

**Making the Most of the Middle Years:
A Revised Plan for Enhancing the Preparation
of Educational Researchers**

**A Proposal to the Spencer Foundation
For an Institutional Research Training Grant
(2002-2007)**

**and a Revised Plan for the Final Years of the Current Grant
(2000-2002)**

**College of Education
Michigan State University**

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In this proposal, we lay out a plan for a reconstruction of our current MSU/Spencer Research Training Grant Program, which would be funded by a second five-year grant from the Spencer Foundation covering the period 2002-2007. The central aim of this program is to help us enhance the quality of preparation we provide for our doctoral students to carry out high quality research on education. First, we provide an analysis of the current situation facing research-oriented education schools in their effort to prepare first-rate educational researchers. Second, we explain what we have been doing in the current program to address this situation, providing some evidence of how this program seems to be working effectively and how it needs to be revised in order to enhance its effectiveness. Third, we lay out the plan for the revised program, which we propose to begin implementing immediately with the fellows admitted to the program for the fall of this year.

Preparing High Quality Researchers in Education Schools

Education schools have a uniquely difficult task facing them in trying to prepare their doctoral students to carry out high-quality research.

A key issue is that we, like other leading education schools, find ourselves in a situation where our students are primarily experienced teachers and administrators. These students have a rich storehouse of professional experience and a powerful commitment to education, which are invaluable assets for prospective scholars of education. This profile also, however, leads to some predictable difficulties in the process of educating and socializing them into their new role as researchers:

- Teaching is a highly *particularistic* practice. It always exists under conditions that are highly dependent on the particular characteristics of the teacher, the individual students, the physical setting, school culture, subject area, grade level, time of year, curriculum frame, and so on. In contrast, research focuses on establishing theoretical claims that are more *universalistic* in nature, where the aim is to find commonalities across contexts and to determine the way that contexts shape practice. Teachers are reluctant to see education this way, for it violates their sense of the uniqueness of practice.
- Teaching by nature is also a highly *normative* practice, focusing on actions that have immediate moral and personal and social consequences for students. Research is a highly *analytical* practice, focusing on the effort to make sense of things. As a result, practitioners as researchers often want to rush to judgment (what should the teacher do? how can we improve teaching and learning?) and find the analytical orientation of educational research cold, detached, even unethical.
- Teachers arrive in a doctoral program with a distinctive mix of professional and educational characteristics that makes it difficult to induct them into research. They come with high degree of professional competence, rich experience in practice, and strong academic skills. But, typically, they also come with a woefully *inadequate liberal education*. In particular, their academic experience in undergraduate programs in teacher education and master's programs in education has not provided them with the solid base of liberal learning that is required for an effective researcher. These programs too often provide students only with technical competence and a thin veneer of general knowledge, leaving them with little understanding of culture, history, and social theory, which is required to produce the best research.

- Educational administrators, whether at the K-12 or postsecondary level, often rely primarily on their *experience* in attempting to improve the education of students. Yet this experience often is limited in scope and uninformed by scholarship or programmatic efforts to improve teaching and learning. One consequence is the widespread difficulty in getting schools and college to adopt best practices. Another is the tendency of administrators as doctoral students to assert the primacy of insights drawn from personal experience over insights drawn from research or theory.
- Often starting in doctoral programs when they are at the peak of their professional careers, prospective educational researchers are frequently shocked and put off by the sense that they are *starting over* again in education, as beginners in their own area of professional competence who are now required to learn different modes of discourse and abide by different criteria for establishing competence.
- Finally, the kind of *knowledge* they are asked to produce as educational researchers is uniquely complex and hard to handle. Educational knowledge is very soft (vs. hard), thoroughly applied (vs. pure), and primarily provides use value (vs. exchange value). As a result, it mistakenly appears to the prospective educational researcher as if doing this kind of research requires no particular expertise.

These characteristics sharply increase the difficulty of preparing doctoral students effectively to carry on high-quality educational research, especially when this must be accomplished within the limitations of a total doctoral experience that typically lasts only for 5 or 6 years. In that short amount of time, we need to provide them with a short course in liberal studies and give them sufficient expertise in a specialized field within education that they will be able to make original contributions to this field. We also have to be able to convince them: that the theoretical and analytical approach of the education research is both necessary and justifiable; that they can become researchers while building on rather than discarding their extensive professional experience; and that producing research-based educational knowledge calls for a uniquely sophisticated form of systematic preparation and experiential learning. It is not surprising that we frequently fail to produce first-rate researchers. Such researchers – especially those who come from practice in education and are able to speak to the problems of practice in their scholarly work – are an essential component of any serious effort to improve teaching and learning in American education.

The Current MSU/Spencer RTG Program and What We Have Learned From It

What We Are Doing: We decided to use the five years of funding provided by the RTG to support a pilot program for preparing researchers. We chose to focus on the middle years of the doctoral experience – after the first year or so (when they are focused on making the difficult adjustment to doctoral study and haven't yet become oriented toward doing research) and before they begin writing a dissertation proposal (by which time their research focus is already set and much of their research training is behind them). We also chose to concentrate on prospective researchers whose interests focused on issues of teaching and learning (at all levels of education and across the lifespan), in keeping with the primary orientation of the MSU College of Education. We realized that we needed to figure out some of the things that were missing from our current practice and experiment with some approaches that might supply these missing elements. Each year we have selected 5 or 6 of the strongest and most motivated prospective researchers in the middle years of doctoral study and have provided them an intensive experience of research preparation. For one or two years, these students: receive full funding from the grant (freeing them to focus on research exclusively); work closely with one or two senior faculty as

mentors; pursue a research apprenticeship experience, in a faculty project or a pilot research study; engage in monthly retreats with other fellows and mentors focusing on a series of particular research issues; and take part in a variety of other brown-bag lunch discussions, college colloquia, and sessions with visiting scholars. After completing one year in the program, students can apply for a second, which is granted if they can demonstrate that they used the first year to good advantage and have developed promising plans for the second.

How It Is Working for the Fellows: We have seen some evidence that this program has yielded benefits that would not otherwise have been possible:

- Students have achieved critically valuable links with senior faculty research mentors that would not have taken place without the intervention of the RTG program.
- Students obtained intensive and extensive research apprenticeship experiences that would not have been possible around the edges of a half-time graduate assistantship.
- Some students took advantage of the opportunity to pursue in-depth field research in a manner that was well beyond what they could have accomplished under the constraints of money and time facing regular doctoral students in our program. For example, one spent a year studying classrooms in a multi-ethnic school in Israel, and another spent a year on site studying Arab-American students in a school and community near Detroit.
- Out of the six students who were identified as doing the most compelling doctoral dissertations in the college in this year's competition for dissertation-completion fellowships, four were former Spencer RTG fellows.
- Fellows have been extraordinarily active in presenting papers based on their work at major conferences and moving these papers along the path to publication.
- Individual mentors have reported extraordinary growth in intellectual power and extraordinary sharpening of intellectual focus in the research work of particular fellows, beyond anything that appeared likely in the absence of the program.

Benefits of the Program for the College as a Whole: The RTG program has not only been providing considerable benefit for the individuals receiving fellowships; it has also been teaching us a lot about what all our students need to learn and what experiences they need to have – beyond what they are currently getting from our regular research preparation approach. Some of the benefits the program has brought to the college include:

- The application process for students seeking an RTG fellowship has brought a positive change within the college by spurring students to think seriously about their research plans and research training needs early in their program, instead of delaying this until they confronted the need to write a dissertation proposal.
- Students who apply but are not accepted into the program still often carry out part or all of the plans they spelled out in their applications. Spurred by the program to think hard about their research preparation needs, they find ways to meet many of them without being a fellow.
- The program has helped attract students with strong research interests to enroll in college doctoral programs, since it signals the seriousness with which we approach research preparation and since it provides substantial support for talented students who pursue research issues early in their studies.
- The program has spurred an interesting set of conversations about research preparation needs in the college – among the faculty (within and among groups of RTG mentors, doctoral course instructors, and research project heads), among doctoral students (in courses, colloquia, and brown-bag lunches), and between faculty and students (in a variety of settings).

Last year, the dean appointed an Inquiry Task Force consisting of faculty and students from across the college with a mandate to reconsider research preparation requirements and possibilities in the college relative to student needs. Lessons from the RTG experiment provided critically important input to that discussion and the actions that followed from it. In part because of this RTG experience, the Task Force concluded:

- Focusing too heavily on the needs of the weaker students in the program is counterproductive. Raising minimum requirements can help and has helped raise the floor of research preparation in the program, but it also can send a message that meeting these requirements is sufficient as preparation for research. We need to be equally concerned about raising the de facto ceiling for stronger students, providing them with the possibilities and incentives to do first-rate work.
- This means getting the message out to both faculty and students that learning to become a researcher occurs across all courses in the program and not just those that are labeled as research methods courses.
- It also means putting students on notice that being minimally competent as researchers is not enough and pushing them to pursue the kinds of knowledge and experience they need to become accomplished researchers in a wide variety of venues beyond the doctoral classroom – including pursuing their own liberal education by doing independent reading and seeking out intellectually stimulating situations, exploring possibilities for inquiry through teaching and research assistantships, establishing research-productive relationships with faculty and fellow students, taking part in the intellectual life of the college (colloquia, interest-area study groups, etc.), and pursuing their own pilot research efforts.
- In line with this thinking, the Task Force proposed a modest reconstruction of the college research requirements. It proposed changing the introductory inquiry class – currently a mélange of general inquiry, philosophy of science, and introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods – into a course focused entirely on the kinds of broad issues infusing the research effort that have been the focus of the RTG program. These include such things as the nature of inquiry, the problem of validity, the link between researcher and subject, alternative conceptual frameworks for research, and critical reading of research reports. Insights drawn from the Spencer RTG conference at Stanford were an important contribution to our redesign of this course. In addition, the Task Force recommended requiring all students to take a more integrated and far-reaching introduction to statistics, in order to supply them with an ability to read research intelligently and with one of several possible frameworks for thinking systematically about questions of validity and the use of evidence.
- Central to this revised inquiry class will be five books that we first tried out in the RTG program. We found that these books helped address crucial aspects of scholarship that were not dealt with sufficiently in coursework. These included conceptualizing research projects, developing the intellectual flexibility required to look at problems from a fresh perspective, creating research designs that address problems of validity, making effective arguments, and writing with clarity and force. These books include:

Wayne C. Booth et al. (1995). *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Howard S. Becker. (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Donald T. Campbell & Julian C. Stanley. (1963). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Weston, Anthony. (1992). *A Rulebook for Arguments* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Joseph M. Williams. (1990). *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Another sign of the broader impact of the program is the series of college-wide colloquia on “The Practice of Educational Research” that the RTG program sponsored. These focused on particular research issues that help prospective researchers. One topic last year was identifying how some dissertation writers came to take the intellectual risk of addressing powerful issues in the field and succeeded in that effort. Another focused on the problem of framing the focus of a dissertation effectively and constructing a useful dissertation proposal. Transcripts of these colloquia were posted on the MSU/Spencer RTG web site.

Problems We Have Identified: We have also learned some things about our RTG program in the last three years that point up problems with its current structure. These problems include:

- Currently the program provide all fellows with about \$19,000 per year in fellowship and assistantship support, with the requirement that they not take on any outside assistantship work for pay during the academic year. The aim is to enable students to focus exclusively on developing their research interests and skills without the distraction of having to support themselves in the usual manner. This structure has indeed had this effect on students, but it has also had two less desirable consequences. First, it may send a message that research and teaching are incompatible with each other and that a real researcher doesn’t teach, which is inappropriate for any education school and especially so for ours, given its strong commitment to teaching and teacher preparation. Second, for students who have a strong scholarly interest in pursuing the latter issues (which is true of many doctoral students), it bars them from the very teaching role that might help them pursue that interest.
- Some students selected as fellows in the program have not taken full advantage of the opportunity to develop their skills as scholars and take on research projects that would be intellectually demanding and substantively significant. The fellowship is sometimes seen as a cherished prize rather than a challenging experience. Some of the research being designed and produced by fellows is excellent, but some is uninspired and shows little sign of addressing important issues in insightful ways. In response, we changed the rules so that the initial fellowship lasts for one year rather than two and fellows are granted a second year of funding only if they can prove that they used the first year wisely and have promising plans for the second. We also now emphasize to fellows that they are expected to use this opportunity to take risks rather than playing it safe and produce significant work rather than merely competent work. And we now require that all fellows present their work to the fellows and mentors in retreats at the end of the year. These changes have helped. But we still need to find ways to build incentives into the program that will spur the kind of work which these students are capable of producing.

- A related concern is the program's exclusiveness. In a large college, we can only support 10 students under current rules. Among some students inside and outside the program, this has bred a sense that the RTG program is more a tony club than a scholarly endeavor. This is aggravated by the sense that some of the fellows are students who really do not need the boost that comes from being part of the program, since they are already receiving strong research mentoring and support from their work on an advisor's research project and already seem well launched on a research career. Such students are likely to look very strong when they apply for the program, with focused research interests and strong academic skills. The committee that reviews candidates for the program debates every year about whether we are just gilding the lily by selecting such students; at the same time, we do not want to establish a perversely antimeritocratic standard for admission that penalizes candidates for being especially smart and research-oriented.
- Both of these concerns feed into the larger issue of the program's institutional impact. Working with a small, capable, and research-oriented group of students has been very helpful to us, allowing us to figure out what kinds of knowledge about research even our most promising students are not currently learning through their doctoral coursework and to try out on these students a variety of methods to provide the necessary learning experiences. But we are now at a stage where we need to shift the program's emphasis, so it concentrates somewhat less of its energy on a small number of fellows -- extending its benefits to more students while simultaneously training more attention on research preparation within the college as a whole. The reform of the college inquiry requirement was one step in that direction.

A Proposal for Revising the MSU/Spencer RTG Program

In light of what we have learned from our first three years of operating the MSU/Spencer RTG Program, we propose to institute some significant changes in the program while retaining many of its core characteristics. The plan is to put these changes into effect immediately with the fellows to be selected for the 2000-2001 academic year and to continue with this revised structure under the second five-year grant, which would run from 2002 to 2007.

Program Elements Carried Over from the Current Program: We would continue most of the basic elements that characterize our current RTG program.

- In order to direct the program intervention at the point where it is likely to do the most good, we will focus on the *middle years* of doctoral study, targeting students who have begun to explore research interests and experiences but who have not yet developed a dissertation proposal.
- We will give preference to students whose interests focus on issues of *teaching and learning*, in keeping with the College's substantive orientation.
- We will support students initially for *one year* and then will invite them to apply for a *second year* of funding, which will be granted if they can demonstrate that they made good use of the opportunity offered by the first year in the program and that they have promising plans for the second.
- Each student will be assigned a *mentor or mentors*, who are faculty members with extensive research experience and with research interests closely related to those of the student.
- Fellows and mentors will work out a *plan for the year* designed to provide the fellow with appropriate research experiences and intellectual pursuits.

- As the core of this plan, each fellow will be required to pursue some sort of *research apprenticeship experience*. This could mean working on a mentor's research project, or developing a pilot study under the guidance of the mentor (framing the study; designing instruments; gathering data; analyzing data; writing, presenting, and publishing papers). It could mean researching, writing, and submitting for publication a literature review in the fellow's area of interest (jointly with or under supervision of the mentor). Or it could mean some combination of these elements.
- In addition, all fellows will be required to produce a *paper* that they will present to the fellows and mentors in the spring during each year they are in the program.

Changing the Structure of Support for Fellows: We propose to change the structure of support for RTG fellows. Currently fellows receive a stipend over the fall and spring semesters totaling about \$19,000 – \$13,000 in fellowship and a quarter-time graduate assistantship (level 3) paying about \$6,000; fellows are barred from taking on any assistantship work for pay during the academic year. Under the revised program, fellows will receive a fellowship but no assistantship from the MSU/Spencer RTG program. The size of the *fellowship* award is *set at the level of the stipend from a half-time graduate assistantship* (GA) at level 2, which is the standard level of support for most doctoral students in the college (currently about \$11,000 per academic year). Thus, in effect, RTG fellows will receive half-time support from the program to support their research endeavors. In addition, fellows will be allowed to take on a *quarter-time assistantship outside the program*, which could be with a research project or in a teaching role. The only requirement would be that the assistantship work should be related to the fellow's research interests and/or should serve to support the fellow's development as an educational researcher.

This change will provide several benefits. It will open the program to more fellows (see below), and it will allow students with a scholarly interest in teaching and teacher preparation to pursue this interest in the role of both researcher and teacher. This change will modestly reduce the total income of the fellows. If students take on a quarter-time assistantship, which is what we expect nearly all students to do, their total income for the academic year will be about \$16,500 (for a GA at level 2) or \$17,000 (at level 3). This would be a reduction of \$2,000-\$3,000 compared to the current support level, but it is at approximately the same level as the university's most generous multi-year recruitment fellowships (the MSU Distinguished Fellowship, the College of Education Dean's Scholar Fellowship). Our sense is that the current level of support for fellows is higher than it needs to be in order to be competitive and that this undercuts our ability to extend the benefits of the program to more students. The proposed changes – a small reduction in the fellowship award plus the transfer of assistantship costs to a research project or teaching program – will cut the cost to the grant for the support of each fellow to less than half of the current amount. We feel that this change will not undermine the research training benefit that fellows gain from being part of the program. Most fellows are already working on a research project without pay as a research apprenticeship experience; the projects could and would be paying them for this work if the RTG program didn't bar them from accepting such support. For fellows who want to do inquiry into their own teaching, the new system will constitute a significant improvement over the current support structure, which prevents them from doing this kind of work.

Increasing the Number of Spencer RTG Fellows: The biggest single benefit of the changed structure of support is that it will allow us to bring more students into the program. Currently we have enough funds to support 10 students a year, five new fellows and five continuing fellows. Under the new program we will be able support about 14 students a year, 7 new and 7 continuing. The reason for this is the current high cost to the grant of the assistantship support it provides to fellows. This year it costs us \$10,000 to provide a Spencer fellow with a

quarter-time assistantship at level 3; the student receives \$6,000 and the rest goes to pay for the student's tuition, fees, and health insurance. Under the new system, a research project or the teacher preparation program will provide the assistantship stipend and benefits for each fellow, which means that the Spencer RTG funds can be used to provide pure fellowship money that goes directly to the fellows. Each fellow will receive the same benefits as before and a stipend that is \$2,000-\$2,500 less than the current level, but each will only cost the grant about \$11,000 rather than \$23,000 (at this year's rates). The difference will allow us to support more fellows with the same level of Spencer funding while also expanding benefits for non-fellows.

Providing Research Expense Funds for Students Outside the Program: We propose to set aside \$14,000 or \$15,000 a year to support doctoral students who incur significant costs in gathering data as part of their own research efforts. We want to encourage students who are not Spencer fellows to seek out research experiences during the middle years of their doctoral studies. Too often, students take their first plunge into research when they begin their dissertation, which is one reason why dissertations often look more like pilot studies rather than authoritative pieces of research. The MSU College of Education requires doctoral students to carry out a research practicum as part of their research preparation program before launching into a dissertation. But these research efforts are often minimal in scope and modest in sophistication – at least partly because students do not have financial support for carrying out a more substantial empirical effort. Within the current RTG program, we have experimented with providing small research expense grants to Spencer fellows as a way of encouraging students to pursue pilot studies in their area of interest. In the last two years we have been able to provide 8 fellows with such grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,500, which helped them pay for such things as recording and transcribing costs, travel expenses, and research materials. The idea is to build on this experience by expanding the research expense funding program and redirecting it to doctoral students who are not fellows and who are therefore not currently being well funded to pursue their research aims. Students would be asked to apply for funds to be distributed in a competition each spring and fall, with awards granted based on the quality of the proposed research.

Emphasizing Value-Added and Risk-Taking in the Evaluation of Applications for Fellowships: We plan to make a small but significant change in the directions we give applicants about the criteria we will be using for selecting future fellows. We will continue to look for applicants who demonstrate a clear *commitment to research* and a *focused area of research interest* which they want to explore. But we will also ask applicants to meet two additional criteria:

- Applicants should show how a year in the RTG program would provide them an *opportunity for research apprenticeship and research growth that would not be possible without it.*
- Applicants should show how a year of research mentoring and freedom from economic constraint in the RTG program would allow them to pursue a mode of inquiry in which they could *take on intellectual risks and pursue issues of educational significance that would not be possible without it.*

These two criteria would emphasize that the program is designed not as a prize but as an intervention, intended to provide promising students with an intellectual and experiential opportunity that would not otherwise be available to them. As a result of this opportunity, we expect fellows to aim for a level of scholarship that is significant rather than merely competent.

Establishing an Ongoing College-Wide Seminar on Scholarly Life and Practice: Our experience in the program thus far has taught us a lot about what students are not learning in their coursework about the practice of research and the life of the scholar. Some of these

insights, as we mentioned earlier, are being fed back into the formal curriculum in order to shore up research preparation courses in the college. But we have also learned a lesson that was spelled out clearly in our discussions on the College Inquiry Task Force last year: Research courses will never be able to provide students with sufficient preparation to carry out their own research in a credible manner. Students need to acquire these skills in a variety of places outside the research methods classroom – including other courses in their formal study program; apprenticeship experiences in research projects; independent pilot studies supervised by a faculty advisor; participation in colloquia and other scholarly events at the college; reading widely on their own; seeking out faculty and students to discuss, critique, and explore research issues; and so on.

However, we have found that there is a need for a structured program that more systematically examines central issues in the extracurriculum of learning to become a scholar in education. In the RTG program, we have experimented with formats for doing this. We have had monthly retreats for fellows and mentors in which we have examined and discussed a wide range of salient issues, including: framing a worthwhile research question; developing an angle on a research problem and constructing a rigorous design for pursuing it; academic writing and rewriting; how to design research projects that deal effectively with threats to validity; presenting research papers; research as a passionate pursuit; and the tension between the normative and analytical in educational research. In addition, we sponsored several college-wide colloquia. The plan under the revised program is to build on this experience by constructing a series of college-wide seminars under RTG sponsorship and the leadership of the mentors and fellows in the program. These seminars would focus on the *practice of educational research* and the *life of the scholar*, with special emphasis on the issues that future researchers and education professors need to know about the profession they are entering and may not be getting elsewhere in their program. Included would be issues we have dealt with in the current program – issues surrounding educational research as a professional practice. In addition, we would explore a range of issues surrounding scholarship as a business and a career. This would include things like the theory and practice of vita construction, interviewing for an academic position, plotting a career as a junior professor, proposing and presenting papers at conferences, the ins and outs of publishing in journals and books, issues of ethics in research design and practice, the nature and practice of reviewing, and so on. These are issues about which the Education Graduate Student Organization (EGSO) and other student groups have tried to mount events from time to time on an ad hoc basis. The proposed seminars, which would be open to the entire college, would seek to approach these issues more systematically, trying to map out over the course of a year a reasonably comprehensive curriculum on scholarly life and practice. The idea would be to meet every two or three weeks all year long and to be creative in thinking about how to make these events as interactive and professionally engaging as possible. It is our hope that we can coordinate some of these events with the participants in the RTG program at University of Michigan, with the idea that we may hold sessions in both locations.

Promoting Conversations About Research Preparation Among Members of the Faculty: We plan to use the RTG program as a mechanism for promoting, on a more systematic and sustained basis, the kinds of conversations we have been having in the past few years within the faculty about issues relating to research preparation. These include:

- Discussions among *teachers* of doctoral courses about the ways in which all these courses can contribute to the research preparation of students, rather than leaving this responsibility to the research methods classes.
- Discussions among doctoral *advisors* about the problems facing students in learning to do research, how thoughtful advising can help alleviate these problems, and how

other facets of a student's experience can be shaped to help the advisors do their job well.

- Discussions among *principal investigators* of research projects about the ways in which these projects can and do provide explicit fruitful instruction for research assistants about the nature and practice of educational research.
- Discussions among *RTG mentors* about what they are learning about research preparation from their own work with fellows and how this can be applied elsewhere in the college.
- Discussions across *all of the institutional domains* that bear responsibility for preparing doctoral students to become researchers – teaching, advising, research projects, and the RTG program – about what each can learn from the others and how together they can have an impact on the richness and depth of research preparation in the college.

Planning for the Future Evolution of the RTG Program: Our experience thus far in the MSU/Spencer RTG program has been one of incremental learning. As time passes, we keep discovering things about the research preparation needs of our students and about the possibilities presented by the RTG program to help respond to these needs. This gradual learning process has led us to institute incremental changes in the program. After one year we changed the funding cycle and shifted to a more structured curriculum; after three years we are making major changes in the form and size of the funding for students and shifting toward a more inclusive focus. It seems likely that the program will continue to evolve over the last 2 years of the first grant and throughout the 5 years of the second. This means that the plans presented here are probably going to have to change, perhaps substantially, during the next 7 years. We may well find that we need to change the way we select and support fellows based on our future experience. We are almost certainly going to want to establish new institutional mechanisms for implementing what we learn about research preparation, as we did with the Inquiry Task Force, and this will take the RTG program in directions we cannot foresee at this stage. In the future, the program may take a more prominent role in leading some of these changes, or it may fade into the background as other institutional innovations take hold and make the program less necessary. So it is only realistic to presume that the program proposed here will have to evolve beyond its currently projected configuration in order to serve its purpose within an evolving context. As Tyack and Cuban suggest in *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, history teaches us that the most successful reforms in education are the ones that allow for hybridization to meet changing needs in particular contexts, and this is no more true for teaching and learning in schools than it is for teaching and learning in schools of education. Our plan for this program, designed to enhance the preparation of researchers, is to prepare a plan will work for now and then evolve as needed.

Revised MSU/Spencer RTG Budget Year 4 and Year 5
2000-2002

Yr 3 Projected Budget Surplus			13,000.00
<u>Present Budget Spending</u>	Yr 4	Yr 5	
student support	240,268.00	124,138.00	364,406.00
other program expenses	26,250.00	15,750.00	42,000.00
Total	266,518.00	139,888.00	406,406.00
<i>Total Available Funds</i>			419,406.00
<u>Projected Budget Spending</u>	Yr 4	Yr 5	
SPENCER (61-6496)			
I. Student Support			
Fellowships	11,300.00	11,600.00	
Student(copy, fax, materials)	150	150	
Annual Support Per Student	11,450.00	11,750.00	
number of student participants	15	15	
Direct Student Support	171,750.00	176,250.00	
Retreats	4,000.00	4,000.00	
College-wide Research Grant	15,509.00	15,624.00	
MSU Spencer RTG Seminars	1,500.00	1,500.00	
Other Student Support	21,009.00	21,124.00	
SUBTOTAL Student Support	192,759.00	197,374.00	
II. Release for Program Coordinator	9,938.00	10,335.00	
III. Mentor funds for Materials, Travel, or Communications	7,500.00	7,500.00	
IV. Program Coordination Expenses	2,000.00	2,000.00	
SUBTOTAL, Other Program Expenses	19,438.00	19,835.00	
TOTAL	212,197.00	217,209.00	
Interest Income Estimate	5,000.00	5,000.00	
	207,197.00	212,209.00	419,406.00

Spencer RTG
8/16/2002-
8/15/2007

		Yearly Fellowship Amount	#	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
I. Student Support									
Fellowships	An	11900	14	166600	173264	180195	187403	194899	902361
Student copies, fax, materials		150	14	2100	2100	2100	2100	2100	10500
Total student support		12050		168700	175364	182295	189503	196999	912861
Retreats				4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	20000
College-wide research grants		1000	14	14000	14000	14000	14000	14000	70000
MSU Spencer RTG Seminars				1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	7500
College-wide Student Support				19500	19500	19500	19500	19500	97500
Subtotal Student Support				188200	194864	201795	209003	216499	1010361
II. Release for Program Coordinator (1/9 + Fringe)				10739	11169	11616	12081	12568	58173
III. Mentor Funds for Materials, Travel or Communications				7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	37500
IV. Program Coordination Expenses				2800	2800	2800	2800	2766	13966
Subtotal Other Expenses				21039	21469	21916	22381	22834	109639
TOTAL PROGRAM				209239	216333	223711	231384	239333	1120000
Interest Income Estimate*					5000	5000	5000	5000	20000
Funds Requested				209239	211333	218711	226384	234333	1100000

*Depending on
applicable foundation
and university policies.

Spencer RTG
8/16/2002-
8/15/2007

			Yearly						
		Fellowship	#	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
I. Student Support		Amount							
Fellowships	An	11900	9	107100	111384	115839	120473	125292	580088
Student copies, fax, materials		150	9	1350	1350	1350	1350	1350	6750
Total student support		12050		108450	112734	117189	121823	126642	586838
Retreats				4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	20000
College-wide research grants		1000	15	15000	15000	15000	15000	15000	75000
MSU Spencer RTG Seminars				1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	7500
College-wide Student Support				20500	20500	20500	20500	20500	102500
Subtotal Student Support				128950	133234	137689	142323	147142	689338
II. Release for Faculty Program Coordinator (90% of 1/9 + Fringe)				9665	10052	10454	10872	11311	52354
III. Mentor Funds for Materials, Travel or Communications				3300	3300	3300	3300	3300	16500
IV. Program Coordination Expenses				1090	1090	1090	1090	1048	5408
Subtotal Other Expenses				14055	14442	14844	15262	15659	74262
TOTAL PROGRAM				143005	147676	152533	157585	162801	763600
Interest Income Estimate*					3400	3400	3400	3400	13600
Funds Requested				143005	144276	149133	154185	159401	750000

*Depending on
applicable foundation
and university policies.

Budget Notes

Three Budgets: Attached are three proposed budgets that operationalize the program:

Revised Budget for Last Two Years of Current Grant, 2000-2002: This shows how we plan to reallocate the funding for the last two years of the current grant in order to implement the proposed changes in the program while remaining within the limits of that grant. This grant was based on the assumption that, since the program would end in the fifth year, no new cohort be admitted that year and only 5 students would be receiving support. As a result, the fifth year budget (2001-02) for direct student support is only a little more than half of the amount budgeted for the fourth year (2000-01). If we add together the total budget for the two years ($\$266,518 + \$139,888 = \$406,406$) and include a projected budget surplus for this year and estimated interest income, we have total available funds of about \$419,406 to be spread across the two final years of the grant. This would allow us to support 15 students per year at a fellowship level equivalent to the stipend provided by a half-time assistantship (see below for details), an average of about \$11,500. Each year approximately half of these students would be first-year fellows and half would be second-year fellows. In addition, we would have about \$15,000 per year available for a research expense fund open to all doctoral students in the college.

Proposed Budget for 2002-07 at \$1,100,000: This budget shows how we plan to allocate funds for the second five years of the MSU/Spencer RTG program (2002-07) under the terms of a proposed grant totaling \$1,100,000. Under these terms, we could support about 14 students per year with fellowships that would grow from about \$12,000 to \$14,000 a year per student over the life of the grant. We could also provide funds to support research grants for students in the college amounting to about \$14,000 per year.

Proposed Budget for 2002-07 at \$750,000: This budget shows how we plan to allocate funds for the second five years of the program (2002-07) under the terms of a proposed grant totaling \$750,000. This would support about 9 fellows per year (at the same fellowship rate as in the larger grant) and still leave about \$12,000 per year for a research expense fund.

At Least 90% of Funds Go to Student Support: All three budgets presented here allocate at least 90% of funds to student support, with less than 10% going to institutional support (coordinator, mentors, and program coordination expenses).

Grant Not Used to Supplant Other Funds: The funds for student support from this grant will be used to supplement and not supplant current levels of funding for doctoral financial aid in the College.

Interest: Any interest earned on grant funds will be used to enhance the support for RTG fellows and for the RTG program.

No Overhead: No institutional overhead is requested as part of this grant.

No Overlap with Spencer Dissertation Fellowship Program: The support in this grant will not be used to duplicate the form of support provided by the Spencer Dissertation Fellowship

Program. Students who receive support from this grant will be in their middle years of doctoral study. Students at the stage of writing a dissertation proposal or beyond are barred from applying for a first year of funding. Students at the stage of writing a dissertation are barred from applying for a second year of funding.

Fellowship Duration: Fellowships are granted to students for one year at a time; first year fellows are permitted to apply for a second year, but the award of a second year of funding depends on how well they demonstrate that they used the first year and how well they plan to use the second.

Fellowship Level: Fellowships are pegged at a level that corresponds roughly to the stipend earned by a graduate assistant working half time at level 2 (which is the level of most students in the middle years of their program). In the 1999-2000, that amount is \$11,000. Students will also be permitted to take on a quarter-time assistantship. If they do so, as nearly all will, this will bring their total support up to a three-quarter time level, which is the approximate level of the most generous multi-year fellowships awarded by the University and the College.

Inflation Factor: Fellowship levels are budgeted to rise at a rate of 4% per year in order to keep up with inflation.

Expenses for Fellows: Fellows are provided with support for copying, phone, fax, and supplies, budgeted at \$150 per person per year, which corresponds with our experience in the current program.

College-Wide Research Expense Funds: We are budgeting funds to support doctoral students who incur significant costs in gathering data as part of their own research efforts. We want to encourage students who are not Spencer fellows to pursue pilot studies in their area of interest during the middle years of their doctoral studies and to take on more substantial datagathering for their dissertations. Students would be asked to apply for funds to be distributed in a competition each spring and fall, with awards granted based on the quality of the proposed research.

Faculty Program Coordinator: The coordinator of the MSU/Spencer RTG program is a senior faculty member. We are budgeting funds to pay the coordinator one month in summer salary based on a median senior faculty pay level. Alternatively, the funds could be used to buy a graduate student replacement in order to relieve the faculty member of a course during the academic year. The actual responsibilities of the position run well beyond a one-month or one-course equivalent, and the College will match the grant funding for the coordinator with another month in summer salary (or replacement cost for another course). If the grant level is \$750,000, however, the 10% of the budget available to cover this and other institutional costs does not allow us to pay a full one-month's summer salary; we have budgeted for an amount (90%) that is as close to this figure as we can get within these constraints. The College will match this amount.

Faculty Mentor Funds: Faculty members who serve as mentors for MSU/Spencer RTG fellows will receive a token credit of \$300 per year, which can be used for travel and other scholarly expenses.

Retreats and Lunches: Retreats are events involving RTG fellows and mentors, which are normally held in a meeting room at the Kellogg Center on campus. They are used to explore particular issues about the practice of educational research that emerge from the work of the fellows and mentors in the program; they also are the place where fellows present their work to other fellows and mentors and engage them in discussion about this work. We are budgeting for about 4 of these per year, two for presentations and two for particular substantive programs. It is our hope that we can coordinate some of these events with the participants in the RTG program at University of Michigan. In addition, the program will continue to host monthly lunches for all fellows and mentors, in order to reinforce the community of scholars within the program and encourage exchange of views and experiences.

Seminars: Seminars are events involving doctoral students and faculty in the College as a whole. These will focus on the practice of educational research and the life of the scholar, with special emphasis on the issues that future researchers and education professors need to know about the profession they are entering and may not be getting elsewhere in their program. Ideas for these will emerge from inside and outside the RTG program. The RTG coordinator will organize these seminars, but individual events will be the responsibility of faculty members and students in the College with relevant interests and expertise. They will be held in meeting rooms in the College. It is our hope that we can coordinate some of these events with the participants in the RTG program at University of Michigan, with the idea that we may hold sessions in both locations.

Program Coordination Costs: Based on current experience, we have budgeted for program coordination costs such as copying, telephone, mailing, supplies, etc.

Program Secretary: The College is contributing costs of the program secretary (one-quarter time) and other support staff required for the program.

Office Space for Fellows: The College is also contributing a room to be used as the office space and meeting room for MSU/Spencer fellows.