Testimony of

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On behalf of:

American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Council of Graduate Schools
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Earl Lewis and I am the Dean of the Rackham Graduate School and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs for Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan, where I am also the Elsa Barkley Brown and Robin D. G. Kelley Collegiate Professor of History and African-American and African Studies. I am pleased to testify before this Subcommittee on behalf of the Association of American Universities, the Council of Graduate Schools, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the American Council on Education, the National Association of College and University Business Officers, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

My testimony will focus on the history and importance of the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) and the Jacob K. Javits Fellowships programs of Title VII of the Higher Education Act (HEA). My testimony will also highlight three recommendations to enhance these programs so they can better meet national needs.

The Importance of Federal Support for Graduate Education

Graduate programs in the United States are respected and emulated worldwide. Our graduate institutions attract the best and brightest students domestically and overseas. Our nation's unique system of combining graduate education with research strengthens the American education system and serves as the backbone for our nation's leadership in science and technology. Graduate education is the primary way our nation educates and trains scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, business and government leaders, and college and university faculty.

Graduate education prepares the scientists and engineers needed by industry, government, and universities to conduct the nation’s research and development. Graduate programs also educate the scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts who preserve and enlarge our understanding of the history and scope of human thought and the human condition, and transmit that knowledge to succeeding generations. Moreover, graduate programs at our nation's universities generate new knowledge and act as incubators of innovative ideas that drive new technologies and create new ways to address societal, health, security, and economic needs and challenges.

GAANN and Javits are two important and complementary elements of the federal government's investment in graduate education. The federal government provides support for graduate education through: competitively funded fellowships, like Javits Fellowships; traineeships, like GAANN; research and teaching assistantships; work study; tax breaks; and student loans. In many disciplines, most federal support for graduate students is provided through research assistantships. However, the federal government provides significant levels of support in the form of competitively awarded fellowships and traineeships as well. These awards are given to exceptional U.S. students and permanent residents who hold great promise in their chosen field of study, and these awards help to meet national needs for high quality talent.

Federal support for graduate education comes from multiple mission-driven agencies and Cabinet-level departments, including the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes
of Health, NASA, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of State, the Environmental Protection Agency, and of course, the Department of Education.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1999-2000, 60 percent of all graduate and professional students and 82 percent of those enrolled full time, full year received some type of financial aid, including grants, fellowships, loans, assistantships or work study.

The federal investment in graduate education fills the same crucial funding gap that federal support provides for basic research. Although graduate students benefit from state investments, private foundation support, industry funding, and institutional resources, the federal government is the primary source of funds for students to finance their education. Talented students with a master’s or Ph.D. degree are a highly mobile national resource. For that reason, states are reluctant to invest in graduate education. When the federal government makes the investment, the nation reaps the dividends regardless of where the recipient of the assistance ends up employed.

Title VII graduate education programs play an integral role in the support of American students pursuing graduate degrees. Unlike graduate education programs authorized in other federal agencies, the Title VII graduate education programs administered by the Department of Education provide support for the entire range of academic disciplines, including the sciences, engineering, arts, social sciences, and humanities.

The GAANN and Javits Fellowship programs of Title VII are designed to increase the number of talented college graduates who pursue careers in teaching and research. The GAANN program supports academically-gifted students in the areas of national need such as biology, engineering, physics, and mathematics. The Javits program provides fellowships to outstanding students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Both of these programs attract exceptionally promising students into graduate study and in so doing, they increase the number of U.S. citizens earning Ph.D.s in important areas that are currently experiencing low U.S. enrollments. Together, GAANN and Javits complement each other and play an important role in supporting key academic disciplines vital to the nation’s scientific, technological, economic, security, cultural, and societal needs.

**Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN)**

GAANN, first authorized in 1992, was designed to reverse the decline in the number of U.S. students enrolling in graduate programs in fields critical to the nation. It closely resembles the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which was highly successful in drawing new talent into our nation’s doctoral programs following the launching of Sputnik. Federal support of GAANN is a key mechanism for attracting talented U.S. students to doctoral programs in areas of great importance to our nation.

GAANN provides competitive grants to academic departments and programs at colleges and universities that in turn award fellowships to excellent students who pursue the highest degree available in a field designated by the Secretary of Education as an area of national need. The current areas of national need are: Biology, Chemistry, Computer and Information Science, Engineering, Geological Science, Mathematics, and Physics. The Secretary also accepts
multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary applications, which propose projects incorporating two or more areas of national need. Institutions that receive GAANN awards are required to provide a matching contribution equal to at least 25 percent of the amount of the grant received.

For FY 2003, 261 proposals were received by the Department of Education and 94 new proposals were selected. These new awards will support just over 500 new graduate students. In total, GAANN will provide support to 180 academic departments (new and continuing awards) that will support approximately 940 graduate students in FY 2003. The average award will be approximately $203,000 and the maximum stipend level award to be given to students is $21,500, (the actual amount is based on the recipient’s financial need), plus an institutional payment to cover tuition and fees in the amount of $11,296 for each student.

At the University of Michigan, five academic departments currently receive GAANN awards, including Applied Physics, Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Geological Sciences. These awards will support about 25 students in the academic year that is now underway. In addition to these, since 1998 the University of Michigan has received four other GAANN awards in Biomedical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Computer Science, and Industrial Operations.

GAANN traineeships enable some of the nation’s brightest doctoral students to become the scientists, teachers, and scholars of tomorrow. These students become responsible for the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge that is crucial to our nation’s vitality.

Let me offer one example of how GAANN is making a difference in graduate education at the University of Michigan. The award to the Chemistry department is being used to broaden doctoral education by deeply integrating the Ph.D. work of the GAANN recipients with an innovative scholarly component on undergraduate teaching and learning. This is a cutting-edge model of integrative graduate training in both research and learning that responds to a national need for strengthening science education at the undergraduate level while ensuring the continued excellence of research-based graduate education.

Jacob K. Javits Fellowships

Originally named the National Graduate Fellows Program, the Jacob K. Javits Fellowships program was created by Congress as a part of the 1980 reauthorization of the HEA. Senator Javits’ original purpose for the program was to create a counterpart to the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program. Specifically, he proposed that the program should encourage highly talented students to undertake doctoral study in the arts, humanities, and social sciences by providing a level of support comparable to federally-funded graduate fellowships in science and engineering fields. Javits is the only federal program that supports multi-year doctoral study in the arts and humanities.

Competition for the Javits Fellowships is selective and is based solely upon academic merit, and award levels are currently determined by each student’s financial need. Javits Fellowships are portable. This provides the students the ability to select programs that, in their view, provide the best training in a given field. This portability also facilitates the pursuit of interdisciplinary studies by Javits fellows. Importantly, Javits supports individuals
who in many cases are pursuing academic careers in fields where financial rewards upon Ph.D. completion are relatively small.

Javits is one of the most competitive fellowship programs in the nation, with approximately 35 applicants for each award. Although the selection criteria are different, there are fewer applicants per award for the prestigious Rhodes scholarships than there are for Javits Fellowships. With this intense competition, the program is supporting the brightest students who have the highest potential to become the eminent scholars and notable teachers and leaders of the future.

This year, 1,676 applications were received by the Department of Education and 45 new fellows were selected. In total, Javits will support 309 new (45) and continuing (264) fellows in FY 2003, and an estimated 307 new (102) and continuing (205) fellows in FY 2004. This is far below the peak number of fellows the program supported in academic year 2001 at 420 fellows. The maximum stipend level award to be given to students for FY 2003 is $21,500, (the actual amount is based on the recipient’s financial need), plus an institutional payment to cover tuition and fees in the amount of $11,296.

The University of Michigan is proud to have nine Javits fellows enrolled this year in the disciplines of Anthropology, History, Music, Political Science, Psychology, and Women’s Studies. I believe that the excellence of the Javits fellows at my university is indicative of all Javits fellows and the promise they hold for contributing to our society.

Graduate education in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts produces the teachers and scholars who provide students with the tools for exploring human thought and creative expression, connect them with their common intellectual inheritance, and enrich their capacity for critical thinking by applying the lessons of the past to current problems and future challenges. In the classroom and beyond, teaching and scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts inform the public discourse essential to the functioning of our democracy.

In a September 2002 speech, Catharine Stimpson the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Science at New York University noted the importance of the humanities, arts, and social sciences to the current challenges facing our nation. She said:

   Let me offer one stark, contemporary example: a man planning a major act of bioterrorism. We won’t get him - in all meanings of that word - if all that we do is to declare war and have law enforcement target him. We also need the artist to imagine him; the humanist to hear his own words and translate his languages, and understand his history and religion; the social scientist to map his politics, ethnography, and psychology; and the scientist to decipher what his weapon is and how to disarm it. Only with this collaboration will we begin to be able to understand him, and only if we understand him, can we really stop him and the next generation of terrorists he might be recruiting.

More recently, the Javits Board noted the value of the Javits program in its May 2003 report. The report states:
[T]he Javits program supports outstanding scholars whose research focuses on human values, relations, governance, culture, civilization, and belief. As our world grows increasingly interconnected and the consequences of human decisions more profound, we are reminded of the importance of continuing to develop cohorts of future educators and leaders who are well versed in these areas of inquiry and prepared to make informed and balanced judgments for the human good.

Recommendations for GAANN and Javits for HEA Reauthorization

Both the GAANN and Javits programs work well but have been chronically underfunded in the federal government’s annual appropriations process. The programs should be reauthorized to continue the complementary arrangement of traineeships in areas of national need, such as science and engineering, and through fellowships to students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The programs could benefit from some important enhancements that will improve their administration and the ability of the programs to achieve their goals.

To this end, I make the following recommendations:

I. Strengthen the authorized appropriations levels for GAANN and Javits;
II. Eliminate Title IV need analysis, and replace with institution-based approach; and
III. Clarify link between the stipend levels of GAANN and Javits and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

I. Strengthen the Authorized Appropriations Levels for GAANN and Javits

Adequate numbers of student awards are important to sustain the vitality and effectiveness of GAANN and Javits. Appropriations for these programs have not kept pace with inflation or their authorized funding levels for more than a decade. For example, Javits has a long history of inconsistent funding. The annual number of new Javits fellowships awarded has fluctuated significantly since the inception of the program. The programmatic high was in 1986 when 211 new fellowships were awarded. In 1995, only 25 new fellowships were awarded.

Congress should use reauthorization of the HEA as an opportunity to strengthen the nation’s commitment to graduate education by authorizing increased funding for GAANN and Javits. Specifically, we recommend that sufficient funding be authorized to support at least an annual total of 1,200 GAANN traineeships, including 400 new awards, and an annual total of at least 400 Javits fellowships, including 100 new awards. These levels of investment would reinvigorate GAANN and Javits at a time when our nation must have the intellectual capability to respond to increased national security threats and to maintain our leadership position in the world economy.

II. Eliminate Title IV Need Analysis, and Replace with Institution-Based Approach

1 The Jacob K. Javits Board recommended in its May 2003 report that program should award 180 new fellowships each year, which is approximately equal to 20 percent of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowships awarded annually. The higher education community in January 2003 recommended a minimum of at least 100 new awards annually. The higher education community endorses the Javits Board recommendation of a target of 180 new awards annually.
As previously noted, current law requires that applicants for GAANN and Javits programs undergo HEA Title IV federal need analysis to determine the amount of their stipend awards to students. All graduate and professional students are by definition independent students and therefore, highly likely to have financial need. Moreover, if a student is married or worked the year prior to enrollment, the government will likely determine that there is no need. In such cases, the financial aid officer is permitted to exercise professional judgment and can decide to override the government's calculation and determine that the student is eligible for some or all the GAANN or Javits stipend award.

The Department of Education is the only federal agency that subjects graduate stipend levels to financial need analysis and in this way it is inconsistent with federal graduate education policy. In fact, Department of Education is inconsistent within itself: other programs in the Department that provide support to graduate students, such as the Fulbright-Hays and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships, do not require need analysis in determining student award levels.

Federal need analysis is primarily an undergraduate student aid policy and it should not be applied to graduate stipend awards. The higher education community is fully supportive of keeping undergraduate student aid need-based. For several decades, federal graduate education policy’s central principle has been merit-based support - attracting and investing in the very best students. This should continue to be the case and should apply to all federal graduate education programs.

With respect to the practical application of the Title IV need analysis to GAANN and Javits, it often causes lengthy delays in processing applications. Sometimes it takes so long to determine need using the federal process that a student may not know how much the stipend will be when she or he has to decide where to use the Javits award - thus hampering the student's ability to exercise the portability of the funding. In the case of GAANN, sometimes the institutional sponsor receiving the award can not tell a student how much his/her award will be in the appropriate time frame for when such decisions need to be made.

In the end, instead of yielding helpful distinctions among the applicant pool, the required use of Title IV need analysis creates difficulties for students, institutions, and the Department. Congress should reconsider a provision originally included in the higher education community’s FED UP recommendations that eliminated this requirement and restored the provision in law prior to the 1998 reauthorization of the HEA. This provision required institutions (not the federal government) to determine an individual student’s financial need. This recommendation would remove the largest part of the burden imposed by the government, and most institutions that have significant graduate education programs already have systems in place to determine student need.

Returning to an institutionally-based need analysis methodology would reduce paperwork and eliminate severe delays in application processing while still ensuring that financial support is reserved for students with demonstrated need.

III. Clarify the Link Between the Stipend Levels of GAANN and Javits and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program.
Congress should clarify the HEA statutory link between the stipend levels for GAANN and Javits student awards to the stipend level for the National Science Foundation Graduate
Research Fellowship (GRF) program. Currently the HEA states that the stipend levels for Javits and GAANN shall be "set at a level of support equal to that provided by the National Science Foundation graduate fellowships." GAANN and Javits stipend levels have historically been linked to the GRF stipend level. The HEA should be amended to reflect this historical link in order to avoid potential confusion of Congressional intent due to the other graduate fellowship programs NSF also supports.

**Conclusion**

The Title VII Javits and GAANN programs have served our nation well and will continue to do so in the future with Congressional support.

The nation’s bright graduate students who benefit most directly from GAANN and Javits increase our nation’s scientific and technological capacities and improve our society’s collective ability to make informed and balanced judgments. They become responsible for the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge and the preservation and interpretation of our scientific, intellectual, and cultural heritage. Investing in these bright and talented individuals is beneficial for all Americans.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify on these important issues.