

# Preparing a 21st Century Workforce by Investing in Graduate Education



Graduate students represent a rich cadre of individuals with varying financial needs. They tend to be older than their undergraduate counterparts, and a greater proportion are married and/or have dependent children.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the decision to pursue graduate education is often one that affects not just the individual student, but also their family. The educational choices of these individuals have a direct impact on the future workforce here in the United States. Through 2026, jobs requiring a graduate degree at entry-level are among the fastest-growing in the U.S. workforce.<sup>2</sup> Many of these professions are public service-oriented, where financial compensation is not a primary motivation for pursuing them. Therefore, federal student financial aid, federal student loans, and loan repayment programs should be designed to help ensure that future graduates

## Recommendations

- Consider the unique financial needs of graduate students when making reforms to federal student loans, annual/aggregate caps, interest rates, and borrowing options.
- Maintain parity for graduate students in federal loan repayment options, while ensuring that income-driven options are truly income-based, not degree-based.
- Allow Pell-eligible recipients to allocate remaining semesters of support unused in undergraduate education toward graduate education.
- Preserve Federal Work Study for graduate students.
- Strengthen funding for TRIO and Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need.
- Strengthen funding for the Title VII Health Professions and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs (Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services).
- Encourage participation in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program as an incentive to pursue careers that serve the public's interest.
- Promote transparency and financial literacy of federal borrowing and repayment options for graduate students and their families.

are able to serve in a multitude of sectors where their skills are needed most. Moreover, transparency about borrowing

and repayment options for graduate students and their families is critical to support responsible decision-making.

1. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). National postsecondary student aid study, for 2007-08 and 2015-16 cohorts. Retrieved from: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/>.

2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). Occupational outlook handbook. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.