Commission on Pathways through Graduate School and into Careers

Issues and Preliminary Findings

Patrick Osmer, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University
Chair, Commission on Pathways through Graduate School and into Careers
Why this Commission?

• The United States depends critically on our capacity to out-innovate, out-create, and out-think the world.

• Graduate schools develop the competencies needed to address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

• To ensure that our graduates reach their potential, we need to illuminate the next phase of the journey: The Pathway Through Graduate School And Into Careers.
Who is on the Commission?

Corporate Leaders
• William Green, Board of Directors, Accenture
• Stanley Litow, IBM
• Joseph Miller, Corning
• Russell Owen, CSC
• Ronald Townsend, Battelle

University Leaders
• Patrick Osmer (Chair) The Ohio State University
• Jeffery Gibeling, University of California Davis
• Maureen Grasso, University of Georgia
• Freeman Hrabowski, University of Maryland Baltimore County
• Jan Morrison, Boston University
• Suzanne Ortega, University of North Carolina
• Teresa Sullivan, University of Virginia
• Lisa Tedesco, Emory University
• James Wimbush, Indiana University

Ex Officio Members
• Kurt Landgraf, ETS
• Debra Stewart, CGS
The Path Forward: The Future of Graduate Education in the United States

• Challenges
  – Changing demographics
  – Attrition and time to degree
  – Debt accumulation
  – Lack of Career Transparency
Transition Through Graduate Education into Careers: Why Important?

• Estimated that the number of jobs requiring an advanced degree will increase by about 2.5 million over the next decade
  – 18% increase in jobs requiring masters
  – 17% increase in jobs requiring doctorates

• Understanding career options may be a factor in deciding to attend graduate school
  – The knowledge-based economy of the 21st century will increasingly require advanced knowledge and skills
  – Graduate education provides individuals with advanced knowledge and skills and produces innovators
Sources of Career Knowledge
Preliminary Findings: Students

• Students believe that a graduate degree is valuable
  – 88% believe a graduate degree provides better career opportunities and over
  – 84% believe it provides increased earning potential

• Information received about career paths is insufficient
  – Over 60% of students received insufficient information about career options prior to entering graduate school

• During graduate school, support is more readily available for “traditional” jobs
  – Academic job search support is more available than non-academic job search support
  – Faculty and research careers are promoted far more by faculty than other careers
Preliminary Findings: Universities

• Institutions vary in the amount of attention, information, and support provided to students regarding career options
  – 60% of Deans believe that students completing a research doctorate are knowledgeable about career options
  – 89% believe that students completing a professional doctorate are knowledgeable about career options

• Non-academic careers are perceived as inferior to academic positions
  – 43% believe faculty provide more support to those students interested in academic careers
Preliminary Findings: Universities

• Outcomes are not routinely tracked and vary dramatically within an institution
  – 32% of deans are very dissatisfied with their ability to track outcomes
  – 43% report that the dean’s office collects career outcome data

• Establishing relationships with employers is not valued
  – 95% of deans encourage students to use faculty to locate jobs following graduation but only 7% formally encourage faculty to maintain relationships with potential employers
Preliminary Findings: Employers

- Employers feel that graduate degree holders bring value to their organization; such staff
  - Have advanced knowledge and real work experience
  - Engage immediately in their work
  - Approach and solve problems in creative ways

- Employers feel that graduate degree holders still lack essential skills; these skills include
  - Engaging in teamwork
  - Effectively oral communication (i.e., creating and delivering presentations, discuss technical issues with non-technical individuals,
  - The application of technical knowledge

- Employers feel that graduate schools must have a multidisciplinary focus and teach students how to innovate
Crucial Questions

• Preliminary findings raise crucial questions about how we are educating and training students
  – Role of professional master’s degrees
  – Role of professional doctorates
  – Nature of doctoral education and training
  – Preparation for alternative careers
Next Steps

• The next version of the report will be reviewed by the Commission in January, 2012

• The final report will be released at the CGS legislative forum on April 19, 2012