Irvine Fellows and Graduate Student Socialization:
Practices for Structural Improvement
by Dean Campbell and William G. Tierney

Barbara E. Lovitts[1] has recently published a book on the causes of early departure from doctoral study. In what follows we offer a sketch of the model Lovitts proposes and how it will inform good practice for the administration of the Irvine Fellowship program.

Three arguments persist throughout the book:
1. It is not the background characteristics doctoral students bring with them to the university that affect their persistence outcomes; it is what happens to them after they arrive.
2. Doctoral student attrition is a function of the *distribution of structures* and opportunities for integration and *cognitive map* development.
3. The causes of attrition are deeply embedded in the organizational culture of graduate school and the structure and process of graduate education.

The *distribution of structures* refers to a model of contexts that work together to integrate doctoral students into the graduate school experience. The contexts of graduate education combined are institutional, disciplinary, interdepartmental, intradepartmental, and external student factors (health, family, finances). The *cognitive map* is a mental model that helps students make sense of what they are experiencing, provides a conceptual understanding of the environment, a plan of action, and a platform for informed decision making. The more opportunities for cognitive map development a department has, the better the quality of students' cognitive maps; and the more opportunities for integration the department has, the more integrated the students.

Lovitts asserts that student background experiences, entering academic characteristics, and other personal individual differences remain with the student during the graduate experience. Graduate programs better serve underrepresented students by providing structural support for these students. For example, students of color who are fully integrated into the distribution of structures with quality faculty advisement, financial assistance, and office space will persist better than those without these resources.

Students who do not become socialized eventually see themselves as outsiders, and ultimately under perform and/or withdraw from doctoral study. In Lovitts' ideal model, departments integrate students well and provide them with resources for persistence beyond their own personal resources. The following table outlines good departmental practices based on suggestions from the authors, and as appropriate for the three goals of the Irvine project:

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[1] Lovitts, B. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Irvine Project Goal	Suggestions for Good Departmental Practice
Increase students of color who will go on to assume faculty positions.	- Create a staff of faculty members charged with helping pre-dissertation students through their programs until they have secured a chair. - Inform students there are no penalties for changing department-assigned advisors. - Hold special seminars for first year students at which faculty discuss their research. - Maintain records on faculty's Ph.D. productivity rates - reward and sanction accordingly. - Conduct exit evaluations by all completers and non-completers on quality of faculty advisers. - Create a mentorship program that matches advanced graduate students with first-year students. - Schedule a series of formal and informal departmental gatherings of faculty and students including brown bag lunches, colloquia, happy hours, etc.
Enhance the climate for faculty of color to engage in sustained intellectual dialogues.	Hold departmental research conference or regularly scheduled colloquia featuring faculty work.
To enhance discussions of diversity on campus.	- Encourage students to be purposeful in what they want to study and with whom. - Require applicant to visit campus; include funds for the visit in the fellowship. - Provide mandatory orientation for all new graduate students of color; require faculty to provide overview of first year classes they teach.