MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 7, 1994

TO: Rural Sociology Faculty & Graduate Students

FROM: RS Department Evaluation Committee

SUBJECT: Statement of Evaluation Criteria

This is a statement of criteria and procedures for evaluating graduate students applying for financial assistance as teaching assistants, as developed in a series of meetings of the Evaluation Committee.

All graduate students planning to apply to the department for financial assistance as TAs for the Fall/Spring semester should submit their materials by mid-April (Fall) or mid-October (Spring), according to the criteria stated herein. The guidelines are as follows:

1. Continuing RS Graduate students who wish to be considered for financial support as departmental teaching assistants should submit Graduate Student Funding Information forms; students who expect to be supported as research assistants by departmental faculty should obtain a written statement of guarantee of this commitment from the respective faculty member (with a copy of this guarantee provided also to the department's Administrative Manager); such students need not submit applications for financial support as TAs. The same holds for students who expect to be supported by other means, e.g., fellowships, appointments outside the department, and so on.

2. The students who have submitted applications for TAs (hereafter referred to as applicants) will be ranked according to their seniority in the department. This ranking procedure will be the same as that followed for more than a decade in this department; (the date of reference for completion of A exams, MS theses, and semesters of support will be August 15 [Fall] or January 15 [Spring]) the procedure will be implemented as follows:

   a. applicants who have completed the A exams and have one semester of financial support after the A exams will be assigned a rank of 10;

   b. applicants who have completed the A exams and have no semesters of financial support after the A exams will be assigned a rank of 9;

   c. applicants who have completed the A exams and have two or more semesters of financial support after the A exams will be set aside in a temporary category;

   d. applicants who have a Master's degree, but who have not completed the A exams, and who have received three semesters of support after the Master's degree, will be assigned a rank of 8;
e. applicants who have a Master's degree, but who have not completed the A exams, and who have received two semesters of support after the Master's degree, will be assigned a rank of 7;

f. applicants who have a Master's degree, but who have not completed the A exams, and who have received one semester of support after the Master's degree, will be assigned a rank of 6;

g. applicants who have a Master's degree, but who have not completed the A exams, and who have received no semesters of support after the Master's degree, will be assigned a rank of 5;

h. applicants who have a Master's degree, but who have not completed the A exams, and who have received four or more semesters of support, will be set aside in a temporary category;

i. applicants who do not yet have a Master's degree, and who have received three semesters of support, will be assigned a rank of 4;

j. applicants who do not yet have a Master's degree, and who have received two semesters of support, will be assigned a rank of 3;

k. applicants who do not yet have a Master's degree, and who have received one semester of support, will be assigned a rank of 2;

l. applicants who do not yet have a Master's degree, and who have received no semesters of support, will be assigned a rank of 1;

m. applicants who do not yet have a Master's degree, and who have received four or more semesters of support, will be set aside in a special category.

The number of students who have been guaranteed funding for one or more years in their letters of acceptance to the graduate field of Development Sociology will now be determined. If any of these students are in the applicant pool, they will be moved to the top of the list of rankings. Nonetheless, such students should submit the application form to indicate desire for an assistantship.

Before moving further in the evaluation process, the seniority rankings of the applicants will be circulated to the applicants in order to verify their status information. If incorrect, the applicants should submit supplemental information to assist the evaluation committee in making corrections.

3. Those applicants set aside because of ineligibility according to the 2-2-1 principles will then be reviewed individually by faculty members of the evaluation committee (hereafter referred to as the faculty). (This committee will be comprised of four or five persons who are not members of the Graduate Field Admissions Committee, and attempts will be made to have each of the Field's concentration areas represented on the evaluation faculty committee.) Their complete files will be examined, and special pleadings on their behalf will be made and discussed; the faculty members of the evaluation committee will then decide by majority vote whether or not to
allow the applicant to re-enter the ranking system (and thus become eligible to compete for financial assistance).

4. Faculty members of the evaluation committee will then read and inspect the application folders of each of the applicants. Each folder should contain information on the following:

a. Record of academic performance in graduate school in the Field of Development Sociology here at Cornell, and, if applicable, at other universities, or graduate fields at Cornell; this record will include course titles and grades for all graduate courses completed, as well as grade point averages for courses completed at each school. The number of incompletes currently on the applicant's record will also be noted.

b. Record of performance as a Teaching Assistant and/or as a Research Assistant; this record will consist of a letter completed by the professor who is currently directing the applicant either as a TA and/or as an RA, discussing the applicant's performance; in the letter the professor should compare the applicant with other students; for instance, providing any information pertinent to evaluating the applicant's potential performance as a TA.

c. If a student has not been a TA or an RA, then the major professor should be asked by the applicant to submit a letter evaluating the student's overall strengths and weaknesses and potential performance as a TA.

d. On the application form, the student will list and discuss his/her record of professional performance; this record will be prepared by the applicant and will list and discuss her/his professional accomplishments while in graduate school; these should include, but are not necessarily limited to, publications; papers presented at professional meetings; lectures given to classes; grant and fellowship applications written, as well as those received; services performed for the department; and so forth.

e. A record of special pleading will be prepared by the applicant and will consist of special considerations and concerns not covered in the above, but items deemed by the applicant to be important for the faculty members to consider in their evaluations.

5. The faculty on the evaluation committee will then discuss the applicants' rankings openly for the purpose of moving applicants from one rank to another, using the materials provided in #s 4a through 4e to make adjustments in the initial base. The discussion will proceed until a consensus (or majority vote) by the faculty on the committee about each applicant's ranking is reached. However, a faculty member will not rank applicants for whom s/he is serving as a major professor.

6. Now that the ranking of applicants has been completed (see #5), each student will be notified of his/her "final" ranking; because of privacy issues, the complete ranking results will not be posted or otherwise made public.
7. At this time, applicants will have a period of about one week to appeal their rankings. The evaluation faculty members will then meet to entertain individual appeals, and to decide whether or not to change or adjust the rankings; the faculty supervisors of those students submitting appeals are encouraged to attend this meeting.

8. Once the final rankings have been completed (#7 above) professors who will be teaching courses in the upcoming semester will be tentatively assigned TAs on the basis of the final rankings and job fit. A few courses require special TA skills in methodology, statistics, and/or substantive background; thus the professors of such courses will be permitted to choose the first such qualified applicant in order of the ranking; this could involve selecting an applicant who is ranked lower than the number of TA positions available. Students will then be informed whether or not they have been tentatively assigned a TA position, and if not, how many ranks away they are from being assigned a position.

9. Whenever an applicant who has been assigned a TA position decides to accept other sources of support, the TA position will then be re-assigned to the next eligible student on the basis of ranking and job fit, and the student will be so notified.

10. The evaluation process will begin after mid-April (Fall) or mid-October (Spring). It will be the applicant's responsibility to obtain and place in his/her file all of the information discussed above in #s 4a through 4e.

11. All applicants will be notified before the end of the Fall or Spring semester of their standing with regard to whether or not they have been assigned a TA position for the following semester, and if not, how many ranks they are away from being assigned a position.

12. Schedule of Dates for the Evaluation Process:

   Mid-April (Fall); Mid-October (Spring): all applicant files completed.

   End of April (Fall); End of October (Spring): Field Assistant will review application files for completeness.

   By Mid-May (Fall); Mid-November (Spring): Evaluation Committee will decide on TA rankings of applicants.