



**Written Comments to the Department of Commerce, Census Bureau in  
Response to the Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; the  
American Community Survey Content Review Results  
(Federal Register, Vol. 79, No. 211, October 31, 2014, pp. 64743-64744)  
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## **BACKGROUND**

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) appreciates this opportunity to provide comments and feedback on the American Community Survey (ACS) Content Review Results. CGS is the only national organization in the U.S. that is dedicated solely to the advancement of graduate education and research, and our membership includes over 500 universities in the United States that annually award more than 92 percent of all U.S. doctorates and over 81 percent of all U.S. master's degrees.

## **SUGGESTION**

CGS urges the Department of Commerce to retain Person Question12 (Undergraduate Field of Degree), where respondents are asked to provide specific major(s) of any bachelor's degrees received by the person with the highest degree in each household.

## **RATIONALE**

Many national sample surveys rely on the results of the ACS to construct a stratification sample design that most accurately reflects the true population of interest, and "specific major(s) for a bachelor's degree" is a key variable that allows researchers and policy makers to examine outcomes of postsecondary education with respect to fields of study. This is crucial for the graduate education community because postsecondary outcomes, including post-baccalaureate pursuit and workforce participation vary by discipline.

For example, CGS and many of our members employ the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics' National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG) to develop national benchmarks for career outcomes of master's and doctoral degree recipients by specific fields. Also CGS uses NSCG to estimate the potential monetary cost and return on investment of pursuing advanced degrees, which is a key element of CGS's financial education website, [gradsense.org](http://gradsense.org) and is utilized by prospective graduate students. Because NSCG is stratified by specific academic majors, CGS can confidently benchmark earnings data by degree and field of study.

The proposed elimination would make it impossible for any national sample surveys, including NSCG, to reliably capture potential field effects on postsecondary outcomes, which would impact our ability to utilize these data for public purposes. To this end, CGS strongly urges the Department of Commerce to retain Person Question12 in the ACS.