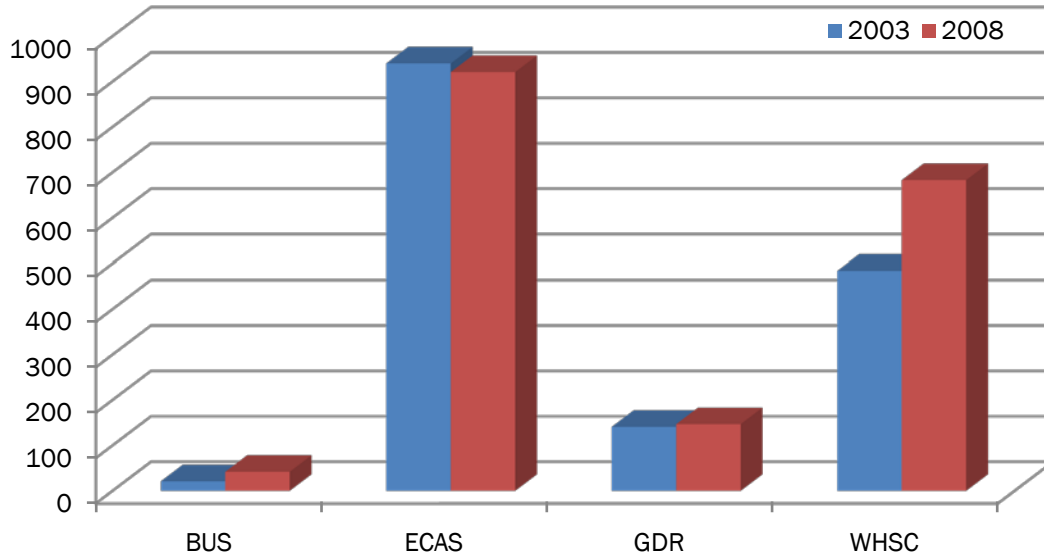
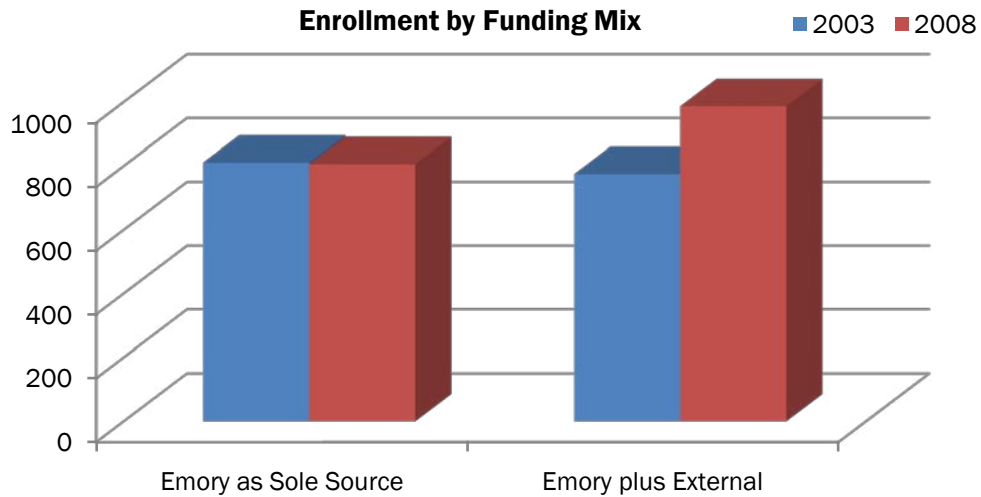


Table 4: Enrollment by Funding Mix, Fall 2003 and Fall 2008

Funding Mix	2003	2008
Emory as Sole Source	811	806
Emory plus External	775	987
Grand Total	1586	1793



Appendix B: Graduate School Advisory Committee

Susan Bauer-Wu, Nursing

Douglas Bowman, Business

Patricia Brennan, Psychology

Martine Watson Brownley, Graduate School Executive Council; English; Goodrich C. White Professor and Winship Distinguished Professor; Director, Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry

Joanna Davidson, G'07, SAAR Postdoctoral Fellow, ICIS

Huw Davies, Chemistry

Ralph DiClemente, Graduate School Executive Council; Behavioral Sciences and Health Education; Candler Professor

Tyrone Forman, Sociology

Carol Hogue, Epidemiology; Jules and Deen Terry Professor of Child and Maternal Health; Director of the Women's and Children's Center

Jeffrey Lesser, History; Chair, Jewish Studies

Jeffrey Mercante, G'09, Biomedical Sciences Postdoctoral Fellow

Victoria Nourse, Law, L.Q.C. Lamar Professor

Gail O'Day, Religion; A.H. Shatford Professor; Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs, Candler School of Theology

Charles Parkos, Biological and Biomedical Sciences; Vice-Chair, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine; Director, MSTP - MD/PhD Program

Dan Reiter, Political Science, Chair

Barry Shur, Biological and Biomedical Sciences; Candler Professor; Chair, Cell Biology

Steven Tipton, Religion; Candler Professor

Deborah White, Director of Graduate Studies, Comparative Literature

Stuart Zola, Biological and Biomedical Sciences; Director, Yerkes National Primate Research Center; Senior Career Research Scientist, Atlanta VAMC