

**The following clarifying information was published
in the Spring 2003 Commission Newsletter:**

Reminder About Our Common Acceptance Deadline

Submitted by Deb Liddell, University of Iowa

Graduate program faculty members are reminded that that at our 2002 Professional Preparation Commission meeting, we passed a resolution supporting the Council of Graduate Schools policy (endorsed by over 350 institutions) stating that graduate students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support, including assistantships, prior to April 15 each year.

To what does this apply? This obligates us, as graduate faculty and program directors, to ensure that neither current nor prospective students are pressured to accept offers of scholarships, fellowships, traineeships, and assistantships prior to our agreed-upon common date of April 15. It is our duty as faculty and program directors, to inform on-campus employers of this policy, and to help them act ethically and abide by this April 15 deadline.

What if a student wants to commit earlier than April 15? Offers of financial support may be made at anytime, along with encouragement to respond prior to April 15. However, we cannot insist upon a response to the offer until April 15. If a student is ready to commit to an offer, he or she may do so at any time.

We've always done it our own way. Why is this a problem? For several years, reports have emerged that applicants to some graduate programs are pressured to accept offers of admission and/or offers of assistantship prior to interviews at other campuses. In some cases, prospective students are being told that they must make a decision on an assistantship offer within 24 hours. In other cases, deliberation time is granted, but it is very early (February) in the admissions season.

Why should we care about this? We don't have a common standard on other issues of admissions. The most compelling reason to care about this is that it models bad practice for aspiring professionals entering the field. We should not be in a race for students. We should want for them no less than we would want for the new professional who is about to launch a career from our programs: that they will take their time, collect the information they need about their fit to their next institution, visit the campuses they are interested in, and get a sense of their future classmates and mentors.

The other reason we should care is that, from an ethical perspective, it compromises the ability to make informed choices and erodes the autonomy of students. This seems, then, a potential breach of ethical practice.

Finally, it violates the agreement endorsed by over 350 institutions in conjunction with the Council of Graduate Schools (see attached for list or visit <http://www.cgsnet.org/PublicationsPolicyRes/resolutions.htm#resolution1> to read the resolution), that states that students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support including assistantships prior to April 15.

For those reasons, we seek support and enforcement of this resolution. We further hope to educate our professional community of preparation faculty, assistantship employers, and prospective students about our collective rights and responsibilities in the admissions process.

NOTE: Revised webpage address for the Council of Graduate Schools Resolution is:

<http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/CGSResolutionJune2005.pdf>