



January 15, 2019

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Representative of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress,

On behalf of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), I want to congratulate you on your election to the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. For more than five decades, CGS has served as the national organization dedicated solely to advancing graduate education and research—our membership includes over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States, Canada, and abroad. Our programs award the majority of U.S. doctoral and master's degrees.

As you and your colleagues begin your work, we want to highlight the critical role that graduate education plays in producing the highly-skilled workforce that can meet the demands of the U.S. economy, spur job creation, innovation, and productivity, and allow us to remain globally competitive. Careers that require a master's or doctoral degree at entry-level are projected to be the fastest-growing segment of the workforce through 2026,<sup>1</sup> and federal policies should encourage individuals to pursue education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

CGS believes that supporting student financial aid and tax policies that allow individuals to better finance their education, investing in science and research, and expanding access and diversity within graduate education, is vital to building the educated, skilled, and diverse workforce necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. CGS is committed to working in a bipartisan fashion to advance the following priorities:

- Currently, graduate students have limited federal options in financing their education, which presents significant barriers to access for many individuals, particularly low-income students and those from underrepresented communities. As Congress works on reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, CGS urges lawmakers to be mindful of the unique needs of master's and doctoral students, whose financial situations can vary greatly from those of undergraduates. Additionally, tax policies that allow graduate students to maximize credits, invest in their retirement, and encourage employers to provide education and repayment assistance should be strengthened.
- Graduate students are key contributors to the nation's scientific enterprise. CGS encourages Congress to increase funding to federal agencies that support basic research and strengthen a future generation of scientists through graduate and postdoctoral traineeships and fellowships.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). Occupational outlook handbook. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.

- At a time when first-time enrollment of international students in U.S. graduate programs is declining<sup>2</sup> and when global competition for attracting top international talent is increasing, CGS believes that policies should support U.S. academic institutions' ability to recruit and retain international students and faculty. Allowing graduates to remain in the U.S. post-graduation will benefit both regional economies and maintain the nation's standing as a strong global competitor.
- Federal policies should support colleges and universities in fostering and creating a safe, inclusive, equitable, and diverse learning environment, and improve the recruitment of students from underrepresented communities into graduate programs.

Once again, we congratulate you on your electoral victory and look forward to working with you and your staff in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Please consider CGS a resource as issues impacting graduate education arise. Visit the CGS website, [www.cgsnet.org](http://www.cgsnet.org), to learn more about our work. If you have any questions, please contact CGS's Vice President for Public Policy and Government Affairs, Lauren Inouye, at [Linouye@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:Linouye@cgs.nche.edu) or (202) 461-3864.

Sincerely,



Suzanne T. Ortega

President

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<sup>2</sup> Okahana, H., & Zhou, E. (2018). [Graduate enrollment and degrees: 2007 to 2017](#). Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.