

DUKE UNIVERSITY,
Durham, N.C., February 23, 1968.

HON. EDITH GREEN,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MRS. GREEN: I am writing to you about current draft regulations as they affect graduate students. I hope you and your committee can still do something about them. Please forgive me for writing a long letter. It seems to me you will better understand the plight of graduate schools if I spend my time describing how the regulations affect us rather than denouncing them in the abstract. Let me assure you that nothing said below is meant to imply that the old regulations were fair. I would only contend that the new ones are not the best way of correcting the inequities of the old.

For nearly a year American graduate schools have been living under a double threat: that of sharply reduced federal financing and that of student bodies gradually reduced by the operation of the draft. Both of these threats have now become firm realities. Unfortunately there is no present possibility of using the second to alleviate the first. In other words, graduate budgets cannot be safely shaped to the size of student bodies, because budget planning must be completed before the major effects of the present draft regulations can be known with any degree of accuracy.

Since you are entirely familiar with what has happened to federal support of graduate education, I will not review that; but I do want you to see how difficult it is for a graduate school to plan intelligently for the coming year even if it is able and willing to sacrifice some other worthwhile activity to maintain the operation of a high-quality graduate school. Let me review the probable operation of the draft.

Present Draft regulations expose all able-bodied male graduating seniors and all able-bodied first-year graduate students to the possibility of being drafted at any time after the first week or two of June. Both groups are automatically deferred until the end of the current academic year, but both become eligible for the draft at that time. What this means is that graduating seniors desirous of entering graduate school and first-year graduate students wishing to continue in graduate school may apply in the usual way for admission and support. For their part, graduate schools may follow their usual procedures in screening and admitting students and in awarding available fellowships, traineeships, and assistantships. By some time in the late spring this process will be completed, budgets will be firmed up, and then in the summer the operation of the Draft on the two eligible groups will begin to undo what was so carefully done during the winter and spring. One can make some kind of estimate as to the number of graduate students who will eventually be lost to the Draft, and one can be quite sure that the losses will be spread out over many, many months. What cannot now be predicted is the date by which most of the attrition will have occurred. A fair guess might be that the heaviest losses will not begin until mid-fall or later. Obviously this guess will be rendered hopelessly wrong if the Vietnam War takes a radical turn for the worse or for the better. Under such conditions as these, how can a university wisely determine how many of its scarce resources to allocate to the uncertainties of graduate education? But if it skimps on graduate education, who will teach its classes three, four, and five years from now?

My last question suggests that more is at stake than graduate education. Many universities use a large number of graduate students to teach elementary and intermediate undergraduate courses. This is not so true of my own university as it is of the large state universities, but even at Duke we would be hard pressed to man our freshman science labs if we could not recruit an adequate number of graduate assistants. Present prospects look dim.

Then there is the matter of housing. If we knew the number of graduate students we will lose to the Draft, we could admit more of the undergraduate students who have applied but cannot be admitted for lack of dormitory space.

I could extend this discussion of the unsettling effects of current draft regulations to other areas of university planning, but I have tried your patience enough. Let me make just one positive suggestion. Even in the present national emergency, I see no reason why the required number of students couldn't be drafted at logical intervals in their schooling, so both they and their schools could make intelligent plans. I am not suggesting that they be allowed to escape the Draft