

When A Factory Needs A Fellow

A Look At Fellowship Programs In Industry

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This is an era of competition. The influence of competition reaches into every aspect of our lives and, quite naturally, causes an allowable share of anxiety. It is hardly much of a shock to human sensitivity to realize with what great urgency and aggressiveness the competitive spirit is blasting through the People Market, these days.

In that market, one of the relatively new media of exchange is education. Hundreds of companies now literally subsidize education, in order to attract certain classifications of personnel. This is occurring now because hindsight is always 20/20! Belatedly, industry is helping to produce the scholars it has needed for a pitifully long time. The effort goes beyond tuition assistance programs and its characteristic aid to employees attending night college classes. The effort is now purposefully extended to include half-time and full-time graduate programs . . . and, what's good for education is good for industry!

If you take a hop-skip-and-jump through industrial canyons, you find little difference among individual company policies and procedures governing administration of these graduate pro-

grams. The differences are minor, through no fault of the respective companies willing to support the programs and, certainly, through no fault of the colleges and universities seemingly eager to provide necessary instructors and facilities. The antiquated academic requirements effectively stereotype most graduate candidates' programs. Especially, in attempting to earn a doctorate, the candidate comes face-to-face with such evidence of academic empire-building and stuffy traditionalism as the currently-fashionable "residency requirement."

Can this nation afford to allow institutions of higher learning to impose the punishment of the "residency requirement" upon otherwise acceptable scholars? American industry, having poured billions of dollars into support of graduate degree programs, still appears to have no official opinion about what should be the function, role and responsibility of the Anxious Age college and university.

In any case, we circumvent the issue by establishing graduate fellowship programs providing for at least one year of study toward the doctorate and, normally, renewable until the doctorate is

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earned. A most useful comparison of these programs results from consideration of these factors:

1. Eligibility requirements
2. Study fields
3. Financial arrangements
4. Number of annual awards
5. Method of selection
6. Participating Institutions

Eligibility

Most companies currently boasting a doctoral fellowship program utilize an in-house committee to nominate individuals to be considered for acceptance by the participating institution. Generally, a fellow-candidate must demonstrate evidence of accomplishment in his special field, evidence of effective current performance and intellectual capacity to profit from an all-expense-paid tour through Ivy-land. Some companies require no particular length of service. Where the requirement does exist, it is usually limited to one year. In many cases, awards are offered to non-employees and a significant number of concerns view financial need as a prerequisite to consideration for the award.

Study Fields

There is definite preference for fellowship candidates who represent the various fields of applied and theoretical science. In support of what amounts to an academic apartheid, roughly six out of ten companies will permit nomination of those applicants whose specialties include:

1. Mathematics
2. Physics

3. Electronics
4. Engineering

Financial Arrangements

Certain fellowship plans provide for increased financial awards to recipients who are husbands and fathers. A few companies absorb all expense for relocation of fellow and family, to make possible attendance at institutions some distance from home. As an adjunct to almost every award, a grant is given to the department of college or university in which the recipient will study. Commonly, current programs contain provisions for:

1. A stipend to the recipient fellow
2. Payment of tuition
3. Payment for required textbooks
4. Payment for usual fees
5. Payment for fees associated with the dissertation

One or two companies maintain novel "loan" plans to provide additional financial support to fellows. These plans do not require repayment of the loan, if the recipient returns to his benefactor's shop, following the scholarly sojourn. Recalcitrant fellows are thus punished, although tax laws assure that recipients must pay income tax on the loan principal.

Number of Awards

Nationally, there is wide divergence in the number of annual fellowships awarded by individual concerns. The range appears to be from three to seventy-five, but most companies report, more realistically, that their actual awards seldom exceed ten in number.

Method of Selection

Invariably, candidates submit some kind of application for consideration as a possible fellowship recipient. The application is often simply a letter, but more often is a form specifically designed for the purpose.

Applications are submitted to a committee composed of technical management personnel. The committee selects the probable recipients and turns its decisions over to the individual administering the corporate education programs. Participating institutions are contacted and asked for statements about the acceptability of respective recipients. Only after acceptability is confirmed is announcement of awards made public.

Participating Institutions

Any number of institutions, both accredited and unaccredited, display a rare willingness to accept full-time graduate degree candidates, accompanied by grants, restricted or unrestricted. Any number of fellows slip into those hallowed halls, put on the scholar's robes, develop tunnel vision and are never again seen in the world of industry . . . and this, too, the industrial world owes to the academic world.

In practice, about six out of ten companies will offer the fellowship award to any accredited college or university to whom the candidate is acceptable. Other companies tend to restrict candidates to certain schools . . . reflecting, perhaps, a sort of disarranged loyalty to an erstwhile alma mater or . . . and this is more likely . . . a crafty gesture toward reducing relocation expenses.

Several institutions of higher learning insist upon handling the money. They

require the company to deposit the funds with the school controller, who then disburses the recipient's stipend to him periodically, and his expense funds upon presentation of appropriate bills and receipts. Such an arrangement effectively prevents the recipient from expending his year's stipend for a sporty MGA to wear around campus.

Research Resume

Having now chatted with, annoyed and otherwise pestered most of the West Coast's missile world management, on this subject of fellowship programs, if I were asked, I would recommend these as appropriate characteristics of such a program:

1. *Eligibility:*

- a. Currently employed personnel, holding Master's Degree.
- b. Avoid service requirement.
- c. Require candidate to give evidence of his acceptability to the institution.
- d. Require specific application on company form.

2. *Selection:*

- a. Require applications be submitted between January and March.
- b. Provide for approval by candidate's sponsor (department head or higher)
- c. Choose recipients by committee composed of technical and administrative management.
- d. Provide for 8-10 awards per 3,000 personnel.
- e. Provide for 4-5 alternates, to replace candidates who withdraw.
- f. Require written acceptance by recipient within 30 days after award.
- g. Announce selections by May 1st for *next* Fall semester.

3. *Finances:*
 - a. Provide for stipend of \$5000. for a year.
 - b. Provide additional funds for tuition, required texts, fees, dissertation costs.
 - c. Label portion of stipend as "salary" and provide all employee benefits.
 - d. Provide \$1000. minimum grant to department of institution concerned.
 - e. Provide funds for transportation to and from class site.
 - f. Retain company control in disbursing funds.

4. *Institutions:*
 - a. Restrict to local colleges and universities which are accredited.
 - b. Establish reporting procedure between company and institution.

Judging by the experience of a good segment of West Coast plane and missile makers, these recommendations appear to be appropriate. Several of these concerns have established two other programs which are related to the fellowship program. One such additional program provides for a "Work-Study Plan," the other provides for education leaves.

Work-Study Programs

Such programs, generally, contain provisions for:

1. 8-10 "Work-Study" fellowship awards per year, per 3000 employees.
2. 20-hour work-week at company at 50% salary.
3. Part-time attendance at local college or university classes.
4. Payment of tuition, fees and costs of required texts.
5. Specific degree objective (usually Master's)

6. Optional full-time or part-time summer employment at company.

Education Leaves

Such leaves are granted, by many companies, for a one-year period. The leave privilege is usually limited to candidates who are not fellowship recipients. At least two companies in this area pay a token salary of \$1200 per year to the individual on education leave. This permits . . . "keeping the employee on full employee benefits for the leave year . . . except that he does not accrue vacation or retirement credits." This arrangement has interesting legal overtones and, discretion being the better part of valor, these companies shall remain nameless, because . . . after all . . . "Big Brother may be watching."

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