

Duke University  
DURHAM  
NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY

21 March 1973

POSTAL CODE 27706  
TELEPHONE 919-684-3715

To: Harold Lewis, Dean of Faculty

From: Peter Klopfer & Donald Stone, Institutional Representatives  
on the Board of Directors, Organization for Tropical  
Studies (OTS)

Re: Establishment of a University fellowship for OTS courses

Duke University's membership in OTS for the past six years has paid off handsomely. Our \$2000/year dues have been parlayed into 19 fellowships for studies in Latin America. These fellowships were awarded on a national competitive basis through OTS auspices and financed primarily by the National Science Foundation. Each award is valued at \$3,000. Feedback at both the local and national level clearly indicates that the OTS courses in Tropical Ecology have consistently been of superior quality and have offered an unparalleled opportunity and challenge for top caliber graduate students. The section at NSF that has been our benefactor in education is phasing out and unless we can find other ways and funds to sustain our courses, we believe that graduate education at Duke University and the elite membership of universities in OTS will lose an invaluable adjunct to their graduate programs.

Accordingly, as representatives of Duke University on the Board of Directors of OTS, we strongly recommend that Duke provide one or more fellowships (valued at \$1,600) to insure that the teaching program at OTS be sustained through a system that guarantees excellence in graduate participants. Our understanding is that fellows will be chosen on a national competitive basis and that University funds would be needed when one of our students is selected. However, since we have averaged 3 fellows for each of our 6 years of membership, it seems highly likely that a minimum of one University fellowship will be needed each year.

The background and justification for this request are summarized in the following paragraphs. The immediate source

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of concern is an echo of the same Federal voice that has ruthlessly undercut support for graduate education. Our funding for education through NSF has reached as high as \$300,000 plus/year but is down now to \$90,000. Existing funds in this category are currently supporting the Winter course (February-March) and are sufficient to carry the Summer program (July-August) at full strength (i.e., 20 students, 4 faculty, \$40,000-\$50,000 budget).

The Executive Committee of OTS has been aware of the pending crisis for several years and has searched far and wide for remedies. Potential granting agencies such as Ford, Rockefeller, OAS, AID, etc., etc. were contacted and some enthusiasm has been generated for certain portions of our total OTS program. Ford, for example, has expressed interest in supporting fellowships for Latins to attend OTS courses. The Stanley Smith Foundation of Great Britain awarded OTS 5,000 pounds/year for a minimum of 3 years to develop the "Las Cruces Tropical Botanical Garden and Field Station," in San Vito de Java, Costa Rica. The National Science Foundation has recently approved a \$50,000/year continuing award to underwrite the costs of field station maintenance. They are, of course, in a position to do this since the justification falls squarely on the shoulders of OTS research activities. A condensed summary of "current" finances gives a pretty good picture of the state of OTS health.

|                                       |                      |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Net worth</u> as of November, 1972 | \$167,000            |
| <u>Income/year</u>                    |                      |
| 1. Membership dues, \$2,000 x 27      | 54,000               |
| 2. Grants                             |                      |
| a. Research     \$350,000             | 155,000 (I.C.)       |
| b. Education     90,000               | phasing out          |
| c. Facilities     50,000              | <u>16,000 (I.C.)</u> |
| PROJECTED TOTAL INCOME/YEAR           | \$225,000            |

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The financial picture is clearly sound and looking better everyday in spite of Federal cutbacks. Unfortunately, we are still paying the price for extravagant management under Jack Spencer's Executive Directorship. After much agonizing, the Executive Committee bought out Spencer's contract in July of 1972. Reorganization has trimmed our Miami headquarters from 8 staff to 2 1/2, cut our office rent in half (\$750 to \$300) by moving to more modest quarters, and succeeded in revamping our accounting system, with the generous help of Steve Harward. It looks now like we are on the right track.

The education program faces the stiffest competition for money and yet it is obviously this part of OTS that offers the most to universities like Duke, Harvard, Cornell, Wisconsin, etc., schools that have no research funds channelled through OTS. Of course we can and do use the facilities in Guatemala and Costa Rica, but we are minor components of the major research thrust. OTS was "established to promote the study of science in the tropics, to conduct organized programs of graduate training and research on tropical problems, and to serve as a national and international agency for coordinating and facilitating the work of individuals and groups in the tropics." (BioScience 17: 236-240. 1967). Educational opportunities were presented as our original justification for joining OTS, and we still maintain that the education program is the only matrix which binds the consortium.

The obvious suggestion for financing education is that Membership Dues be used. The best estimate is that we can probably free \$30,000 of the \$54,000 income for direct subsidy of education. The entire amount is not available because NSF disallows indirect cost (I.C.) recovery from research activities to be siphoned off for education. Education has to pay for its share of the use of facilities, labor, etc. While \$30,000 seems like a sizeable chunk of money it doesn't go very far. Each of our courses in the past have averaged around \$40,000, and although certain economies can be made, room and board, national and international travel, etc. keep the costs above \$20,000 per course. This assumes we take better advantage of faculty release time. Another problem is that even if we should be able to mount one course per year with Membership Dues, one course is sufficient to accommodate only a small fraction of the total number of applicants and, perhaps just as importantly, the meager offering would allow no room for course diversity. People in the marine sciences, forestry,

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agriculture, etc., many of whom have been our strongest supporters, would no longer see justification for holding their institutions in OTS.

Education must be maintained at a modest level for OTS to continue as a viable consortium. Several options have been suggested and two new avenues for OTS-related courses will be offered this summer. The University of Southern California will offer "Biology of Tropical Vertebrates" in OTS style for paying participants. The course will take advantage of OTS facilities and staff (for a fee), but obviously will not be of OTS caliber because the students will not be selected on a national competitive basis. The second course sponsored by Harvard in "Plants of the Tropics" is most unusual because they have offered to reserve 5-6 fellowships (tuition, transportation, subsistence) for OTS participants who are selected by OTS on a national competitive basis. This is a magnanimous offer on Harvard's part and is unlikely to be repeated by many institutions (see attached).

Other innovative possibilities for student support exist, and we have not given up on major granting agencies; however, the most promising new development is the guarantee that several institutions will be able to "generate internally fellowships earmarked for graduate students from their institution who are selected to participate in OTS courses." Stephen Preston (President of OTS and Associate Dean of Natural Resources at the University of Michigan) and Kenneth Turnbull (Executive Director of OTS and Professor of Forestry at the University of Washington) have sounded the challenge in the attached letters. The Executive Committee of OTS will meet in Miami on Friday, March 23, to consider this and additional matters.

Appended to this request are included (i) letters by Preston and Turnbull, (ii) current status of accreditation and listing of OTS courses at Duke, (iii) flyers for the courses sponsored by USC and Harvard, and a (iv) map denoting sites of operation in Costa Rica along with the 1971 Annual Report that has several informative summaries on education and research activities.