

reflect heated competition among private institutions to liberalize their aid offers.

Harvard's financial-aid initiative started in 2004, when President Lawrence H. Summers announced that families with incomes below \$40,000 would no longer need to make any contribution to the costs of educating their children at the College, and such contributions were re-

duced for families with incomes between \$40,000 and \$60,000 (see "Class-conscious Financial Aid," May-June 2004, page 62). Yale, Stanford, Penn, and other private institutions began comparable programs, and public schools such as the University of North Carolina promoted their augmented aid programs. Harvard's threshold rose to \$60,000 in 2006, with reduced con-

tributions expected for families with incomes from \$60,000 to \$80,000 (see "Aid Augmented," May-June 2006, page 69).

During 2007, Amherst, Davidson, and Williams announced plans to eliminate loans, emulating Princeton. (Princeton also excluded home equity from aid calculations, as did Stanford, which had earlier reduced the weight of that asset in its aid

Gains for Graduate Students

Harvard's new formula for undergraduate financial aid, unveiled on December 10, overshadowed its consequential changes in support for Ph.D. programs, disclosed on December 7. In a message to faculty colleagues, then-dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Theda Skocpol diagnosed and outlined solutions for three problems; the details were made available later, in response to queries.

- **Stipends.** Ph.D. students do not pay tuition; through this academic year, humanities and social-sciences students have been offered stipends for living expenses during their first two years of graduate study, followed by teaching fellowships in the third and fourth years. In these fields, "the stipends we guarantee...have lost ground compared to those proffered by our chief competitors, causing us to lose prospects to MIT, Princeton, Yale, Berkeley, Columbia, Stanford, and so forth," Skocpol wrote. In an interview, she noted that Harvard has been "losing the top candidates to our peer universities and even state schools."

The stipends, adjusted regularly for higher living costs, rose from \$17,600 in academic year 2003-2004 to \$18,500 two years later and \$19,700 this year. For students entering GSAS programs this fall, the sum will be \$21,830, an adjustment well above such "incremental" boosts. For antitrust reasons, schools do not share competitive information about their aid, but *Inside Higher Ed* reported on December 12 that Yale's support now ranges from \$20,000 for nine months to \$28,000 for full-year stipends, depending on disciplines. Skocpol said the new stipend should put Harvard midway among comparable institutions.

- **Summer support.** In the same fields, Harvard has in the past promised just two summers of living expenses, versus the three to five offered by peers. Students progress most successfully toward completing their dissertations, Skocpol wrote, when they can make optimal use of their summers—prime time for learning languages, conducting field work, or mastering a statistical technique required to pursue research. Effective this fall, financial support will double to four summers. Skocpol said the stipends, meant to cover an additional two months of living expenses, are worth about \$4,300 annually. Significantly, the extra financing applies both to entering students and those already enrolled, covering the so-called G3 and G4 years. Again, this puts the University in the mid range of offers.

- **Science.** In the natural sciences and engineering—including

programs in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS), and the Longwood campus (Harvard Medical School [HMS] and Harvard School of Public Health)—planned growth in laboratory facilities, faculty ranks, and research programs have not been matched by growth in Ph.D. student enrollments. GSAS data found constrictions in federal government and foundation funding contributing to the "crisis."

Financial support for graduate students in the sciences depends not only on departmental endowments and University resources, but also on faculty members' research grants and on federal and foundation training grants. But Harvard's federal grants have begun to decline (see "Getting and Spending," November-December 2007, page 71)—reflecting the level budget of the National Institutes of Health, which is squeezing science support everywhere. Foundation fellowships have diminished. Federal training programs have been held essentially level; even when available, such grants can confine students to existing projects, just when they should explore new fields that most interest them. And in cutting-edge fields—the medical school's systems biology department, say, or regenerative medicine—there are no established endowments to fall back on, and federal research funds may not yet be available.

In response, Skocpol reported that the Harvard University Science and Engineering Committee (see "For Science and Engineering, New Life," March-April 2007, page 65) had agreed to underwrite "Harvard Science Fellowships"—to the tune of \$7 million per year now—to more appropriately support graduate students otherwise dependent on training grants; to expand enrollments in new fields; and to match new faculty members in new fields with suitable student pools for their research groups. The funds (derived from FAS, HMS, and other University sources) mean that FAS and SEAS natural-sciences programs will admit 210 to 215 graduate students this fall, up from a five-year average of approximately 190. For interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs based in Longwood, the comparable growth will be to 145 entering students, up from a five-year average of about 130.

Admissions will focus on areas where enrollments have lagged behind faculty growth. The new funding thus represents both an enhanced level of graduate-student support and a jump start for a core University priority: expanding science research and education—particularly across traditional boundaries and at the frontiers of discovery.