

Program Review: The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) Program

I. Program Description—The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program

Since its inception in 1988, as the Mellon *Minority* Undergraduate Fellowship Program, MMUF has endeavored to provide support to academically promising students from populations that historically have been underrepresented both in graduate education and on the faculties of American higher education. MMUF has sought to realize the twin goals of expanding the number of students from underrepresented populations who successfully obtain PhDs in the arts and sciences, and increasing the representation of these PhDs on the faculties of American higher education. Changing its name in 2003 to the Mellon *Mays* Undergraduate Fellowship Program, and rededicating its mission to serving underrepresented students *and* students who have a demonstrated commitment to eradicating racial disparities, MMUF currently provides structured programming, faculty-led mentoring, targeted financial assistance (e.g., stipends for research), community-building and information-sharing events (e.g., fora, colloquia, etc.), and early career faculty development services to program participants at each of the participating 33 higher education institutions in the US, the 39 member institutions of the United Negro College Fund, and the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Now in its nineteenth year of operation, MMUF has served to date more than 2800 student participants (the program's Fellows) and has supported the attainment of over 235 PhDs.

While the specific features of the MMUF program are tailored to the needs of students at each participating institution, MMUF program services are overarchingly dedicated to supporting and developing talented students, many of whom, in the program's absence, might not pursue either graduate study in the arts and sciences or faculty careers in academia. Typically, at each MMUF hosting institution, five undergraduates are selected annually. MMUF nominees, who typically are nominated in their sophomore year by members of their institutions' faculty, complete an application process that includes a written statement of purpose, submission of transcripts, and one or more interviews with a campus-based MMUF selection committee. (Selected MMUF undergraduate students enter the program in their junior and senior years of undergraduate study). Each fellow is paired with a faculty mentor who meets regularly with him or her to provide guidance and academic role modeling, oversee his or her undergraduate research, and provide encouragement and academic support. During the course of each academic year, MMUF programs provide workshops and meetings for MMUF Fellows on topics relevant to Fellows' scholarly development, including writing and research skills, Graduate Record Exam strategies, and presentation and public speaking skills. During their undergraduate study, MMUF Fellows are eligible, each year, to receive a stipend (approximately \$1000 per semester) for relief from term-time employment, stipends for summer research projects (approximately \$3000), and small stipends (approximately \$400) for academic-related travel.

Summary of MMUF Program Components

Although institutions' MMUF programs vary from campus to campus, typically MMUF programs include:

- Mentoring of undergraduate Fellows conducted by one or more faculty member(s)
- A research project conducted by each MMUF Fellow
- Stipends for term-time (i.e., academic year) research
- Stipends for summer research
- Stipends for academic-related summer travel
- Regular meetings of MMUF Fellows
- Workshops and colloquia on relevant topics and issues

MMUF undergraduates who matriculate to PhD programs in designated fields in the arts and sciences continue to receive support during their graduate school careers. MMUF PhD students become eligible for repayment of a portion of their undergraduate student loans, up to a maximum of \$10,000, and as they continue to pursue their PhDs, become eligible for a number of services provided by MMUF's partner institutions, the Social Science Research Council and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. These include the SSRC's annual summer conferences for graduate students, which are aimed at college seniors and graduate students in their first through third years of post-baccalaureate study, and pre-doctoral grants, which offer selected students research development funds with which to refine their dissertation research.¹

MMUF graduate students who have completed their coursework and successfully passed their qualifying exams are eligible for Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation-sponsored competitive grants, including the Travel and Research Grant, which provides advanced graduate students with financial support (up to \$5,000) to complete dissertation research, and the Dissertation Grant program, which provides advanced graduate students who are near completion of their dissertations with up to \$20,000 for one year of financial support during the final stages of dissertation writing.

Because the program has produced more than 235 PhDs, the majority of whom have assumed faculty positions, MMUF continues to develop and deploy post-doctoral support initiatives. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, in partnership with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, operates a Faculty Career Enhancement program, which provides to competitively selected MMUF PhDs in their third year of

¹ The Social Science Research Council and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation provide a range of ancillary programs that support the goals of MMUF. These include the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's grant programs: MMUF Dissertation Grants, Travel and Research Grants, and the Career Enhancement Fellowship for Junior Faculty Program. The Social Science Research Council's programming includes MMUF Summer Conferences and the Graduate Student Initiatives.

college/university teaching, grants that support their preparation for tenure. These grants include support for a year-long sabbatical and the counsel of senior faculty mentors.

II. MMUF Program Review: Goals, Design, and Methodology

The MMUF program review gathered and analyzed information from a range of program stakeholders, including undergraduate program participants, MMUF graduate students, MMUF PhDs, program coordinators, participating faculty, and institutional leaders. Through a variety of data collection strategies, including in-person and telephone interviews, web-based surveys, and observations of MMUF events, the MMUF program review investigated the following key questions:

1. How have participants been affected by the MMUF program?
2. How have participating institutions been affected by the program?
3. Which components of the program have been most valuable to program participants?
4. What program-related challenges have program stakeholders encountered?
5. What suggestions would program stakeholders make for refining the program?

In order to address these questions, a multi-method approach was employed, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The program review, which was conducted between January 2007 and December 2007, included:

Qualitative Research: Qualitative research was conducted with a sample of geographically dispersed and institutionally differentiated MMUF program sites. Site visits were conducted to six MMUF-hosting institutions and two MMUF national events, where program reviewers conducted in-depth, individual and focus group interviews with MMUF program coordinators, MMUF undergraduate and graduate student participants, MMUF faculty mentors, MMUF PhDs, and senior institutional leaders (e.g., provosts, deans, etc.) Additionally, in-depth phone interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of MMUF personnel, including MMUF coordinators and key informants. Qualitative program review activities were designed to provide rich qualitative data that would indicate the effects of the program on participants and institutions. In all interviews and site visits, care was taken to select MMUF sites that represent the major program features of MMUF by virtue of institution type, regional location, and length of MMUF staff experience. The sample of MMUF-hosting institutions included a private college and two private universities, one public college, and two private liberal arts colleges. Site visits included visits to colleges and universities in the eastern, midwestern, and western regions of the US.

Quantitative Research: In addition to qualitative research, the MMUF program review deployed a series of web-based surveys of program stakeholders, including 1) current MMUF undergraduate Fellows; 2) MMUF graduate students; 3) MMUF PhDs; and 4) MMUF Program Coordinators. Surveys enabled program reviewers to gather descriptive data from a large number of MMUF participants and stakeholders, which provided

critical findings about the program’s outcomes, effectiveness, and challenges.² Five hundred and two surveys were completed by MMUF participants and stakeholders.³ Survey data were analyzed for central and most frequently reported themes. Findings from the analysis of survey and interview data are reported in Section III, “Program Review Findings.” Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages summarize program review activities.

² To maximize the candor of responses, all survey respondents and interviewees were assured of confidentiality. Respondents were informed that information that they provided, when aggregated with other informants’ responses, would inform program review findings. However, survey respondents and interviewees were also assured that their responses would be “de-identified;” that is, individuals’ identities would not be associated with responses, nor would their identities be associated with respondent-provided data.

³ Survey respondents were contacted by e-mail prior to the surveys’ implementation to announce forthcoming surveys and to invite respondents’ participation. Respondents were shortly thereafter e-mailed a web link to their respective surveys. Two follow-up reminders were sent to remind respondents to participate and to maximize the surveys’ response rates. The surveys were distributed to a complete roster of undergraduate and postgraduate MMUF participants supplied to program reviewers by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It should be noted, however, that the sample of survey respondents is a *non-probability*, or non-random, sample and therefore may not be fully representative of the views of the total population of MMUF participants. This said, data sources were triangulated by respondent type, and the resulting congruence of findings among types of respondents suggests that findings are nonetheless substantially representative of the population of MMUF participants and stakeholders.

Table 1. Summary of MMUF Program Review Activities

Activity	Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Surveys of MMUF program participants and stakeholders (i.e., current MMUF undergraduate Fellows, MMUF graduate students, MMUF PhDs, and MMUF Program Coordinators) 	502 individuals surveyed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Site visits to MMUF Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ California Institute of Technology ▫ City College of New York ▫ Oberlin College ▫ Swarthmore College ▫ University of Pennsylvania ▫ University of Southern California 	6 universities/colleges visited
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Individual, in-person and telephone interviews 	41 individuals interviewed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus group interviews 	43 individuals interviewed

Table 2. Summary of MMUF Program Review Surveys
(N = 502)⁴

Persons Surveyed	Total Population	Frequency of Survey Respondents	Percentage
Current MMUF Undergraduate Fellows	428	196	45%
MMUF Coordinators	81	50	62%
MMUF Graduate Students	461	177	38%
MMUF PhDs	207	79	38%

■ About MMUF Survey Respondents

▫ *MMUF Undergraduate Fellows*

One hundred ninety-six MMUF undergraduate Fellows completed the MMUF Program Review survey. Slightly more than one-half of these respondents (56%) were college seniors and 37% were juniors. The plurality of survey respondents, 44%, were enrolled at private universities. Thirty percent were enrolled in private colleges. Of the remainder, 7% were enrolled in public colleges, 7% were enrolled in public universities, and 11% were enrolled in historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Sixty-two percent of survey respondents reported that one or more of their parents or guardians completed an undergraduate degree. Sixty-seven percent said that they were the first person in their immediate family to plan on obtaining a PhD. Data on the racial backgrounds of undergraduate survey respondents is summarized in Table 3. While sizable subgroups of both black and Hispanic respondents report that they were the first in their families to complete an undergraduate degree, it is noteworthy that Hispanic respondents were much more likely than their black counterparts to report that neither of their parents had completed an undergraduate degree (61% vs. 25%).

⁴ Program Coordinators and undergraduate MMUF Fellows demonstrated the highest response rate of the four groups of MMUF stakeholders who participated in MMUF Program Review surveys. It is not surprising that responses were greatest among groups that are most immediately connected to MMUF. Although the survey response rates for graduate students and MMUF PhDs were substantially lower than Program Coordinators and undergraduate Fellows, data from graduate students and PhDs—both of whom are chronologically more distant from the undergraduate program participants—provided substantial data sets on which findings for these groups are based.

Table 3. Race of MMUF *Undergraduate* Survey Respondents
N = 194

<i>Race</i>	Frequency	Percent
Black	84	43%
Hispanic	49	25%
Mixed	29	15%
Other	16	8%
Asian	8	4%
Caucasian	5	3%
Native American	3	1%

Table 4.
One or More Parent/Guardians Completed *Undergraduate* Degree
Respondent' s Race
(N = 158)

Race	Parent Completed BA/BS	Neither Parent Completed BA/BS	N (Total Answered Question)
Caucasian	80%	20%	5
Asian	75%	25%	8
Black	73%	25%	84
Mixed	69%	28%	29
Native American	66%	33%	3
Other	56%	37%	16
Hispanic	39%	61%	49

Undergraduate survey respondents were asked, “Do you think that you would you have aspired to enter a PhD program, had you *not* participated in the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program?” One-third of respondents indicated that they would not have, or probably would not have, aspired to entering a PhD program had they not participated in MMUF. Responses are summarized in Table 5 on the following page.

Table 5. Undergraduates Who Would Have Aspired to Entering a PhD Program Had Respondent *Not* Participated in MMUF
(N = 192)

Response ▼	Frequency	Percent
Yes	53	28%
Not sure, but tending toward responding "Yes"	75	39%
Not sure, but tending toward answering "No"	44	23%
No	20	10%

▫ *MMUF Graduate Students*

One hundred sixty-nine MMUF graduate students participated in the MMUF Program Review survey. Nearly half (48%) were enrolled in private universities and 43% were enrolled in public universities. Sixty-one percent of survey respondents reported that one or more of their parents or guardians had completed an undergraduate degree. Eighty percent said that they were the first person in their immediate family to enter a PhD program, while 20% reported that they were *not* the first in their immediate family to enter a PhD program. As with undergraduate Fellows, Hispanic PhD students were more likely to be the first in their families to complete undergraduate degrees as compared to black PhD students, although the difference was much less marked than with undergraduates.

The race of PhD students who completed the Program Review survey is summarized in Table 6, below.

Table 6. Race of MMUF Graduate Student Survey Respondents
(N = 169)

Race	Frequency	Percent
Black	82	48.5%
Hispanic	50	30%
Mixed	27	16%
Other	6	4 %
Caucasian	2	1%
Asian	1	0.6%
Native American	1	0.6%

Table 7. One or More Parent/Guardians Completed *Undergraduate* Degree by Respondent's Race
(N = 168)

Race	Parent Completed BA/BS	Neither Parent Completed BA/BS	N (Total Answered Question)
Mixed	73%	27%	26
Black	62%	38%	82
Hispanic	54%	44%	50
Other	50%	50%	5
Native American	0.0%	100%	1
Asian	0.0%	100%	1

Like their undergraduate colleagues, MMUF graduate students were asked, “Do you think that you would you have aspired to enter a PhD program, had you *not* participated in the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program?” Nearly half of respondents reported that they would not have entered or probably would not have entered PhD programs had they not participated in MMUF. Survey responses are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Graduate Students Who Would Have Aspired to Entering a PhD Program Had Respondent *Not* Participated in MMUF
(N = 168)

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	23%
Not sure, but tending toward answering “Yes”	57	34%
Not sure, but tending toward answering “No”	44	26%
No	29	17%

▫ **MMUF PhDs**

Eighty MMUF PhDs completed the MMUF Program Review survey. Nearly 80% reported that they are currently a faculty member at a higher education institution. Forty-four percent said that they are faculty at a public university, 20% at a private university and 24% at a private college. Two PhDs indicated that they currently teach at an HBCU.

Seventy-two percent of PhDs who completed the survey also reported that one or more of their parents or guardians had completed an undergraduate degree. Seventy-seven percent reported that they were the first in their immediate family to earn a PhD. Tables 9 and 10 describe the race of MMUF PhD survey respondents and their parents' educational background, respectively.

Table 9. Race of MMUF PhD Survey Respondents
(N = 79)

Race	Frequency	Percent
Black	52	66%
Hispanic	16	20%
Mixed	7	9%
Other	3	4%
Native American	1	1%
Caucasian	0	0%
Asian	0	0%

Table 10. One or More Parent/Guardians Completed *Undergraduate* Degree
by Respondent's Race
(N = 79)

Race	Parent Completed BA/BS	Neither Parent Completed BA/BS	N (Total Answered Question)
Native American	100%	0.0%	1
Black	77%	21%	52
Hispanic	75%	25%	16
Mixed	71%	29%	7
Other	67%	33%	3
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0

III. Program Review Findings

► Synopsis of MMUF Program Review Findings

Pages 12 through 14 synopsise the findings of the 2007 Program Review. The subsequent pages (p.16 &ff.) present in more detail the data on which this synopsis is based. Please note that findings are organized by respondent/informant type.

■ MMUF's Outcomes/Effects

Research conducted for the 2007 MMUF Program Review indicates that MMUF produces a number of outcomes. For MMUF *undergraduates*, findings indicate that the program:

- 1) informs Fellows about the requirements, norms, and rewards of the academic profession;
- 2) influences Fellows' self-conception and early identity as young scholars;
- 3) builds a sense of community, solidarity and purpose;
- 4) prepares MMUF undergraduate Fellows with information about "what to expect" in graduate school and academia;
- 5) equips Fellows with knowledge, tools and skills needed to successfully navigate graduate school and academic careers;
- 6) provides a supportive and inspiring community of peers, faculty mentors, and MMUF staff; and
- 7) enhances Fellows' confidence about their skills and abilities.

For MMUF *graduate students*, the program builds upon the above undergraduate outcomes as it:

- 8) provides graduate students with information about "what to expect" regarding the norms, expectations, and social conventions of graduate school and the academy;
- 9) continues to equip graduate students with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully navigate graduate school and academic careers;
- 10) provides a supportive community;
- 11) enhances graduate students' confidence about their academic skills and abilities; and
- 12) positively influences graduate students' career aspirations and career choices.

MMUF also produces effects beyond those produced in individual MMUF participants. These *institutional* effects include:

- 13) raising and/or sustaining the awareness of participating campuses about the issues associated with diversity and equity;
- 14) offering to institutions demonstrable models of exemplary programming; and
- 15) positively affecting the prestige of host campuses.

All Participants' Satisfaction with MMUF

Satisfaction ▼	MMUF Undergraduate Fellows (N = 185)	MMUF Graduate Students (N = 150)	MMUF PhDs (N = 72)
Very satisfied	62.7%	62.7%	73.6%
Generally satisfied	31.9%	32.7%	23.6%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4.9%	3.3%	2.8%
Very dissatisfied	0.5%	1.3%	0%

Percent of Surveyed MMUF *Undergraduate* Fellows Who Would Recommend the MMUF Program to Others (N = 185)

Would Recommend MMUF to Others?	Percent	N
Yes	96.2%	178
No	2.2%	4
Uncertain	1.6%	3

■ Challenges

Although the program has experienced numerous and substantial successes, it has also encountered some challenges. MMUF *Program Coordinators* report that the program has encountered challenges in regard to:

- 1) the recruitment and retention of undergraduate participants;
- 2) the perceived attractiveness of *academic* careers vs. *professional* non-academic careers;
- 3) gaining and sustaining support from, and recognition by, host institutions; and
- 4) ensuring an adequate and consistent supply of MMUF Mentors.

Undergraduate Fellows said that challenges they have encountered while participating in the program include challenges associated with:

- 5) conducting undergraduate research (e.g., identifying an appropriate topic, balancing time devoted to course work and time devoted to research, etc.);
- 6) time management;
- 7) mentoring (e.g., identifying the right mentor, working effectively with mentors, etc.); and
- 8) financial concerns.

MMUF *graduate students* report that challenges include:

- 9) inefficient communication of program-related information;
- 10) access to program-related post-undergraduate funding;
- 11) program structure and operation;
- 12) modification of MMUF's original mission; and
- 13) for some MMUF graduate students, a sense of disaffiliation from the program.

MMUF *PhDs* reported that challenges include:

- 14) perceived liabilities resulting from changes in MMUF program conferences;
- 15) problems securing adequate financial resources during graduate school;
- 16) differential treatment of graduate students in math and science;
- 17) problems associated with addressing the needs of non-African-American MMUF Fellows; and
- 18) perceived elitism within the program.

► **Effects of the Program on MMUF Program Participants**

▣ Data from MMUF Program Coordinators

During individual and focus group interviews with MMUF Program Coordinators, interviewees spoke of the effects of the program on MMUF Fellows. Coordinators observed that the program affects Fellows by providing unique opportunities to pursue both knowledge and career aspirations that many MMUF students would not otherwise pursue. One program coordinator, for example, noted that “MMUF gives students an opportunity to explore the qualities and passions that they didn’t know they have. We have a lot of students who originally know little or nothing about an academic career or research. They come in with [preconceived] notions of becoming a lawyer or a doctor. One of the things the program does is that it gives them the space, the opportunity, and the connection to faculty to change those preconceptions.” Another interviewee said, “When I reflect on the students in our program who are currently in graduate school, I have to say that the majority are students who [without MMUF] would never even have considered going on to graduate school in the arts and humanities.” Yet another interviewee said, “What MMUF does is that it introduces the idea that teaching in higher ed *is* a legitimate career choice to pursue. Some of our students may say, ‘Hey, teaching in higher education. That’s a real career choice. I never would have thought of that. That

might never have occurred to me.’ So the Mellon program introduces this notion that you [MMUF participants] can be a scholar, that you can change the lives of young people like yourself, by becoming a college teacher.” Another coordinator observed, “MMUF also validates the ‘instinct’ that students may have for doing research. Once they are ‘in the fold,’ we have two years to teach them about what it is like to do research and to be a professor.” Another coordinator commented, “Even for those MMUF students who don’t immediately go on to graduate school, having been Fellows in the program legitimates the life of the mind, of being an intellectual...”

Coordinators observed that MMUF’s combination of mentoring, skill-building activities, research experience, and consistently supportive high expectations helps students to transform their self-conceptions and to begin thinking of themselves not just as typical college/university students, but as future faculty and respected members of the academy. One Coordinator said, “Mellon encourages these kids to see themselves as ‘succeeders.’ Our students’ identities change [as a result of the program]. They begin to see themselves as *knowledge producers*.” This interviewee further noted, “These young people come to know that teaching and being a professor is a legitimate and respected career choice—Mellon introduces the notion that *you* can do this, and that you *can* be a scholar.”

The MMUF Coordinators Survey provided Program Coordinators with an opportunity to comment on the program’s observed effects on students. Survey respondents observed that MMUF produces a number of benefits for undergraduate participants, including: **1) informing Fellows about the requirements, norms, and rewards of the academic profession; 2) influencing Fellows’ self-conception and identity as young scholars; 3) building a sense of community, solidarity and purpose; and 4) preparing Fellows with the tools, skills, and understanding required to achieve successful academic careers.**

- **Informing Fellows About the Requirements, Norms, and Rewards of the Academic Profession**

One survey respondent noted that “the program gives our students a sense of what they are choosing when they choose a life in academe... I would say that this overall education of students about what academia, as a profession, is really about, is the most important effect of the program on students.” Another Coordinator observed, “The MMUF program’s most important effect has probably been to give [Fellows] the structure and the tools to enable them to participate in an intensive undergraduate research experience, and to understand what a career in academia really means.” Another Coordinator reported, “MMUF has been instrumental in helping students to develop their understanding of what it takes to become a professor. In addition, this program provides MMUF Fellows an opportunity to gain invaluable research experience. Most importantly, through the program, participants become familiar with a community of peers [who] share similar career interests.”

While MMUF enables participants to gain an understanding of “what it takes” to become a professor, it also helps them to see the “pathway” to the profession and to acquire or enhance a range of skills needed to get there. One Coordinator, for example, observed, “MMUF has definitely focused Fellows’ earnest attention on the prospects of becoming a

college or university professor. More often than not, participating students had considered what they think of as more glamorous professions until being nominated to the program by a college professor. The MMUF program gives them pause to reflect seriously on becoming college or university professors, and provides a clear pathway to demystifying the means of getting there..." Another Coordinator remarked that MMUF helps Fellows to see the attractiveness of an academic career and to equip them with skills necessary to achieve their career goals: "When the students have been selected appropriately (i.e., have the motivation, intellectual ability, and work ethic to succeed in academia) and have received dedicated and competent mentoring, the most important effect is to convince them that an academic career is both desirable and within their grasp, and to give them the skills to follow through."

▪ **Influencing Fellows' Self-Conception and Identity As Young Scholars**

MMUF positively influences participants' self-conception and emerging identities as scholars. MMUF affects students, as one Coordinator reported, by "giving them a sense of themselves as serious young scholars on track toward academic careers." Another Coordinator said, "It has helped them to imagine themselves as future faculty and as researchers. It has also helped them to develop essential tools and work habits to bring this about." An additional Coordinator at a private college remarked, "The most important effect, I would have to say, is [Fellows'] recognizing their own power as emerging scholars. When they find their critical voice and the confidence to embark upon new ways of reading and thinking, it is an amazing moment." As another program Coordinator noted, MMUF assists Fellows by providing a vision of their own capacity as scholars and educators. "MMUF provides each participating fellow with the opportunity to secure knowledge in such an important manner - that is, through the [attainment] of the PhD. Upon entering into the program, MMUF students experience the most lasting effect, and that is 'knowing that it is possible' to research that which interests them, write about their research, and share their research with their colleagues and, most importantly, their future students."

MMUF's mentoring and programmatic support are important elements in influencing Fellows' emerging identity as young scholars. One Coordinator noted, "For most of our students, the MMUF program expands the range of personal and professional options. Usually Fellows have not had the opportunity to communicate with adults in academia outside the classroom. Once they establish a solid relationship with a faculty mentor and program Coordinators, they begin to blossom as they learn about the wide range of career and life experience options. MMUF broadens their horizons and confirms the possibilities that their dreams can come true." This informant further noted that Fellows' identification with a prestigious program helps to inspire and motivate them. "The fact that they are connected to the prestigious Mellon Foundation helps them to see themselves as precious and capable and ready to embrace the world. The financial support confirms that an institution believes in them and in their future, but the effect is not just the money, but what the money allows them to do."

Some Coordinators reported that MMUF not only affects participants' self-conception and identity, but also helps to build participants' confidence. One Coordinator said, "MMUF has given our students the confidence and skills they need to pursue doctoral

studies and reinforce that they can become professors. Those students who decide they will not pursue the PhD also gain clarity about their interests and also the added confidence to go for their dreams.” Another Coordinator reported that MMUF’s most important effect is “giving the students the confidence and opportunity to develop skills to be a successful scholar during and after the undergraduate experience.”

- **Building A Sense of Community, Solidarity, and Purpose**

MMUF strives to build among program participants a sense of shared experience and common purpose. Program Coordinators frequently commented that MMUF builds a commonality of interests among Fellows, and that this, in turn, establishes a sense of purpose, solidarity and self-confidence. One Program Coordinator at a public college observed, “In addition to the financial support students of the MMUF program receive, I believe the most important effect MMUF has on participating students [is] the feelings of fellowship created on a micro level at the individual institution and on a macro level through regional conferences and beyond.” Another Coordinator noted, “I would say that the single most important effect of MMUF is to provide students who might not otherwise consider a career in academia with a community in which they can begin to think of themselves first and foremost as members of the academy who have a mission to fulfill in diversifying higher education and thereby making it a better place for everyone.” Another Coordinator said, “The most important effect [of the program] is the sense of being part of a rigorous intellectual community and learning how to contribute to such a community in a meaningful way.”

One Coordinator stressed the connection between Fellows’ sense of community and their growing confidence. “MMUF’s greatest effect is creating a sense of community among the Fellows. This, in turn, gives them confidence in their intellectual abilities,” while another program Coordinator said, “It’s the research support and mentoring: not only *faculty* mentoring, but the fellows also mentor each other. They also develop a strong commitment to the program goals and willingness to give back.”

- **Preparing Fellows With the Knowledge, Tools, and Skills Needed to Successfully Navigate Graduate School and Academic Careers**

Many MMUF Coordinators reported that MMUF enhances students’ skills and provides them with important “tools” (i.e., opportunities, experiences, knowledge, etc.) with which Fellows are able to pursue successful academic careers. One Coordinator said, “I would say that Mellon provides the opportunity for our students to be immersed in research, to understand the graduate school process, and to begin to understand what it means to be a professor in the academy.” Another reported that “MMUF is valuable to our students because of the opportunities it provides during undergraduate years to prepare students for graduate study and research and setting the path for successful matriculation towards completion of the PhD degree.” Another informant commented, “MMUF gives [Fellows] the tools to carry out research and feel confident that they will be admitted into, and succeed in, graduate school.”

A Coordinator summed up the effects of the MMUF program by noting, “[MMUF] has 1) empowered students with a sense of mission, both in an academic and social capacity; 2) it has provided them with a space in which to speak about and analyze issues of race and identity, which they may otherwise not have been confronted with; 3) it has opened up other doors (such as scholarships/mentorship/discourse community/etc.) and has given the students some sense of confidence and assurance when applying for assistance elsewhere; and 4) it has made postgraduate/graduate studies a reality - it has affirmed the potential that our students possess. MMUF has also prepared students for acceptance to Honors Studies and has placed them ahead of their peers in terms of stimulating a well-developed research thesis.....”

▣ Data from MMUF Fellows

While MMUF Coordinators are uniquely positioned to observe the effects of the program on participants, so too, although from a different perspective, are MMUF Fellows. In interviews and surveys, MMUF Fellows reported that MMUF had affected them in a variety of ways, including: **1) preparing them with information about “what to expect” in graduate school and the academy; 2) preparing them with the knowledge, tools and skills needed to successfully navigate graduate school and academic careers; 3) providing a supportive and inspiring community of peers, faculty mentors, and MMUF staff; and 4) enhancing their confidence about their skills and abilities.**

▪ **Preparing MMUF Fellows With Information About “What To Expect” In Graduate School and the Academy**

MMUF Fellows frequently reported that the MMUF program had prepared them with information about what to expect in graduate school and as future faculty. Survey respondents noted that MMUF provided them with information and experiences that revealed both the explicit and implicit norms of higher education. As one Fellow observed, “During the program, I learned a great deal about the culture and subtleties of graduate school. It was great having the opportunity to discuss this with the Program Coordinators and graduate student mentors, all of whom had personal stories about graduate school experiences.” Another MMUF participant said, “I’ve learned what a PhD program really consists of, and about the hardships that a student may face. In addition, my research and presentation skills have strengthened, which has allowed me a more insightful view of a career in academia.”

Other MMUF Fellows noted that their experience of the program helped them to see more clearly the pathway to membership in academia. One Fellow, for example, observed of the program, “It was useful to get an idea of how different people ended up in their positions as professors. It was great to be able to talk to a wide variety of people in academia in order to get an idea of the challenges they have faced.” Another remarked, “I learned in detail about the path to becoming a tenured professor. I learned, from the inside, about the world of academia. I do not think this is easily accessible information, and I am grateful to the MMUF for providing me with this knowledge.” Another Fellow reported, “Because I went to a mini-conference earlier in the semester

with minority faculty, I was able to listen to them speak about their experiences and I feel that that was valuable to hear, so that I can understand what I will encounter in the coming years.”

- **Preparing Fellows with the Knowledge, Tools and Skills Needed to Successfully Navigate Graduate School and Academic Careers**

MMUF Fellows reported that the program conveys critical information, enhances program participants’ skills and knowledge, and prepares Fellows for graduate study and academic careers. Ninety-four percent of surveyed MMUF Fellows reported that they had learned things that they would not have learned had they not participated in MMUF. As one Fellow noted, “MMUF has given me a wonderful opportunity to gain experience and insight into academia as an undergraduate. The ability to work closely with professors, Mellon Mays administrators, and other fellows, all the while receiving solid financial support, has allowed me to conduct advanced research projects that would have been impossible otherwise.”

In interviews and surveys, MMUF Fellows consistently highlighted the ways in which MMUF assists them to acquire knowledge and to augment their research capabilities. One MMUF survey respondent, for instance, reported, “I’ve learned the steps necessary to do thorough research, how to work with faculty members and other researchers doing similar work. I’ve gotten an in-depth look at academia, especially as it applies to the humanities and social sciences and the wide variety of research that has been done.” Another Fellow observed, “The regular meetings of MMUF Fellows in the seminar has challenged me to prepare myself for a graduate environment, exposed me to new material and research methods, and has given me access to some of the best speakers and academics available. Without the seminar, I would have missed out on this environment--one where I am pushed by my mentor and my peers to maintain such a rigorous approach to academic studies.”

Some Fellows stressed that the program offers important insights into the workings of graduate school and, more broadly, the academy. One Fellow, for example, observed, “The MMUF training programs and workshops have provided me with a great deal of insight and knowledge not only on how to approach/pursue research (with practice to boot), but also what considerations to keep in mind when thinking about graduate school.” Another Fellow remarked, “MMUF allowed me to deepen my understanding of areas that I already was interested in. In addition, weekly seminars with fellows expanded my purview, and discussions with mentors and speakers gave me greater insight into the inner workings of universities.” As another MMUF participant summarized, “I learned about graduate school, what it takes to be in academia, especially what it takes to be a successful academic. I have learned a great deal about the admissions process and the kind of work required of a grad student. I would not have a clue about these issues had I not been part of this program.”

- **Providing a Supportive Community of Mentors, MMUF Staff, and Peers**

In surveys and interviews, MMUF Fellows reported that the program provided them with a supportive community of mentors, MMUF staff, and peers. One Fellow observed, “I feel a great sense of support and I’m fortunate to know that if a problem arises, I can go to anyone associated with MMUF...” Another Fellow said, “The element of community and support were invaluable to me during my undergraduate career. Without Mellon I’m not sure how I would have survived!” When asked which experience stood out for her, another Fellow said, “My experience with the faculty who are the advisors and Coordinators of the program. As someone who will be entering academia in the future, the faculty coordinators serve as mentors and role models who take an active interest in my well-being and success.” Another MMUF Fellow said, “I learned a great deal from sharing personal experiences and ideas with my colleagues in the Mellon program. I also have a supportive network of friends and mentors that I probably would have been unable to cultivate had I not participated in MMUF.”

In surveys and interviews, MMUF Fellows often remarked about the value and significance of the supportive relationships they established with MMUF mentors. Fifty-one percent (n = 95) of surveyed MMUF undergraduates reported that they had “excellent” relationships and 33 % reported that they had “good” relationships with their MMUF advisors.⁵ One Fellow, for example, said, “The one-on-one attention and deep concern of my mentor is one of the biggest things that stands out for me about our MMUF program. My mentor/program director takes his position very seriously, and without this, our general program, the seminar, and my research would lack the same rigor and push towards excellence.” Describing MMUF’s distinctly supportive nature, another Fellow observed, “What makes the MMUF program different from others is the mentoring relationship. The program really cares about its students, and there are worthwhile systems put in place to ensure the success and longevity of the students in the program.” Responding to a question about the most outstanding feature of the program, another MMUF Fellow observed, “I think the mentoring is the most important, not because it’s helping me understand what I want to do with my life, although it is, but because it allows me to engage in academics while also integrating my culture into what I study and into the environment at my college. Without something like the Mellon program, I do not know that I would have the 'cultural' guidance that I have had.”

While both faculty mentoring and support from MMUF Coordinators and staff are critical components of the program, MMUF Fellows also stressed the importance of MMUF’s peer-to-peer networks, and the creation of peer groups of scholarly excellence. One Fellow, for instance, said, “I have formed invaluable and lasting relationships with...other MMUF fellows. This bond has not only created a strong support system but also motivated my scholastic achievement.” Another observed, “I’ve really enjoyed being part of the community of MMUF fellows. It’s great to share time and thoughts with other young scholars who are thinking about important questions and doing excellent work.” One MMUF Fellow underscored the link between community and scholarly excellence when she reported, “It has afforded me the opportunity to get in contact with a host of really smart people: it is at once encouraging and intimidating, but in the end, I believe the challenge and opportunity of testing my ideas against theirs has really allowed me to grow both as a scholar and as a person.” Asked which experience or feature of the

⁵ “How would you rate the quality of your relationship with your MMUF Advisor?” (N = 184)
Excellent: 51.6% (n = 95); Good: 33.2% (n = 61); Fair: 12.5% (n = 23); Poor: 2.7% (n = 5).

program most impressed her, another Fellow noted, “[the] inspiration I receive from my fellow Fellows. That is, the camaraderie we establish as we embark upon a long but fruitful journey.”

- **Enhancing Fellows’ Confidence About Their Research Skills And Abilities**

Many MMUF Fellows emphasized the positive effect of the program on their research capacities, and subsequently, on their growing confidence in their abilities as researchers and scholars. For example, one Fellow said, “I have learned to appreciate my research interests and value academic research in a way I did not before.” Another reported, “I am positive that I would not have been accepted to doctoral programs had it not been for MMUF. The flexibility of the program and the support of my mentor allowed me to develop my own research interests and then communicate those interests to the schools I applied to and to which I was accepted.” Another Fellow said, “I learned a vast amount that I would not have otherwise learned in my college experience. I feel extremely well-prepared for the rigors of graduate school and also feel much more confident in my intellectual abilities.” Highlighting the sense of Fellows’ potential that the program cultivates, another Fellow said, “I have learned that there are many opportunities in the world and you just have to learn to go and take them. The MMUF program has allowed me to do things that I didn't know I could do.”

Summarizing the beneficial effects of the program, one MMUF Fellow commented that “being a part of MMUF has greatly aided me in three ways. First, it has [helped me], and continues to help me, to plan and prepare for graduate school---from workshops speaking about how to write a good personal statement, to having my mentor really give me the inside scoop about what is going on. Second, it motivated me to seek a mentor. I realize that one is very limited when [one] work[s] by [oneself]. My mentor has been instrumental in my success. The last, and maybe most important thing: It has given me confidence. I now know I can get through grad school, and therefore I am much more motivated than I would have been without the program.” Another Fellow observed, “The MMUF program has been vital to my development as a scholar. I have grown tremendously through research, writing, and critical analysis. I appreciate everything that the program does for people of color. It has opened up many doors for me and it was a blessing that I was accepted into the program. Thank you!” Another MMUF Fellow commented, “I have learned that this particular career trajectory is a difficult one, but is very much attainable and rewarding.”

- Data From MMUF Graduate Students

MMUF graduate students corroborated many of the same outcomes of the program that their undergraduate colleagues reported. In surveys and interviews, MMUF graduate students reported that MMUF affected them by: **1) providing students with information about “what to expect” in graduate school and the academy; 2) preparing them with the knowledge, tools and skills needed to successfully navigate graduate school and academic careers; 3) providing a supportive community; and 4) enhancing their confidence about their skills and abilities. Additionally, many graduate students**

reported that the MMUF program positively influenced their aspirations and career choices.

- **Providing Students with Information about “What To Expect” in Graduate School and the Academy**

Like their undergraduate counterparts, MMUF graduate students reported that participation in the program prepared them with information about what to expect in graduate school and as future faculty. One MMUF graduate student observed, “I learned a lot about graduate school and the admissions process. Through our regular meetings, I was also exposed to MMUF alums who were [then] pursuing PhDs. The exposure to graduate school from both information sessions and through the personal experiences of MMUF alums was important in helping me to frame my [subsequent] trajectory in graduate school.” Another MMUF graduate student remarked, “I truly began understanding about life in the academy (including research, the life of the mind, and being a professor) because of the Mellon program,” while another Mellon graduate student commented, “Although I knew I wanted to be a historian, I didn't know a thing about how to go about getting a PhD, what graduate school and academia were like, nothing. MMUF was invaluable in teaching me the steps and processes.”

- **Preparing Graduate Students With The Knowledge, Tools and Skills Required to Successfully Navigate Graduate School and Academic Careers**

Mellon graduate students also stressed the important role that the MMUF program played in providing them with the knowledge and skills required to succeed in graduate school and beyond. In questions that asked MMUF graduate students to reflect upon their undergraduate MMUF experience, graduate students frequently reported that participation in the undergraduate program equipped them with valuable skills ranging from research to writing.

One graduate student noted, “I didn't know what ‘real’ research was until I did MMUF. With the help of my mentor I learned how to narrow down on a topic. You think you know a lot as an undergraduate, but what you realized through MMUF is that you know a little about a lot of topics rather than a lot about few topics,” while another reported, “I had the opportunity to take a specialized writing course, which has greatly contributed to my success in graduate school. The ability to write very clearly was definitely something I learned specifically through the program.” Another MMUF graduate student observed, “MMUF gave me the opportunity to learn the value of research very early on--had I not participated in MMUF, I would not have arrived at Caltech the summer before my freshman year to work in a lab, and so probably would not have been connected with scientific research until later. Yet instead, I was able to maximize [my] research experience as an undergraduate from the start.”

While some graduate students stressed the importance of the program in helping them to acquire specific academic skills, others indicated that the MMUF program provided both academic skills and knowledge of the “inner workings” of the academy. “Working with a faculty mentor--and with other department faculty/staff--was extremely important for

gaining both procedural knowledge (e.g., how to go about planning a research project) [and] discipline-specific content knowledge. Importantly--considering my current academic career path--I also began to learn about the inner workings of an academic department. Lastly, my confidence in my ability to do independent research grew immensely during my years as an MMUF fellow.”

- **Providing a Supportive and Encouraging Community**

MMUF graduate students often noted that their experiences as undergraduates provided them with a community of peers that assisted them in making the successful transition to graduate school. One MMUF graduate student, for example, said, “MMUF connected me to a group of extremely bright and committed students at my home institution. Because I waited one year before entering my program to work full-time at a research institute, by the time I was applying to PhD programs, I had the tremendous benefit of advice, essay editing, and mentorship from my MMUF cohort--three of whom are already in PhD programs, having entered straight out of their undergraduate education. Without them, I am not so sure I would have gained entrance into the top-rated program to which I have [been accepted].” Another graduate student noted the importance of MMUF’s summer institutes: “The MMUF opened my eyes to the entire PhD process. Had I not participated as an undergraduate, I would have felt overwhelmed by the national, predominantly white, scene; however, with the community created through the summer institute, I felt as if I was a part of a larger movement. For the first time, I felt like I was where I belonged, among peers who didn’t think that my interest in research and teaching was strange.” Summarizing the value of the sense of community created by MMUF, another MMUF graduate student stated, “The MMUF program was essential; it gave me the encouragement, support, and confidence that I needed to pursue a PhD.”

Many MMUF graduate students reported that the sense of community established by MMUF did not end at the completion of their undergraduate or graduate school careers, but formed the basis for extended networks. When asked what most stood out for her about the program, one graduate student said, “While there are so many [features], one main thing would be networking. The summer conference and the constant refreshing of the MMUF directory allows for a network to be established among Fellows. I feel this is critical not only for support as you go through the respective programs, but when we complete these degrees, this network provides contacts for the job market.” Another MMUF graduate student responded that “other MMUF fellows and their sharing of trials, tribulations and successes [is what most stands out]. I have built an extensive network of support outside of my department due to the Mellon conferences, which has guided me through the past six years.” Another noted, “The support network, including other students and advisors and older students with PhDs, is really invaluable and is my biggest source of inspiration and motivation.”

Although MMUF graduate students underscored the importance of participating in a community of peers, many also emphasized the value of MMUF program personnel and mentors. Asked what stood out for respondents about their undergraduate experience, MMUF graduate students often cited the role of MMUF personnel. One graduate student observed, “The fact that I feel I can always turn to the director of my undergraduate MMUF [program] should I ever need support is very important. This was true when I was

an undergraduate and continues to be so today.” Another remarked, “What stood out for me was the dedication and enthusiasm of the deans, professors, and advisors who first recruited me for the program and then supported me when I was awarded the MMUF. It was quite inspirational, and I haven't been able to find similar inspiration since,” while another MMUF graduate student noted, “What stood out for me was the openness of the faculty mentors and their support of me as a mentee. The faculty members in many ways prepared me for graduate school. The nature of the comments and suggestions they made [was] very encouraging.” Another reported that what stood out most about the MMUF program was “the commitment by the director of the program and my mentors. I cannot stress enough how important their words of encouragement and the time they dedicated to my research [were] in preparing me for graduate school.”

- **Enhancing Graduate Students' Confidence About Their Skills and Abilities**

Reflecting on their experiences while MMUF undergraduates, MMUF graduate students often observed that MMUF helped them to acquire important academic skills and self-confidence. One MMUF graduate student, for example, said, “The support I received as an undergraduate fellow, both from the site administrators and my mentor, really helped me develop my research skills and my confidence in my own abilities.” Asked to identify a notable aspect of the MMUF program, another graduate student recalled, “Definitely the support and encouragement for individual research. I feel this is a key component, especially as it becomes crucial later in graduate school in a PhD program. Independent research for a PhD dissertation can be a challenging task in many aspects, but since we were able to experience that as undergrad[s]...we already have the confidence and the tools to undertake that task. I was especially influenced by the trip stipend, as I was able to travel to New York for my research. This encouraged me to do my PhD research abroad.” Noting how MMUF provided opportunities to gain both skills and self-assurance, another MMUF graduate student reported, “The research experience provided by the MMUF [program] gave me a jump-start that made me feel comfortable in graduate school, especially since I did not have a masters degree. I felt that although the students who had a masters degree were more experienced and knew exactly what they wanted to do, they lacked research experience, which is paramount to success in graduate school. Mellon gave me that firm foundation to start on and I felt right at home and as confident as any doctoral student who had a masters degree.”

- **Influencing Graduate Students' Aspirations and Career Choices**

MMUF graduate students frequently commented on the role that the MMUF program played in helping them to consider academic careers in the arts and sciences and to understand the conditions of their future profession. Graduate students also noted that MMUF helped them to refine their areas of academic concentration. As one graduate student commented, “Participating in MMUF introduced me to the possibility of doctoral study and has helped me to define my goals and formulate an attainable educational and career path. MMUF taught me about the timeline and process for pursuing a career in academia. I also learned what life as a professor is like, both the positive and negative aspects.” Another MMUF graduate student reported, “Had I not participated, I would not have realized what a PhD had to offer. I would not have realized that an advanced degree (outside of a JD, MBA, or MD) was available to me.”

Noting the role that the program plays in helping students to specify their career goals and areas of specialization, one MMUF graduate student recounted how MMUF helped to refine participants' career aspirations: "Even though I had initially listed mathematics as my major field on the MMUF form, I slowly realized throughout the rest of my sophomore year that I would much rather be engaged with a dynamic field like classics at a graduate level. The MMUF director at my school soon recognized my dilemma, and directed me to attend an intensive summer program of elementary and intermediate Latin at another university, funded by MMUF, so as to advance my classical education. Had I not had MMUF funding and direction, I would have never switched fields - and I would have never enrolled in a PhD program in classics!"

► **MMUF's Effects on Institutions**

In addition to the effects on program participants, data indicate that MMUF produces broader effects by influencing the institutions that host MMUF programs. More than half of surveyed MMUF Program Coordinators (54%; N = 26) reported that MMUF has exercised a salutary effect on their institution, and 30% reported that, although they weren't certain, they were inclined to answer affirmatively to the question, "Do you think that the operation of MMUF on your campus has had an effect on your institution?"

In interviews of, and open-ended survey questions posed to, MMUF Coordinators, respondents reported that their respective MMUF programs: **1) raise and sustain the awareness of campuses about the issues of diversity; 2) offer to host institutions models of exemplary programming; and 3) positively affect the publicly perceived stature of host campuses.**

- **Raising and Sustaining the Awareness of Campuses about the Issues Of Diversity**

MMUF affects the institutions that host the program in a variety of ways, including raising the awareness of campus constituencies about the need for, and benefits of, diversifying their campuses. One Coordinator, for example, noted, "It's gotten non-minority faculty to think seriously about the continued under-representation of minority faculty on our campus and elsewhere. In the process of learning about the program, so that they can nominate their students---especially when they learn that the Coordinator was an undergraduate Fellow herself---they realize how valuable the program is and how necessary...They realize that the students they nominate now can, and will, be on the faculty of this campus or another campus ten years from now. The program makes that a much clearer idea among [name of school's] faculty." Another Coordinator observed of MMUF, "It has made our faculty and administrators more aware of our outstanding minority students, it has provided role models for students outside the program, and it has highlighted the importance of encouraging our minority students to do advanced research and to go on to graduate school. It has also provided us with faculty and graduate students of color, thus diversifying our institution."

MMUF also supports discourse about the importance of diversity on campus. One Program Coordinator enumerated the ways in which the program affects campus discourse. “Mellon fellows are leaders in campus discourse. The program and the Fellows' projects encourage other students to embrace their intellectual interests. Fellows' projects and presentations often create fora for the discussion of controversial topics. MMUF has been at the table in several recent hires, thereby providing an important voice of advocacy for students and faculty of color. MMUF has sometimes partnered with the college and other departments to bring important academics of color to campus to talk with students and the campus community.” Another Coordinator said that MMUF “focuses the conversation on faculty diversity. It creates community for more than the selected fellows, and it makes faculty feel that their support of students has value beyond the individual relationships. [MMUF]) has served as a model for other diversity initiatives on campus.” Emphasizing the importance of moving beyond awareness to action, another Coordinator reported, “We've hired MMUF Fellows to our faculty! The program is part of a campus-wide concern with inter-group understanding and the idea of going beyond ‘learning about diversity’ to appreciating how diversity ‘changes *how* we learn’.”

- **MMUF Offers to Institutions Models of Exemplary Programming**

On some campuses, MMUF acts as a model for other campus programs and has encouraged the adoption of additional campus-based diversity programs. One Coordinator observed, “MMUF has served as a model program for our institution, and along with [name of program], has influenced the formation of an undergraduate Biology Scholars Program. I have been actively thinking about ways to supplement this program in ways that will increase the diversity of our institution, and I am currently working on some outreach efforts in which I might not have engaged had I not been so influenced by MMUF.” At another institution, another Coordinator reported, “The MMUF [program] has been a model for another research fellowship that our institution funds internally, and it is cited frequently in discussions about programming for students from underrepresented groups. This year, we also have two MMUF fellows on our faculty, so we have benefited from the pipeline. And, perhaps most importantly, the MMUF fellows become leaders and intellectual role models on campus, especially, but not exclusively, for students of color.” At a third campus, a Coordinator said, “The experience of the graduate initiatives set in place by MMUF, e.g. research conferences, residential weekends, cohort cohesion, etc.--are being investigated at an institutional level to see where similar initiatives could be set up to enhance the [name of institution] postgraduate experience.” Two other Coordinators, respectively, reported, “MMUF has led to institutional investments in other programs to promote post-baccalaureate study for underrepresented individuals,” and “MMUF enabled us to experiment with programming and mentoring approaches that we could expand to other students.”

At another institution, a Coordinator noted that MMUF's influence reached other faculty and that the program had been emulated by other campus programs. “A very sizable group of faculty members have taken it as a responsibility or an opportunity to participate in the aims of the MMUF program. It has been an annual event every year since 1989 and faculty members frequently express their consciousness about the program when they contact us about likely candidates when we're not soliciting. ‘Copy-cat’ programs have

sprung up over the years--earlier on this campus by the Pew Foundation--for students in the sciences, and recently by college alums whose purposes are different, but [whose] methods are similar. For the past 12 years, the College president has hosted a dinner at his home for the MMUF [Fellows] as the first event of the year on his calendar. I think it's fair to say that the event is now a practice.”

- **MMUF Positively Affects the Stature of Host Campuses**

MMUF provides an important cachet to participants and to host institutions. One MMUF Coordinator reported, “MMUF is a prestigious program which enhances the stature of the College. MMUF also contributes to the recruitment of high-caliber students by the College.” Another observed, “My institution has been greatly served by MMUF, because it has heightened the intellectual climate on campus. Students respect the scholarship of our Fellows and often inquire about how to become a Mellon [Fellow] after seeing Fellows present their research. It is an honor unlike any other on campus because of the stringent guidelines and its national reputation. It also serves to help in recruitment, both for the institution and to majors in the humanities and social sciences.” Remarking about the program’s status, another Coordinator noted, “The Mellon name carries very high status in our community and in our institution. Members of our community, as well as members of our institution, are especially proud of our association with Mellon. All of us are doubly proud of our students when they are selected as Mellon fellows. We are all uplifted!”⁶

► **Most Valuable Program Components**

As mentioned above, the MMUF program offers to undergraduates a range of tailored program components. The basic program model consists of the following features:

- Mentoring of undergraduate Fellows, conducted by one or more faculty members
- Research conducted by each MMUF Fellow
- Stipends for term-time (i.e., during academic year) research
- Stipends for summer research
- Stipends for academic-related summer travel
- Regular meetings of MMUF Fellows
- Workshops and colloquia on selected topics and issues

In order to gather data that indicate the relative value of these components, surveys of program stakeholders (i.e., Program Coordinators) and participants (i.e., MMUF undergraduate Fellows, MMUF graduate students, and MMUF PhDs) asked respondents to rank in order the three MMUF program components that participants perceived to be

⁶ While the MMUF program confers prestige on institutions, it should be noted that the program also offers an important imprimatur for individual participants. MMUF Fellows often referred to the status and peer respect that they enjoyed as a result of their participation in and identification with the program. Typical of this sentiment was the comment by a Fellow who observed, “The fact [is] that being a Fellow is something for life and it is such an honor to say that I am a Mellon Fellow.” When asked to identify the program’s most outstanding feature, another Fellow responded, “The reaction of people when I tell them that I am a Mellon Fellow. In other words, *its reputation*.”

the most important. All MMUF program participants and stakeholders identified faculty mentoring as the most important program component. Program Coordinators and undergraduate MMUF Fellows identified undergraduate research as the second most important program component, while MMUF graduate students and MMUF PhDs identified stipends for summer research as the second most important program component. Each respondent type identified a distinct program component as the third most important feature of the MMUF program: MMUF Program Coordinators identified regular meetings of MMUF undergraduates, MMUF undergraduates identified stipends for summer research, MMUF graduate students reported stipends for term-time research, and MMUF PhDs said that they found the possibility of loan repayment to be the third most important feature of the program.⁷ Please see Table 11, on the following page.

⁷ Although survey respondents identified the value of individual components of MMUF, some participants stressed the inseparable and interdependent nature of MMUF's program elements. As one MMUF PhD remarked, "These elements are difficult to separate, let alone rank, as often one requires another. For example, the opportunity to conduct research depended on the funding from MMUF during the academic year and the summer. Moreover, I checked loan repayment, rather than regular meetings with other fellows, because the promise of loan repayment allowed me to obtain additional financial aid during my last year in college."

Table 11.
Three Most Important Program Components (Ranked)
As Reported by Type of Respondent

Rank of Program Component	MMUF Program Coordinators	MMUF Undergraduate Fellows	MMUF Graduate Students	MMUF PhDs
1	Mentoring of undergraduate Fellows, conducted by one or more faculty members (94.1%)	Mentoring of undergraduate Fellows, conducted by one or more faculty members (71.1%)	Mentoring of undergraduate Fellows, conducted by one or more faculty members (76.3%)	Mentoring of undergraduate Fellows, conducted by one or more faculty members (75.3%)
2	Research conducted by each MMUF Fellow (72.6%)	Research conducted by each MMUF Fellow (56.7%)	Stipends for summer research (60.6%)	Stipends for summer research (52.0%)
3	Regular meetings of MMUF Fellows (41.2%)	Stipends for summer research (61.0%)	Stipends for term-time (i.e., during academic year) research (39.4%)	Possible eligibility for loan repayment (44.2%)

In addition to the core components of the undergraduate MMUF experience, many MMUF participants continue to receive affiliated services and programming provided by the Social Science Research Council and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. Surveyed MMUF PhDs reported that they had participated in a range of post-MMUF undergraduate program components, ranging from pre-doctoral research grants to junior faculty career enhancement programs. Table 12, on the following page, indicates the postgraduate programming in which individual PhD *survey respondents* reported they had participated.

Table 12.
Most Important Type of Postgraduate MMUF Programming
As Reported by MMUF PhDs
(N = 80)

Affiliated Program	Percent	Frequency
Predocutorial Research Grant (SSRC)	62%	48
Travel and Research Grant (WWNFF)	39%	30
PhD Retreat (SSRC)	34%	26
Dissertation Grant (WWNFF)	27%	21
Junior Faculty Career Enhancement Program (WWNFF)	23%	18
None of the Above	21%	16
Other	4%	3
Proposal Writing and Dissertation Development Seminar (SSRC) *	0%	0

*First implemented in 2007

MMUF PhDs commented on the range of benefits that MMUF undergraduate and postgraduate programming offers. As one MMUF PhD observed, “Attending the summer conferences and now the PhD Retreat has allowed me to make friendships and professional connections that continue to help my career and scholarly work. This program has allowed me to be part of a peer group, something that every scholar needs.” Another MMUF PhD observed, “I would have never thought that, a decade after entering the program, I'd remain in such regular contact with so many of the people I met through MMUF. Ironically, most of the people I am closest to aren't from my undergraduate institution, nor are they in my discipline per se. These enduring professional friendships that have survived dissertation writing [and] co-organized colloquia and [have] been the foundation of countless fellowship application reviews, were fostered through the

summer conference and are continuing to grow. We've gone from reading summer grant applications to looking over each other's tenure dossiers.”

Another MMUF PhD maintained, “Without a doubt, the single most important and valuable feature of the MMUF program has been its ability to produce a network of support and belonging, a community of practice really, among the various cohorts of Mellon Fellows. These networks of relations have made my progress into graduate school, through the various transitional stages of graduate school, onto the job market and into a position, through the first few years of academic employment, and through the tenure and promotion review process, possible. I might have made it through without these multi-‘generational’ cohort relations, but I doubt it. To this day, the community of Mellon Fellows is a crucially important social network. As someone who has also received two Ford Foundation fellowships, where this kind of enduring cross-cohort relating does not exist, I can safely say that the Mellon "net" catches, holds, and propels us along the path into the professoriate...”

Surveys of MMUF participants asked respondents to rate their overall satisfaction with the MMUF program. Table 13 summarizes responses.

Table 13. All MMUF Participants’ Satisfaction with MMUF

Satisfaction ▼	MMUF Undergraduate Fellows (N = 185)	MMUF Graduate Students (N = 150)	MMUF PhDs (N = 72)
Very satisfied	62.7%	62.7%	73.6%
Generally satisfied	31.9%	32.7%	23.6%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4.9%	3.3%	2.8%
Very dissatisfied	0.5%	1.3%	0.0%

► Challenges Encountered

The MMUF Program Review sought information about the most significant challenges faced by the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program and its stakeholders. Stakeholders identified two broad types of challenges: those associated with the program, its design and operation, and those encountered by participants and staff.

■ Data from MMUF Program Coordinators

MMUF Program Coordinators indicated that the program has encountered a range of challenges. These challenges include issues related to: **1) the recruitment and retention of undergraduate participants; 2) concerns about the attractiveness to program participants of academic careers vs. professional, non-academic careers; 3) support from, and recognition by, host institutions; 4) ensuring an adequate and consistent supply of MMUF Mentors; and 5) other challenges.**

■ **Challenges Associated with the Recruitment and Retention of Undergraduate Participants**

In an open-ended survey question about the most important challenge faced by the MMUF program, Program Coordinators reported that they believed that the recruitment and retention of participants posed a substantial challenge. As one Coordinator said, “The greatest challenge is getting students who we know would be excellent candidates for the program to actually apply and then, stay with the application process--to not self-select out of the process.” Another said, “Our most significant challenge is getting the word out and encouraging faculty to have their students apply.”

Although student recruitment was often identified as a substantial challenge, some Program Coordinators observed that recruiting students who met program eligibility criteria had been a specific challenge. One Program Coordinator observed that “our most significant challenge is identifying students that fit the MMUF profile. It is becoming increasingly difficult to identify underrepresented students who are pursuing Mellon-approved fields of study. This challenge has prompted us to reconsider our outreach and recruitment efforts.” Additionally, some Program Coordinators noted that there seemed to be a relatively small pool of eligible candidates at their institution. As one noted, “Because of the large numbers of pre-professional students at our school and the relatively small numbers of underrepresented minorities (especially Hispanics and Native Americans), the pool from which we draw our Fellows is relatively small.”

■ **Academic Careers vs. Professional, Non-Academic Careers**

In interviews and surveys, Program Coordinators observed that the attractiveness and popularity of professional schools (e.g., law, medicine, business, etc.) makes it increasingly challenging to recruit undergraduates to a program which emphasizes careers in the academy. One Coordinator summarized the sentiment expressed by a number of colleagues: “The most significant challenge [we face] is the competition with the pre-professional environment.” Another observed, “At our college, the largest department is Business and Finance. Our difficulty is convincing students of the benefits (especially immediate benefits) of pursuing the ‘less glamorous’ path to the PhD degree.” Another Coordinator said, “Many of our students have been told by their parents and communities that they should be going into the professions of law or medicine. It is difficult to convince some of these students that they should go on and get a PhD instead. This means problems for us in recruiting students and convincing some of our existing Fellows to follow through and apply to grad schools.” Expressing a sentiment shared by a

number of Program Coordinators, one Coordinator observed, “Our biggest challenge is losing students to law school.”

Some Coordinators noted that in addition to the attractiveness of professional schools, the program’s requirement that undergraduate students identify, quite early in their undergraduate careers, their long-term career goals and commit to an academic career sometimes presented challenges for both the program and for students. One Program Coordinator noted that “finding the students who really have the passion to become a professor [is the largest challenge]. It is not always easy to figure out who is committed to the process.” Another reported that the greatest challenge is “recruiting, in the sophomore year, students who are definite about going to graduate school and the professoriate,” while another noted, “Sophomore year is very early for most students to be thinking about what it might mean to get a PhD.”

- **Support from, and Recognition by, Host Institutions**

While Program Coordinators often spoke of the cachet associated with institutions which host the MMUF program, a few Coordinators also noted that in the day-to-day operations of their institutions, MMUF did not always seem to garner the concrete support some might expect. “We have been challenged by a lack of institutional support for the program. The college has denied the program any funding for administrative support and refused to adjust assignments of current staff...It also refused to adjust the workloads of the faculty and dean co-coordinators to make it possible for them to focus appropriate energy on the program. Senior staff verbalize appreciation for MMUF, but the lack of tangible support undermines our effectiveness and beclouds the image and prestige of the program. It is our hope that additional changes are about to take place. Even the administrative assistant has made a difference in efficiency and maintaining regular communication with the Fellows.”

One Program Coordinator observed, “Right now I am part-time, and almost 100% supported by another grant. Once that grant goes away my support goes away. I do not think it is unreasonable for the foundation to provide institutions with a list of expectations in terms of institutional support for staff time (i.e., a minimum of ten hours a week for an administrator, a certain course release for faculty coordinators, and administrative help that is spelled out as “x” share of a secretary[‘s working hours]) If the institution has to cough up some support, I think they might view the program differently--other grants do spell out what the matching institutional commitment to staffing will be.” Another Coordinator noted that their most significant challenge had been maintaining the program’s flexibility in the face of changes in their institution’s structure and reporting relationships. “[Our most significant challenge has been] being flexible in responding to the many structural changes in administration of undergraduate education [at our institution]. MMUF has reported to different offices and its proximity to [the] highest levels of university administration has varied.”

Another Program Coordinator noted that obtaining support from critical institutional stakeholders had been a challenge. “The most significant challenge I have faced at my institution is gaining the support of the administration. For reasons that I do not fully understand, many of my efforts to recruit MMUF students and to publicize the benefits of

the program for the students have been thwarted. I have been given additional administrative and committee assignments that impose additional restraints on my time. I have been overtly blocked from doing my own research, which has a direct impact on my MMUF [Fellows], and I've been challenged to 'demonstrate my commitment' to the university in other ways that take me away from the kinds of things that directly connect with academic development."

- **Ensuring an Adequate and Consistent Supply of Mentors**

The MMUF program relies upon the active and consistent participation of faculty members as student mentors. Some Program Coordinators noted that securing and ensuring the consistent involvement of faculty had proven to be a challenge. One Coordinator said, "The biggest challenge has been finding faculty members who are willing to serve as mentors, not merely as advisors. My institution is something of a hybrid--a college in size, but with some graduate programs, and a faculty that is more involved in research and other professional activities than faculty at a typical liberal-arts college. The faculty is relatively small, so it quite often occurs that only one faculty member represents the area in which a fellow is interested in doing research. If that faculty member goes on sabbatical and does not understand--or want to understand--that mentoring is not an on-again, off-again activity, the MMUF Fellow may be left without anyone to guide his or her research. Those Fellows who have failed to follow through are almost without exception those who could not find a suitable mentor or found one but were left in the lurch. Inadequate mentoring also accounts for the serious writing difficulties some of the Fellows have; I do my best to monitor their writing and offer guidance, but I cannot be acquainted with the subject matter, stylistic conventions, and vocabulary of all the Mellon fields." In response to questions about the most significant challenge, one Program Coordinator reported, "Securing uniformly high-quality faculty mentoring for all Fellows. The quality of departments varies and the availability of suitable mentors in different departments varies greatly," while another echoed this same sentiment when she observed, "Maintaining a pool of full-time faculty who are available and willing to mentor our students."

- **Other Challenges**

The above challenges were the most frequently reported by Program Coordinators; however, other challenges were also reported. For example, one Program Coordinator commented on the impact of MMUF's post-2003 name change and outreach to non-minority students: "The [most significant] challenge is to sustain the original aims of MMUF to change the face of the academy, now that the program has been symbolically connected to the mission of Benjamin E. Mays. Our first MMUF cohort after the change was a distinctly different group of applicants and led to an untraditional cohort chosen by the selection committee. The larger challenge, then, was to provide a new way to convey the goals of the program to the professors who nominate the candidates and the committee who selects the fellows. We arranged a meeting with the faculty at the start of the spring term this year and made a PowerPoint presentation about the program highlighting the symbolic importance of Dr. Mays' history of mentorship. Secondly, and almost simultaneously, several new and similar funding means have become available on

this campus to first-year students in the form of four-year scholarships. Such students in effect are removed from the pool of nominees for our MMUF program. It remains to be seen what impact, if any, this ‘embarrassment of riches’ will have on our local program.”

In interviews and surveys, some program coordinators reported that staff turnover had presented a challenge to continuity of the program. One Coordinator said, “In terms of the program structure/operations itself, there has been a great deal of turnover in the Mellon Co-Coordinator position. The holders of the position have been great colleagues, but the lack of stability means that relationships and program knowledge have to be often reestablished...”

■ Data from MMUF Fellows

MMUF Fellows identified a range of challenges that they experienced while participating in the MMUF program. These included challenges associated with: **1) conducting undergraduate research (e.g., identifying an appropriate topic, balancing time devoted to course work and time devoted to research, etc.); 2) time management; 3) mentoring (e.g., identifying the right mentor, working effectively with mentors, etc.); and 4) financial concerns.**

■ **Conducting Undergraduate Research**

In surveys and interviews, a substantial number of MMUF Fellows noted that the process of identifying an appropriate research topic, and confining themselves to a specific research interest, had been a challenge. As one Fellow noted, “The biggest challenge has been narrowing my focus/question down, because my interests are so broad.” Another Fellow observed, “I feel that I was often very overwhelmed by all the possibilities of my research, and I lacked the structure and necessary goal[-setting skills] to further my research adequately.” Other Fellows noted that the abundance of possible topics presented challenges. One Fellow, for example, observed, “One feels like a little kid in a candy store. Mellon provides us with the means (with our semester stipends) to fund any research interest we wish. Biting off more than I can chew has been my biggest hindrance.” Another said, “Sticking to a research topic is the biggest challenge. As I learn more things, my attention moves to something else I like. So it's challenging to stick with just one idea and not waiver from it.”

■ **Time Management**

Although selecting a research topic is challenging for some Fellows, for others, managing their time, especially in regard to balancing time for research with course work and other academic demands, poses an important challenge. “The biggest challenge is balancing regular course schedules, leadership roles on campus, and completing the Mellon project. The research project is somewhat too extensive for a college student who is striving to maintain a high GPA, graduate on time, and still enjoy life!” Another Fellow reported, “I had a very hard time coping with both my daily course load and my research. I think perhaps if I had better structured time to do research it might have been easier...”

Another Fellow noted, “The biggest challenge I have faced with the MMUF program has been being able to find the time outside of my classes, coursework, and extracurricular activities to complete my research. I find it very difficult to squeeze every element required to complete my research into my academic schedule.” Some Fellows reported that, over time, they learned to manage their time more efficiently: “My biggest problem initially was being able to manage my time to include my research. As time progressed, I became better at it and now that I am a second-semester senior, I feel that I can adequately manage my time between research, course work and other things that are a part of my life.”

- **Mentoring**

Mentoring is a key component of the program. For some Fellows, securing a compatible mentor, establishing an effective working relationship, and working productively with their mentors can be a challenge. One Fellow noted, “Finding a mentor was difficult for me. The person I thought would be my mentor wound up being too busy (and is probably leaving the University soon). While I’ve found someone who is intellectually interested in my research topic, finding someone who I interact well with, personally, to be my mentor, has been more difficult.” Another said, “Finding someone who wanted to be an active mentor was a problem. The experience has influenced the type of mentor I will be.”

In some instances, Fellows reported that the match between their interests and those of their mentor were not necessarily congruent. “The mentoring program did not work effectively for me. My mentor did not know anything about my research and provided little help to help me conduct my research. I believe that mentors should have similar workshops to help them understand the goals and objectives of the program so that they can be better equipped to help students in their research endeavors...” Another noted, “The biggest challenge has been working with my mentor--balancing what I’m interested in and what I want to do with what she’s interested in and what she thinks I should do.”

Fellows also reported challenges in developing and maintaining productive relationships with their mentors. “[My biggest challenge has been] trying to develop a relationship with my mentor. I believe I did not make the best choice by choosing a mentor who I was not familiar with...” Another Fellow noted, “Keeping in touch with my faculty mentor has proved to be a challenge.” Others noted that schedules and personalities sometimes presented challenges. One said “[It’s been a challenge]... maintaining the mentorship with the faculty member. We are always very busy,” while another observed that it was a challenge “having to deal with a mentor who is very much unlike me in terms of work ethic, time-management, and interpersonal skills.”

- **Financial Concerns**

In open-ended survey questions, some Fellows observed that financial concerns constituted a challenge to their participation. In some instances, Fellows referred to inadequate resources with which to finance term-time and summer living expenses. As one Fellow reported, “Money has been the biggest challenge and frustration with the MMUF program. Though our stipends for travel and technology are more than enough, I

consistently find that our summer living stipends/school year stipends are less than sufficient. Typically, I have to get a job just to cover rent and basic living expenses such as food, electricity, etc. for the summer, which is a huge distraction from my research.” Another Fellow said, “The program doesn’t provide room and board so I spent most of my stipend towards these two things.” Another fellow, when asked about the biggest challenge faced, said, “The fact that Mellon has not taken into account the challenges that students in the public school system have to face--having to work while in school, just to be able to stay in school. There are many more non-traditional students in the public school system than there are in the private, and the program should take this into account and modify some of its demands and expectations to best help these students. This would seem to best corroborate its mission statement of trying to actually help people rather than hinder them or complicate matters for them.”

Other MMUF Fellows said that the unpunctual receipt of stipends had presented a challenge. “My primary frustration with the program has been delays in the processing of payments of the stipend.” “Reimbursement is the biggest challenge because it is not prompt at all.”

▣ Data From MMUF Graduate Students

Although graduate students reported a wide-range of benefits that they derive from participation in MMUF, and 98 percent said that they would recommend the MMUF program to other students who might be eligible for the program, graduate students also identified a variety of challenges. Among the challenges that students experience are those associated with: **1) inefficient communication of program-related information; 2) access to program-related postgraduate funding; 3) program structure and operation; 4) modification of MMUF’s original mission; and 5) disaffiliation from the program.**

▪ **Inefficient Communication of Program-Related Information**

Graduate students frequently commented that inefficient communication of program-related information presented challenges to them. Some observed that such communication appeared to be inconsistent, while others observed that the absence of timely communication presented an obstacle to accessing available program resources. When asked, “What has been the biggest challenge you have encountered or problem you have experienced while affiliated with the MMUF program?” one MMUF graduate student observed, “Inconsistent flow of information. For several years after [my] undergraduate career, I didn't receive any information from MMUF and even after enrolling in a PhD program, I haven't always been alerted to various MMUF-related opportunities. Frequently, [Name of Undergraduate MMUF Advisor] would tell me about something, and then I [would] contact the appropriate folks based on *this* information, and ask to be added to the appropriate e-mail list. Had it not been for my advisor’s alerts, I would have missed out on grant/fellowship opportunities, for example.” Another graduate student noted that the biggest challenge had been “being notified of grant opportunities [as a] postgrad. I had much more clear and efficient communication with MMUF as an undergrad, but then transitioning to SSRC has been quite murky. For example, there was no clarified enrollment process for receiving my grad fellowship

monies from SSRC, even though their staff has been most helpful and prompt to respond to these issues. The online portal also gives me frequent technical difficulties.” Another graduate student summarized students’ concerns, saying, “At times, the flow of information within the MMUF family is not as good as it needs to be. While things have certainly improved over the past two years, there is still a lot of work to be done to make sure that all fellows are aware of available fellowships and upcoming conferences...”

While most graduate students who remarked about the challenges presented by inefficient communication also expressed concern about the impact of such communication on their knowledge of available resources, some pointed out that communication challenges also left them uninformed about changes in program structure and operation. For example, one graduate student said, “The biggest challenge has been lack of communication by the MMUF program about the program's recent changes. Lots of changes are occurring with the program which haven't been announced to the Fellows. I believe the MMUF program needs to streamline communication with the Fellows, especially now that we don't have an annual nation-wide conference.” Another observed, “Remaining abreast of what opportunities are available [has been a challenge]. After leaving my undergraduate institution, I lost contact with my former advisor and often found out about applications and deadlines from other MMUF Fellows who happened to be at my graduate institution.” Another stated, “[The biggest challenge has been] lack of communication. Despite repeated requests I seem to have been dropped from most forms of communication; I have failed to receive notifications of conferences, etc., which I've been unhappy about.”

▪ **Access to Program-Related Funding**

A number of MMUF graduate students commented that they had faced challenges associated with the receipt of funding for which they felt they were eligible. As mentioned above, many commented that they either did not receive adequate information about funding opportunities or received such information in an untimely manner. Other graduate students, however, noted that when information was available, they sometimes found that funds were difficult to access and were inadequate. “I have struggled somewhat with opportunities to find consistent funding in order to finish my PhD in the length of time my program expects. MMUF's support programs are helpful, but applying for them has been stressful and there has been less assistance in figuring out how to secure support throughout graduate school--especially in the summer--than I have needed.” Another graduate student observed, “The biggest challenge has been attaining summer funding, given that my department does not provide it. While MMUF does offer the Predoctoral Grant, which can be used to cover some of these expenses, it still is not enough to cover an entire summer's worth of research and living expenses.” Another said, “I spent a lot of money on books, expecting to get reimbursed through the graduate support stipend. However, the eligibility rules changed the semester I entered school and I had to work extra jobs to pay off that debt.” Another graduate student observed that funding for graduate students should be commensurate with that of undergraduates. “I would like to see just as [many] if not more resources being devoted to graduate students [as were] given to undergrads.”

A few surveyed graduate students expressed concerns about MMUF's loan repayment program. In response to the question about the biggest challenge they faced, one MMUF

graduate student survey respondent noted, "...upon seeking information about the MMUF's loan repayment program, I felt as though the administrative coordinator brushed me off and discouraged me from further inquiring about the repayment of my undergraduate loans. Yes, detailed e-mail correspondences were provided, thus explaining the oddly ever-changing rules and regulations that supposedly pertained to my alma mater's way of handling the repayment of my student loans. At one moment the administrative coordinator suggested that I need not worry about having my loans repaid since I am still in the earlier stages of my PhD program, and it is still up in the air as to how things will turn out for me in my program. Time after time, I felt as though I had to repeatedly prove my worthiness, as if I were begging for charity. In short, the information I had been given by the administrative coordinator from my former MMUF undergraduate institution significantly differed from that [which] current MMUF fellows from that time (the 2005-2006 academic school year) had been told in their monthly MMUF meetings. As a result of this treatment, I have ceased to pursue MMUF's repayment plan for undergraduate loans." Another graduate student noted, "Some of the details of loan repayment can be confusing," while another observed, "Getting my student loans repaid is always quite a task. You have to seriously follow up on it, and it should be an easier process."

- **Program Structure and Operation**

A few MMUF graduate students reported challenges that they felt were associated with the structure and operation of the program. One, for example, said that there appeared to be differences between the undergraduate and graduate MMUF programs: "As a graduate student, the Mellon program at my university has no structure. The students meet once a month and have no requirements. They seem very unmotivated. It's a stark contrast to my *undergraduate* Mellon program, which was extremely active and dedicated." Another MMUF graduate student reported that "as far as the MMUF program at [Name of School] specifically is concerned, I cannot say that I enjoyed my experience there. Personally, I felt there was an enormous disconnect between the faculty and students--there was a sense of distrust between the two parties. This disconnect then led to unsuccessful workshops, and oftentimes painful monthly meetings. We did not understand each other--but only one party was making final decisions about meetings, workshops, etc. I felt supervised..." Reflecting on the undergraduate experience, one graduate student mentioned, "There was little accountability in the *undergraduate* program. I specifically asked my directors to read my summer works and comment on them, but had I not asked, they would not have read them. I also requested that each Fellow make a small presentation on our work, [and] again, had I not asked for that, we would not have known what our fellow Mellons were researching or have [had] any space to practice oral summaries of our work with each other."

- **Modification of MMUF's Mission**

Related to the reported challenges associated with the structure and operation of the program are challenges associated with the change in MMUF's eligibility requirements which accompanied the program's name change in 2003. For some, the program's decision to include non-minority students was seen as a challenge to the program's original mission and purpose. One MMUF graduate student noted, "I think that the changes to the program's mission a few years ago--its fear of being sued--were never

adequately explained to the Fellows (we all felt caught by surprise), nor did we have a thorough enough debate or discussion about what it means for the MMUF program's goals.”

Others reported that changes in the program had created challenges. “I have experienced some tension between the aims of the program and the needs of the community. While the goal has been to increase minorities in the academy, this implicitly requires group cohesion and motivation that amounts to community development. In the last few years, efforts to consolidate interests and build stronger networks have been actively undercut by restructuring, when it was advertised otherwise. Community development may be too lofty a goal when the logistics of matriculation and career advancement are the only real measure of the program.” Another MMUF graduate student observed, “The destruction of that sense of community and networking over the past few years [has been the biggest challenge]. Many of us are still quite angry with how these changes were made and not only necessarily about the inclusion of whites, but of the restrictions on participation at the conferences precisely for the core of the group (years 3 and up). The workshops, papers, and so forth, were secondary (we get enough of these opportunities in our departments and disciplines) to the friendships and social networking. Also, the focus of the program has seemed to shift to PhDs (the Program's Advisory Board) and the first-third year [graduate students], at the expense of the rest of us. We should be able to volunteer at the conferences and participate to a greater degree as presenters and moderators.”

- **Disaffiliation from the MMUF program**

Some MMUF graduate students found that as they progress through their graduate school careers, maintaining a relationship to, and involvement with, MMUF presented a challenge. Although they attributed their sense of disconnection from the program to a variety of causes, some graduate students nonetheless reported that they felt disaffiliated from MMUF. When asked about the biggest challenge MMUF graduate students faced, one survey respondent wrote, “The biggest challenge has been maintaining the network communications. I often find myself disconnected from other fellows [in ways such] as having never been invited to attend a summer conference.” Another graduate student said, “I do not really feel a sense of community with others in the MMUF program. I feel a bit like an outsider at the conferences; I feel like we are all crabs in a bucket scrambling over finite resources.”

While some survey respondents attributed their sense of disaffiliation to personal reasons, a few said that the absence of MMUF colleagues in their graduate institutions led to a sense of isolation. “After having children, it became a bit more difficult for me to make it to every summer conference; perhaps because of this, I have not felt the same level of support as I come to the final years of the dissertation process. My contacts with MMUF have dwindled and I do not feel I know that much about the current staff or organization. There do not seem to be as many opportunities for fellows to gather at this stage of our studies.” Another MMUF graduate student said, “I’m feeling very alone and insecure at my graduate institution, without any other Mellons (I didn't know there was one here in a different program until now, years later)... [I have been] feeling that I did not have a safe space or a community to turn to with practical and emotional issues.”

Some informants expressed a longing for connection to the program. “I, sadly, attend a school without a Mellon ‘chapter.’ I attend the conferences and seminars, but then return to a Mellon-less campus. Interacting with Mellon fellows, for me, does not happen on a regular basis. I guess helping me to find Mellon groups in my area, the middle of the country, would be a big help.” Summarizing the sentiments of those who felt disconnected from MMUF, one MMUF graduate student remarked, “I think that there should be a larger effort toward maintaining ties with fellows after they finish their undergraduate studies.”

▣ Data From MMUF PhDs

MMUF PhDs are, of course, the most chronologically distant group in relation to the undergraduate MMUF experience. However, because of their multi-year experience of, and relationship to, MMUF, PhDs offer a unique perspective on the program. A survey completed by eighty MMUF Fellows who had attained their PhDs, 80% of whom are now teaching in higher education institutions, provided information about program-related challenges. Among these challenges were: **1) perceived liabilities resulting from changes in MMUF program conferences; 2) problems securing adequate financial resources during graduate school; 3) differential treatment of graduate students in math and science; 4) problems associated with addressing the needs of non-African-American MMUF students); and 5) perceptions of elitism within the program.**

▪ **Annual PhD Conferences**

Some PhDs, when asked, “What is the biggest challenge you encountered or problem you experienced while affiliated with the MMUF program?” reported that they felt that issues related to MMUF conferences, and especially the summer conference, represented a significant challenge. A few PhDs noted that changes made to MMUF conferences represented a loss. One MMUF PhD said, “When the annual conference format changed, I was very disappointed because I felt that a treasured space was being taken away from me,” and another noted, “It often feels that the program administrators do not understand that the fellowship, and particularly the conference, was a family support network for many, if not most, of us. A cavalier attitude towards removing it has turned many of us cynical towards the program and the wider academy.” Another PhD, when asked to name the program’s most challenging aspect, said, “That I can’t go to summer conferences anymore! I mean, I know numbers grow and money is limited, but I wonder how the ‘newbies’ will be mentored if not by the older Mellons? Also, I feel a desire to give back to the next generation of Mellons in the way that those ahead of me lent their support. There’s little way to do that.” “My only complaint is that the conferences ended. I received my PhD last May, and was looking forward to the yearly conference with such excitement. It is the one thing I used to anticipate every year. My world is situated between Mellons and everybody else. The conference was the reason for that.”

▪ **Financial Resources**

Despite financial assistance provided by MMUF-related sources, financial resources appeared to remain a challenge for some PhDs. As one PhD said, “My biggest challenge was always money--which was partially alleviated by the Mellon fellowship. I was on the waiting list for three dissertation-writing grants. I didn't get any of them. This made my final writing year incredibly burdensome.” Another MMUF PhD reported, “Having enough research/travel funds to conduct my research in a timely, effective, and rigorous fashion [was the biggest challenge]. As tenure approaches, I have had to loan money to myself or rethink my research due to lack of research assistance/funds. Although I apply for funds at my institution, I do not always get them - largely because it is a public institution strapped for research funds.” Another PhD, reflecting on the way that fellowship funds had been distributed, noted, “In hindsight, it seems superficial, but at the time, I was very frustrated about how the stipends were administered. I wish clear guidelines and procedural information had been provided to me about how stipends were dispersed. I recall feeling as if the college had intercepted "my money," while fellows at other colleges had open access to "their money." My understanding is that now the guidelines for paying the stipend have been clarified and made more consistent among participating institutions.”

- **Differential Treatment of MMUF Fellows in Math and Sciences**

A few MMUF PhDs expressed concerns about what they perceived to be differential treatment of students whose disciplines are in math and science. “While I was a graduate student, Mellon sponsored yearly conferences for graduate students in the MMUF program. These conferences were a challenge for science/math students to participate in because there was a tendency for the organizers of the conferences to want to have a theme for the conference, and students in quantitative disciplines had a hard time visualizing how their work could fit into any of the themes. When students in the sciences voiced these concerns, it was not clear that we were heard. When I tried to volunteer to organize one of the conferences, it was not clear to me that I had not been chosen to help until I received the announcement for the next conference. I believe that it is experiences like these that made many of the science/math students [who] were in MMUF at the same time that I was feel like the unwanted stepchildren of MMUF.” Another MMUF PhD, reflecting on his experience in the sciences, observed, “As a math/science graduate student and now a postdoc, I have found it difficult to participate in many of the workshops or conferences because they are really not intended for me. I guess most MMUF fellows are doing humanities studies, but it would be nice if there were some event targeted specifically to the math and science students.” Yet another MMUF PhD observed, “I am in the sciences, and that was rare in the program when I started. Having so many meetings during the day made it a bit difficult to really do research since my research was connected to the lab, and many experiments require an uninterrupted block of time. Moreover, I was not eligible for all of the benefits that other Mellon Mays Fellow received; that has been taken care of and I am truly happy for it.”

- **Needs of Non-African-American Program Participants**

In interviews and surveys of MMUF PhDs, some informants reported that they felt that the needs of non-African-American minorities may not always be adequately addressed by the program. When asked about the biggest challenge, one respondent reported, “There are many challenges - but one is that not only are there few Latino/a faculty in the

academy today, but I also feel that the MMUF program has inadequately addressed the needs and experiences of Latino and Latina Mellon Fellows.” Another said, “I wonder if my feeling of ‘outsiderness’ does have something to do with being Latino. Very rarely have the conferences featured (and then validated) the experiences of Latino academics. While I always learn from any academic of color, MMUF has often privileged African-American academic experiences. And if I feel somewhat marginalized as a Latino, I can't even imagine what some of the Filipino or Native American students feel.”

- **Perception of Elitism Within the Program**

Some MMUF PhDs reported concerns about social issues—including perceptions of elitism within the program, and the implicit signals sent by MMUF about social status. One MMUF PhD noted, “As an alum of an HBCU, the biggest challenge I have encountered is dealing with the lack of respect I feel the program has for the faculty at HBCUs. I am grateful for the experience that I and other colleagues have had through MMUF, but I think the program would be a lot stronger if faculty at HBCUs had more control over their individual programs and if our schools were not treated as second-class institutions. The message I hear from Mellon is that if I were to return to my alma mater to teach, it would be almost as if I had not gone through the Mellon program or attended the graduate school I attended.” Another PhD noted that there were implicit assumptions about the proper path for MMUF participants: “[The biggest challenge has been] the class assumptions at the beginning stage of my grad school career regarding the right school, the right career path and the right topic. If I had believed what I heard at the first meetings, I would have thought doing work on race and medicine at [name of university] was *déclassé*... and tired.” Another noted status tensions among PhDs at different kinds of higher education institutions. “[There have been] tensions between Mellon Fellows situated at Research One institutions and elite institutions versus those who were not. MMUF did little to stem the reinforcement of social hierarchies within the program. In fact, it often encouraged it by solely focusing on a particular model of success at particular institutions.... This also speaks to the problem I encountered with the elitist viewpoint of the program--it went against everything that I imagined it would be, since I was a first-generation college graduate and a student of African-American history. I thought the powerful sense of authentic community and service to one's organic community was something that could not be debated. Instead it took me nearly ten years of Mellon to discover that it was just as self-serving and pretentious [as] graduates who choose careers for money. I decided to break free of such perceptions and I am happy for it...”

IV. Stakeholders' Suggestions for Strengthening the MMUF Program

Although data collected by the program review indicate that MMUF produces a wide-range of salutary effects for individuals and institutions, the program review also gathered data that indicate ways that the program might be strengthened. In surveys and interviews, program participants and stakeholders were asked to suggest ways that the program might be changed to better serve participants in the future.

▣ Data from MMUF Program Coordinators

Program Coordinators suggested that MMUF could be strengthened by **1) modifying MMUF's program structure and operation; 2) enhancing communication among cohorts of MMUF participants; and 3) more consistently notifying partner institutions about MMUF students who matriculate to graduate school.**

▪ **Modify MMUF's Program Structure and Operation**

Interviews and surveys of MMUF Program Coordinators revealed a number of suggestions for ways that the program might be strengthened, including modifications to MMUF-related curricula and instruction (especially in regard to Fellows' research skills); and enhancing mentoring training for faculty.

Some Program Coordinators observed that they would like to see MMUF employ a basic curriculum and more structured instruction that would expose students to a more systematic set of program content. When asked to suggest a change that would enhance the MMUF program, one Coordinator suggested, "A required curricula linked to a class that meets regularly would be a great place to start." Another observed, "We have started requiring participation in a for-credit research workshop that brings the students together for genuine academic interaction. I think that has been the most significant improvement we have made... I recommend it to all."⁸ Another Program Coordinator reported, "I would like to see a slightly more structured use of the monthly meetings with Fellows. Right now, the meetings are often used to remind students of upcoming deadlines and events, with occasional discussion of academic issues or an occasional visiting speaker. While I would not want to turn our meetings into another 'class' that students were required to take, and while I think the informal nature of the meetings is a good thing, I do think students might benefit more from additional discussion, perhaps on topics related to the life they are going to face in graduate school and as faculty members. Our students get research training from their mentors, so the curricula I am thinking of would not be 'research method' types of instruction, but rather additional information and

⁸ While some Program Coordinators suggested that MMUF might consider adapting a standard curriculum across campuses, others said this would not be a desirable development. One Coordinator said, "I think one of the strengths of MMUF has been that each granting institution has the freedom to structure its own program within certain parameters. While I might be interested in changing our Mellon program's mentoring structure, I do not think it would be in the best interests of the MMUF national program to mandate major changes in the program at all schools."

discussion about the more universal questions our students might have about academe: ‘How do I choose a mentor once I get to graduate school?’ ‘How will it differ from my undergraduate studies?’ ‘How will I manage the workload?’ Even professionalization questions such as ‘How does one achieve tenure?’ or ‘What makes research publishable?’ might be things our students can start considering now, even before they are in graduate school.”

Coordinators frequently suggested that MMUF redouble its emphasis on providing Fellows with research skills and experience. One Coordinator mentioned, “We would like to expand opportunities for curricular enhancement, specifically a class or two on research (semester-long) to enhance Fellows’ research skills,” and another said, “I think that the program could be strengthened by having a number of small MMUF faculty mentoring research sessions for which undergraduate Fellows receive academic credit and faculty mentors receive course release or additional stipend allocation.” One other Coordinator said, “We will be trying a two-track process in the fall: to separate juniors and seniors at times, requiring seniors to work on graduate school applications and providing research training for juniors. I think my experience demonstrates that the students need more directive programming.”

Program Coordinators emphasized the vital role that mentoring plays for MMUF Fellows and the centrality of mentoring to the program’s success. Some Coordinators said that they would like to see more professional development for mentors. One Coordinator suggested, “Specialized training for mentors on what it means to be a mentor has been requested in the past - and as Coordinators, we have spoken to the mentors and directed them to literature with respect to this. I still feel that having a specialized training program for mentors in place in a more official capacity would be useful and extremely beneficial for both mentors and students. Maybe an MMUF video or DVD explaining ‘how to be an effective mentor’ could be something to think about for future reference.” Another reported that it would be helpful if there were some core and standardized material that could be used to orient mentors. “Because of differing mentoring styles, perhaps it would be beneficial to put some general guidelines in place for all mentors to be sure that students stay in the pipeline and complete the graduate program. Increasing frequency of student meetings may be helpful, as well, particularly if scholars who have successfully completed the program, both undergraduate and graduate, can be brought to these meetings to talk about their experiences and encourage more students to enter and remain in the program.”

One Coordinator said that MMUF mentors would benefit from more exchange of information and best practices. “As the mentors are the cornerstone of the program, I believe that there need to be more meetings among mentors. Mentors need to be able to talk about mentoring and best practices. Mentors also need to be made aware of how their influence affects their fellows.” Another reported that he would like to see the program give faculty mentors release time to work with MMUF Fellows.

- **Enhance Communication Among Cohorts of MMUF Participants**

Many Program Coordinators observed that they would like to see stronger links forged between undergraduate Fellows and Fellows who had advanced to graduate school, and beyond. Such links, Coordinators maintained, would serve to strengthen the benefits of the program for all participants. As one Coordinator observed, “The graduate student initiatives program already seems very strong, but it would be great to see more opportunities for veteran fellows (current grad students, PhDs in post-docs or on the tenure track, and tenured faculty) to interact with undergraduate fellows...” Another Coordinator stressed the importance of communication among cohorts of MMUF participants when she reported, “In theory, the three phases of the program [now] address the needs of MMUF graduate students at appropriate points in the journey. However, there needs to be more interaction between fellows at different stages (e.g., first through third years can see sixth-plus years present papers at the summer conference) so that informal internal mentoring can occur.”

- **Notify Programs About MMUF Students Who Matriculate to Graduate School**

Some Coordinators expressed a need for better tracking and notification of MMUF programs about those Fellows who matriculate to graduate school. When asked what kinds of changes would be helpful for the program, one survey respondent noted, “...those of us at institutions with graduate programs are delighted when Mellon Fellows enter our institutions as grad students, and we would like to welcome them to come to our programs. We don't, though, always know that they are on our campuses. We Coordinators (and I include myself in this) need to be better about telling Coordinators at other Mellon institutions when our fellows are going to attend their grad schools.” Another observed that he would like to see “better notification to MMUF institutions of which MMUF fellows have matriculated [to those institutions].” Another Program Coordinator reported that the program could benefit from improved dissemination to Coordinators of information about MMUF Fellows who matriculate. “I would definitely like to receive a database of our Mellon graduate students nationwide. We know about our institution's graduate Mellon Fellows by word of mouth now, and we would certainly like to include all of them in some of our MMUF activities.”

- Data from MMUF Fellows

MMUF Fellows identified changes to MMUF that they felt could strengthen the program's effectiveness. These changes include: **1) augmenting meetings and opportunities for social connections; and 2) refinements of MMUF programming.**

- **Enhance Opportunities for Social Connections**

MMUF undergraduate participants frequently reported that they felt that the program could be improved by increasing the number and quality of meetings, and by augmenting opportunities for social connection among current and past MMUF participants. In some

cases, Fellows reported that they would like to see MMUF sponsor more national-level meetings. “The MMUF program [could] be strengthened if there were more opportunities for Mellon Fellows to meet nationally, and talk about their interests and research. Considering that professors in specific disciplines meet to discuss their research, this will give us a taste of what it is like to explain your research focus to others.” Another Fellow observed, “An annual conference, where all MMUF participants could meet and present to one another their research, is much needed. This would create a broad community of MMUF participants who would be able to create networks for support and assistance on research issues.”

MMUF undergraduates expressed interest in increasing social connections to and communication among Fellows. As one Fellow noted, “The Fellows should get together more often. There is something to be said about communion with like-minded people. Most of us live far away from other fellows....” Another Fellow suggested that “regional graduate school fairs and allowing fellows to find mentors outside their own institutions would be helpful. Also, better communication between participating schools and their cohorts would be helpful. For example, the Princeton conference last year brought together students from all over the east coast and part of the midwest. It was interesting to meet Fellows from around the country and hear what they were working on.” Another MMUF Fellow observed, “The Mellon program could afford to improve the cross-college social aspect of the program. I think it’s important to make it easier for us to meet each other.”

Some Fellows reported that they felt that the program would be strengthened by creating more comprehensive connections among participants, including inter-cohort and inter-campus connections. One Fellow, for example, observed, “I would like the MMUF program to create a network between [undergraduate] fellows and [postgraduate] fellows, which allows [undergraduate] fellows to contact [graduate] fellows who have pursued careers in their chosen fields,” while another stressed the importance of creating connections among MMUF participants on different campuses: “I think that more interaction between MMUF students from the different, affiliated institutions would be incredibly valuable in terms of creating other bonds that could serve us later in life.”

- **Refine MMUF Programming**

Undergraduate Fellows suggested a number of ideas for refining MMUF. These ranged from refining the structure of the national program to strengthening the responsibilities of MMUF Mentors. “As I understand, MMUF seems to range widely from school to school. While I am extremely happy with the program at my university, I think that the program should have some sort of standardized research-oriented structure.” Another MMUF undergraduate participant noted, “I believe that there should be uniformity throughout the program, nationwide. The program should expose us to research opportunities earlier than usual. Instead of conducting research during our junior summer, we should be doing it earlier (perhaps in our sophomore year). We need to have more structured meetings.”

Some MMUF participants suggested changes related to program design and operation. Suggesting a way to strengthen campus-based MMUF seminars, one Fellow suggested that MMUF might “survey incoming cohorts about their particular research interests and

find a way to incorporate disparate disciplines and areas of concentration within disciplines into selected course readings. This would mean tailoring the seminars to the particular participating students. It might be difficult, but I think it would enrich the seminars to have students of varied academic backgrounds bring together their interests and find ways of relating them.” Another Fellow said, “I think students need more exposure to research and good writing techniques or presentation skills from their first year. I also think it would help early on to begin discussing the road to being a PhD and what other options are available for Mellon Fellows after graduating from undergraduate college.”

Other Fellows suggested ways to strengthen the role of mentors and coordinators. “[MMUF could be strengthened by] making sure the mentor relationship is strengthened; for example, through mid-semester evaluations from *both* students and professors.” Another Fellow noted that she felt that mentors could benefit from further specification of mentors’ responsibilities: “More time should be spent on explaining to mentors their responsibilities to the student...” while another observed, “I think that the MMUF Coordinator needs to have better and more frequent contact with students.”

Some Fellows felt that MMUF could be strengthened by increasing the frequency of contact between mentors and mentees. One Fellow, for example, said that she felt the program could be strengthened if it could ensure “more one-on-one time with each Fellow and the Program Coordinators to discuss graduate school or career plans.” Another observed, “The pressure on the mentor to encourage and meet with their mentee should be strengthened...”

Offering a comprehensive set of suggestions, one MMUF Fellow commented, “MMUF could have more of a classroom structure--it could be a ‘graduate school 101’ course, and tell us everything we need to know about grad school, including bringing in more graduate students for us to interview. It could also help us with the transition from undergraduate life to the ‘real world.’ It could also serve as a resource in understanding financial issues we will face as young scholars [upon] leaving the undergraduate campus and going wherever we choose to go. In all, there are many facets of a young scholar's life that are outside of just researching that present very real challenges. The program could/should address these issues so that we gain the knowledge not only of how to do research, but how to deal with the challenges of scholarly life.”

▣ Data From MMUF Graduate Students

Because of their recent experience as undergraduates and their current experience as graduates, MMUF graduate students have a distinctive perspective on ways that the program might be strengthened. In regard to the undergraduate MMUF program, MMUF graduate students suggested that the *undergraduate* MMUF program could be strengthened by: **1) increasing the number of opportunities for interaction among MMUF undergraduate and graduate students; 2) augmenting undergraduate Fellows’ preparation for graduate school, including providing more undergraduate conferences; and 3) strengthening the mentoring component of MMUF.**

- **Increase Opportunities for Interaction Among MMUF Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

Like other groups of MMUF stakeholders, many graduate students observed that they would like to see the undergraduate program provide more opportunities for undergraduate Fellows and MMUF graduate students to interact. As one graduate student said, "...it would be great if there was a way to have undergraduate Mellon Fellows get in touch with graduate Mellon Fellows at their campuses, or nearby." Another said, "I think the program could be strengthened by developing more communication between Fellows at different institutions. It would be a good way for the undergraduates to start realizing how big the Mellon family (and its resources) are."

Some MMUF graduate students reported that creating more opportunities for interaction would provide important information to MMUF undergraduates. One graduate student remarked, "My undergraduate Mellon experience was terrific--the only thing that might have helped was having more interaction with Mellon graduate students so I could have learned about the various phases of PhD work." Another graduate student suggested, "I think it would be awesome to have graduate student mentors in addition to a faculty mentor. Grads, I think, would be just as enthusiastic and remember what it's like to be an undergrad."

- **Augment Undergraduate Fellows' Preparation for Graduate School**

In interviews and surveys, MMUF graduate students reflected on their experience of the program and suggested that MMUF could be strengthened by augmenting the program's offerings of information and skill development. Some students suggested that they would like to see the program provide more information at an early stage in undergraduates' careers. One survey respondent, for example, noted, "I'd like to see more workshops to prepare for grad school, especially on how to apply, writing and rewriting [the] statement of purpose, and also college visits," while another observed that they felt that the undergraduate program could be strengthened by providing "more information about the nuts-and-bolts of applying to graduate schools and pursuing a career in the academy. Even when I applied to my PhD program, I didn't have a clear sense of how one practically went about pursuing a job in academia. Information about what that career trajectory typically looks like, i.e., coursework, teaching, fellowships, junior faculty...and what life is like at each step would have been very helpful..."

One graduate student noted that he would like to see the undergraduate program provide more background information to undergraduates about life in graduate school. "[MMUF should provide] more discussion about what life in graduate school is like beyond research. I met plenty of grad students through MMUF, but I always got the feeling that grad school would be just like a more intense version of college. The rhythm of work in graduate school, the social scene (especially because people are older and have spouses and families) were big surprises when I started grad school..." Another MMUF graduate student stressed the importance of providing timely information to MMUF undergraduates about life in graduate school: "[MMUF should] provide more information about what graduate school is, and what a career in research entails, starting *freshman* year with potential applicants/scholars. That is, MMUF should have information sessions

starting from the get-go, so that we can have that in mind and start thinking about what research we might do later in college.”

Some MMUF graduate students felt the MMUF program could be improved by refinements of undergraduate programming, including more frequent term-time MMUF meetings and undergraduate conferences. For example, one graduate student observed, “I know that each university conducts their program differently, but I certainly would encourage each program to have weekly meetings. Weekly meetings allow Fellows to become real colleagues and provide an atmosphere for sharing one's work without hesitation...” Another MMUF graduate student remarked, “There might be more frequent meetings for just undergraduate Fellows. Both on their campuses and [at] national meetings/conferences, just to strengthen their connection and help them form support networks to encourage them to go to graduate school and to help them survive it.” Another suggested that “it might also be worthwhile to have a summer week-long workshop for rising seniors about how to apply to graduate school.”

Many graduate students emphasized the importance of MMUF workshops, conferences and informal networks. “MMUF should host a region-wide or national undergraduate conference, like McNair does. They should invite grad students to come and talk with the undergrads at these conferences, but also give the students an opportunity to present their work to a wider audience.” Another graduate student proposed, “I think MMUF should sponsor a national conference for senior Fellows, which I think would provide a space to discuss grad school applications and provide a chance to hear the work of other fellows.”

- **Strengthen Mentoring**

Some MMUF graduate students felt that MMUF could be strengthened by refining MMUF's mentoring component. One graduate student observed, “Much depends on the faculty mentor. Some faculty just do it for pay incentive. So [I would suggest instituting] a way to monitor and reward those faculty who go beyond their required service and a way to call those faculty who do not take the responsibility seriously, accountable.” Similarly noting the potential value of enhancing the accountability of mentors, another graduate student said, “[I'd like to see] better accountability structures for mentors to ensure that students are getting [the] guidance and assistance they are supposed to be.”

Other MMUF graduate students remarked that the MMUF program could strive to more effectively apprise mentors of their roles and responsibilities. “MMUF could be more proactive in its efforts to inform mentors of their responsibilities. Mentors could be given some kind of compensation to make the job seem more appealing.” Emphasizing the importance of matching mentees and mentors, another Fellow said, “More attention should be paid to how mentors are matched with students. Matters of compatibility and availability should be as closely attended to as possible.”

While MMUF graduate students suggested ways to ensure that the undergraduate program effectively serves students, they also had numerous suggestions for ways that MMUF's *graduate* programs and services could be improved. These suggestions included: **1) enhancing the availability of program-related information; 2) supporting participants' interaction and communication; 3) bolstering financial**

support for MMUF graduate students; and 4) extending mentoring to graduate students.

- **Enhance the Availability of Program Related-Information**

MMUF graduate students frequently remarked that MMUF's graduate student-serving programs could be enhanced by the timely and effective distribution of information, especially about grants and other supportive services for graduate students.

One MMUF graduate student suggested, "I now know that the SSRC has all sorts of programs directed at MMUF graduate students - but perhaps they could publicize these events (I am thinking the PhD Retreat) more?" Another graduate student said, "I'm not really aware of what programs are there for us after we leave the undergraduate fellowship. I'm aware that they exist, but I'm not sure what they are, who they're targeting, and what I need to do to take part in them." Another graduate student suggested that "there should be someone who communicates and works with MMUF Fellows who are currently in graduate school, informing them of the process and the resources available to them. There should also be some sort of e-newsletter or something similar that deals with issues for graduate students in each stage of the process."

Access to current information about resources and colleagues is a prominent concern among current MMUF graduate students. Reflecting on the reported absence of sufficient information, one graduate student said, "It would have been more helpful to understand what your relationship to the program would be upon entering graduate school. Apart from the reimbursement aspect, I really knew nothing of what I was eligible for at that point. In retrospect, I feel that I was under-informed about, and hence under-prepared for, such opportunities."

A number of graduate students said that they would like to have greater access to information about resources and MMUF colleagues. "I would like to know more about what the program already does to serve graduate students," one graduate student observed. Another said, "It would be great if there were a resource website of sorts that listed everything from loan information to grants and scholarships to calls for papers and jobs openings," while another reported, "Perhaps the MMUF could create a listserv similar to the Ford Fellows' list (if it has, perhaps it could be advertised more) to allow the network of Fellows to communicate with each other more efficiently."

- **Support MMUF Participant Interaction and Communication**

A number of graduate student survey respondents and interviewees noted that MMUF should encourage greater social connection and communication among program participants. One survey respondent reported, "Well, as a first-year graduate student, I'm looking forward to the conference in New York this summer. I was feeling a little untethered after coming from such a supportive and structure Mellon-undergrad experience into a graduate school program. Maybe if there could be an online forum or newsletter or a way to link and update Mellon grads on organizational changes, meetings, conferences, etc. I feel out of touch now that I am away from my undergrad institution. If my old advisor hadn't forwarded me the info the summer conference I wouldn't even have known

about that. In addition, I wouldn't be aware of the SSRC-Mellon grants if one of the older Mellons in my department hadn't told me. And until I filled out this survey I hadn't even heard of the Mellon connection to the Woodrow Wilson [Foundation].”

While some MMUF graduate students suggested technology-based means for providing information, others said that in-person events and processes could help to strengthen connections and community. When asked about ways to strengthen programs and services, one PhD student responded that she would like to see “much more supported interaction with cross-cohorts of Mellons! It is so important and crucial to our survival in academia. Please develop another alternative for the summer conference to allow Mellons beyond their third year to participate. [This would] ...allow for cross- cohort interaction and mentoring...” Another said, “I would like to re-open the summer conference to all currently enrolled MMUF PhD students.” Another reported: “The restructuring of the annual Mellon conference to target the needs of fellows in different stages of the PhD program has done a great job to better serve graduate students. Though I was hesitant at first, I can see the need and benefit of having different conferences/workshops. It would be great, though, to have a conference where all Fellows are invited every couple of years. It builds strong support networks and cohesion among fellows.”

- **Bolster Financial Support for MMUF Graduate Students**

Many MMUF graduate students alluded to their need for enhanced financial support during their years of graduate study. Although the SSRC and Woodrow Wilson provide support, many graduate students appeared to feel that they need additional opportunities to obtain enhanced financial support during graduate school. As one graduate student reported, “I experienced some difficulty in convincing the SSRC or WWNFF that ‘living expenses’ are critical to hastening progress toward completion. I am frequently in situations where I do not need a research or travel grant for costs ostensibly associated with my dissertation (since my research is local), but I do need money to pay my rent. I find that I have to work outside jobs, such as temping and freelance writing, which distract me from writing my dissertation. I lost an entire semester of writing last year because I had to work an outside job.” Another MMUF graduate student said, “Continued summer support for graduate students could be a good way of strengthening the nexus between Fellows and the Foundation as they transition to graduate school. In undergrad, it was reassuring to know that I would be able to conduct research because of the Foundation's generosity in providing a stipend and funding for research-related costs. As graduate students, this funding would provide Fellows with increased flexibility in terms of the work that they do, the professors with whom they may work, and other intangibles that would facilitate their path toward joining the illustrious list of MMUF alumni with PhDs.”

Some MMUF graduate students said that they felt that graduate students could benefit from Mellon-provided stipends in the same way that undergraduates do. As one survey respondent said, “I know that as an undergrad the semester stipends really helped out, and it would be great if something like that could be given out to graduate students.” Another said, “Summer and yearly stipends/grants for research are always necessary for grad students who are conducting MA or dissertation research.”

- **Graduate Mentoring**

MMUF graduate students reported that following completion of undergraduate work, mentoring remains a critical need. One survey respondent noted, “I feel that MMUF should assign each of us an MMUF mentor for grad school just as we had one for undergrad. I have had no mentorship in graduate school at all. I wish I had an MMUF person who checked in with me monthly in graduate school like I had in undergrad.” Another MMUF graduate student observed, “Graduate students could use the same services, mentoring, colloquia, etc., [that] the undergraduates have at their disposal.” Noting the need for continued mentoring, another MMUF graduate student said, “I feel graduate students could benefit from a Mellon faculty mentor, too.”

- Data From MMUF PhDs

Although MMUF PhDs are the most chronologically distant from the undergraduate program, surveyed PhDs nonetheless offered suggestions for ways in which the undergraduate program could be strengthened. These suggestions included: **1) creating opportunities for undergraduates and postgraduate MMUF participants to connect with one another for the purpose of sharing knowledge and experiences; 2) enhancing MMUF undergraduate mentoring; and 3) expanding the MMUF program to reach more students.**

- **Creating Opportunities for Undergraduates and Postgraduate MMUF Participants to Connect**

MMUF PhDs, like their undergraduate and graduate student colleagues, often noted that the program could better serve undergraduates if it made greater efforts to create opportunities for undergraduates and postgraduates to connect with one another for the purpose of sharing knowledge and experience. When MMUF PhDs were asked, “In what ways, if any, do you think the MMUF program might be strengthened to better serve undergraduate students?,” many said that they would like to see more inter-cohort sharing of experience. “Now that there are more alums of the program, MMUF could be inviting them to share their experiences with current undergraduates. This could be accomplished through lectures, summer research collaborations, or as a secondary mentoring relationship.” Another PhD said, “I’d like to see more mentorship between Mellon alums and the undergraduate population,” while another observed, “Perhaps a mentoring program or research program could be established between the undergraduate fellows and the postdoctoral alums.” Another PhD reported, “I recently returned to my old undergrad school to give a lecture and I spoke to the current Fellows. I think it was a great experience for both sides, so if we could encourage more of that it would be great.”

One MMUF PhD spoke of the unique situation of some Fellows at HBCU campuses, where the MMUF PhD may be the sole participant in the program: “For those students at HBCU who are the only MMUF fellows [at their institution], it seemed lonely. Those at majority institutions and at HBCUs with a Mellon Coordinator meet regularly throughout

the year. It would be nice for MMUF to facilitate meetings throughout the year that gather the MMUF Fellows who are by themselves at their institution.”

- **Enhancing MMUF Undergraduate Mentoring**

Some PhDs felt, like their undergraduate colleagues, that the undergraduate MMUF program could be made stronger by more systematically assisting mentors in understanding their crucial role in the program. “It might be good to have greater regulation of the mentoring and undergrad research projects. Perhaps a brief handbook and guidelines for mentors; perhaps formal guidelines or contracts drawn up between mentors and students to articulate the responsibilities of each person, student and faculty member...” Another said, “Through my work as an RA and TA for the Summer Institute, I saw that there are far too many students with inactive or uninvolved mentors. I still have a strong relationship with both of my mentors, one that means a great deal to me, and I would hate for other fellows to miss out on that kind of relationship. Mentors could be better monitored.”

- **Expanding the MMUF Program**

A number of MMUF PhDs said that they would like to see the MMUF program expanded, so that it would be able to reach larger numbers of eligible students. “I’d like to broaden it to include more undergraduate students, particularly those who may seem the most likely to go to graduate school anyway. One may think the program isn’t really making a difference to these students, but I would argue otherwise. Enthusiasm for graduate school can easily be lost if not adequately supported and encouraged. I have seen this happen among some of the best minority undergrads, who seem rock-solid like they’ll go to grad school anyway. Don’t let the program ignore these students. It is important to include them, too, and they will also have a positive influence on others who are more uncertain.” When asked how MMUF might be strengthened to meet the needs of eligible students, one surveyed PhD simply stated: “Increase the number of participating institutions.”

MMUF PhDs also offered suggestions for strengthening the graduate aspects of MMUF. The most frequently mentioned means for strengthening graduate MMUF programming were: **1) enhancing connections among MMUF participants at all stages of their involvement in MMUF; and 2) creating a mentorship program for graduates.**

Like MMUF graduate students, MMUF PhDs frequently noted the importance of maintaining connections among MMUF participants at all stages of their education and professional preparation. PhDs noted that they would like to see more opportunities for students to connect and exchange ideas. One PhD observed, “As an undergraduate, I had close contact with other MMUF program undergraduates. It was helpful to have a sense of community. I felt a bit more isolated as a graduate student where there was no program. Possibly, an official discussion group online or e-mail list for the group may be helpful to continue support between members of the program.” Another PhD suggested, “Perhaps [it would be possible to have] chapters for former MMUF participants in major cities, or involve Mellon alums in local interviews for future participants.” Another

suggested, “The MMUF program should continue to facilitate connections across levels of graduate study. I persevered in my graduate career partly because of the continuity provided and possibility represented by more advanced fellows.”

Other MMUF PhDs called for reinforcing MMUF’s already strong efforts in mentoring. Some suggested that graduate students would benefit from mentoring during their graduate career. “[The program could be strengthened] by creating a mentorship program for graduates, too. At times, MMUF fellows do not have proper mentorship at their graduate institutions and could use help and guidance through the process...” Another Mellon PhD said, “I might have benefited from a professorial mentor similar to what I had as an undergrad. Someone completely devoted to seeing me complete my program and get a job. I didn't feel like the program was active in ensuring this for all of its participants. It seemed more concerned with recording what happened as opposed to directing what happened.”

V. Additional Observations and Suggestions for Program Strengthening

In addition to the suggestions outlined above, interviews and surveys of MMUF participants and stakeholders raised additional issues for consideration.

- Some MMUF stakeholders reported that MMUF stipends may need to be increased, even if only modestly. Stakeholders reported that the current \$3000 stipend should be augmented to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living. One interviewee, for example, noted that a modest increase from \$3000 to \$3500 or \$4000 would make a substantial impact on Fellows by relieving the financial pressure that some Fellows currently experience. Program sponsors may want to consider examining the adequacy of student stipends to determine whether these are able to reduce Fellows’ need to accept paid employment.
- In interviews and surveys, participants and campus-based stakeholders reported that they felt that the effectiveness of MMUF-provided mentoring could be improved by implementing a brief orientation and/or mentoring curriculum for faculty mentors. As mentioned above, some informants said that the program would benefit from a standard curriculum or set of introductory resources that could be made available to faculty. Program sponsors may want to consider developing resources for faculty, especially faculty who may be newly assuming the role of MMUF mentor.
- Some MMUF graduate student interviewees observed that SSRC summer grants should be distributed at the beginning of the summer, not the end. As one MMUF graduate student said, “With many students in PhD programs that provide little or no summer funding, SSRC research grants go a long way towards making basic ends meet such that we can focus on research. Their usefulness is significantly decreased when they come at the end of the summer.”
- As highlighted by nearly every group of informants who participated in this study, MMUF provides a valuable and unique social network for participants, one which

helps to inspire and sustain participants throughout the various stages of their education and faculty careers. Participants frequently praised the efforts of the program and the Foundation to provide opportunities for Fellows to connect with one another and to share the lessons and insights provided by their experience. The Foundation may wish to consider ways to further strengthen and sustain connections among program participants, beyond sponsored conferences. Could, for example, networks of MMUF PhDs and MMUF graduate students be established on a regional basis or could enhanced web-based communication fora be created for program participants? Expanded means for social communication and information exchange among participants could serve as tools for connecting current undergraduate and graduate participants with Mellon PhDs, and help to ensure that social networks are reinforced and strengthened. As one Mellon PhD noted, “Even if these are not alumni receptions or conferences, simple online networking would be invaluable in helping us to be more actively aware of [people] who are resources within the alumni community.”

- Some program participants and stakeholders expressed the belief that recruitment of undergraduates would be enhanced if the program’s list of designated fields could be expanded. Some institutional stakeholders, for example, reported that the Mellon Foundation should consider broadening the scope of designated fields to include students in a greater number of the natural sciences (e.g. biology, astronomy, chemistry, etc.). Expanding the program’s designated fields to include the natural sciences, these informants argued, would expand the applicant pool and ensure that historically underrepresented populations achieved careers in fields where such populations remain a very small minority in both graduate education and in the academy.

VI. Conclusion

Research conducted for this program review indicates that MMUF produces a variety of positive outcomes for undergraduate program participants. These outcomes include influencing Fellows' self-conception and early identity as young scholars; providing Fellows with information about graduate school and academia; providing Fellows with a supportive and inspiring community of peers, faculty mentors, MMUF staff and PhDs; and furnishing Fellows with the research skills and understanding required to successfully negotiate graduate school, and subsequently, to achieve successful academic careers. MMUF and the allied programs provided by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and the Social Science Research Council continue to support MMUF participants as they matriculate to and complete graduate school, by building upon the undergraduate program's achievements. Graduate program services do so by communicating vital information about the norms, expectations, and social conventions of graduate school and the academy; sustaining a supportive network of peers and associates; and positively affecting graduate students' career aspirations and preparedness for entry to the professoriate. Although the program has encountered some modest challenges, including ensuring an adequate and consistent supply of MMUF Mentors' recruiting undergraduates who, in some instances, may find professional careers an attractive alternative to academic careers in the arts and sciences; and garnering recognition and support of host institutions; the program clearly provides a unique set of opportunities to students from populations that have historically been underrepresented in graduate education and in the academy.

In interviews and surveys, program participants frequently praised the MMUF program, its sponsors, and program staff. Typical comments by MMUF fellows include:

- I feel privileged to associate myself with the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, and I would like to thank all of the administrators that work hard to sustain this fellowship.
- I love the MMUF. It has helped me tremendously, not only financially, but also in terms of helping me develop into the intellectual and human being I plan to be in the future.
- I just want to strongly emphasize the mentoring aspect of the program. Without my mentor my level of success would not have been achievable.

MMUF graduate students remarked:

- MMUF prepares its fellows for what the rigors of an academic life are. What a PhD does seemed very elusive to me prior to [participating in] the program. Moreover, I feel that the peer support that one receives as a Fellow was paramount not only to my intellectual development, but along with the entire support system of the larger program, helped me stay the course of my undergraduate degree.

- As a student on financial aid, the Mellon Fellowship opened a whole realm of opportunities for me that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. Instead of working in the library, I got to do research with a professor who then became my thesis advisor. Through her, I learned so much about the culture of academia--how to write conference papers, how to visit archives, how to prepare materials to teach a class. Without Mellon mentorship and term-time support, I would never have had the opportunity to learn these things or develop this strong of a mentoring relationship.
- MMUF connected me to a group of extremely bright and committed students at my home institution. Because I waited one year before entering my program to work full-time at a research institute, by the time I was applying to PhD programs, I had the tremendous benefit of advice, essay editing, and mentorship (of sorts) from my MMUF cohort--three of whom are already in PhD programs, having entered straight out of their undergraduate education. Without them, I am not so sure I would have gained entrance into the top-rated program to which I have [been admitted].
- The research experience provided by the MMUF gave me a jump-start that made me feel comfortable in graduate school, especially since I did not have a master's degree. I felt that although the students who had a master's degree were more experienced and knew exactly what they wanted to do, they lacked research experience, which is paramount to success in graduate school. Mellon gave me that firm foundation to start on and I felt right at home and as confident as any doctoral student who had a master's degree.

MMUF PhDs also expressed praise for the program:

- It has been a remarkable experience and I am so very thankful for all of the opportunities that have come my way because of my affiliation with the program.
- I have only unreserved praise for the program and its members and staff.
- I would not be a professor today if I had not participated in this program.

Additionally, survey data indicate that participants are satisfied with their experience in the MMUF program:

Table 14. All Participants' Satisfaction with MMUF

Satisfaction ▼	MMUF Undergraduate Fellows (N = 185)	MMUF Graduate Students (N = 150)	MMUF PhDs (N = 72)
Very satisfied	62.7%	62.7%	73.6%
Generally satisfied	31.9%	32.7%	23.6%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4.9%	3.3%	2.8%
Very dissatisfied	0.5%	1.3%	0%

When surveyed program participants were asked if, based on their experience, they would recommend the MMUF program to others, 96% of undergraduate Fellows, 98% of graduate students, and 97% of PhDs stated that they would recommend the program to others.