

Resolution

Building An Inclusive Graduate Community: A Statement of Principles

The Council of Graduate Schools reaffirms its belief that seeking students from groups historically underrepresented in graduate education and encouraging these individuals to pursue advanced degrees serves the best interests of higher education and the nation at large. Broadening the talent pool from which graduate students are chosen enhances the educational and scholarly activities of all students and faculty and is sound academic policy.

Graduate education establishes an environment of intellectual collegiality in which interaction among people with differing points of view is essential to learning. Students must confront subject matter at the leading edge of their disciplines, a territory frequently characterized by different and often opposing points of view. They must learn to question what is before them in a manner that is both rigorous and evenhanded. They must maintain high standards for the criteria of proof, and they must be not only willing, but also eager to test their ideas in a forum of their peers and colleagues. In this way, they hone their own skills and learn to engage in and contribute to the continuing discussion that defines the current consensus in any field.

By bringing diverse individuals together to engage in intellectual activities, graduate education engenders respect for intellect, regardless of source, and builds a community whose members are judged by the quality of their ideas. The importance of this kind of preparation cannot be overstated. Graduate study serves to educate and train tomorrow's teachers, scholars, scientists and engineers, and future leaders in business, government, and the professions. Upon graduation, these individuals will work in a rapidly changing world where race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and related factors merge with knowledge, merit, and talent to play important roles in shaping society. Their ability to deal with differing ideas and viewpoints will enable them to interact effectively with people in all sectors of society throughout the world.

Underlying the intellectual inquiry that is fundamental to graduate education, are strategies designed to create an inclusive and diverse graduate community. Virtually all of these strategies have utilized the broad concept of affirmative action: universities have affirmed their commitment to equality of opportunity by taking direct and specific actions to provide access to graduate education to those from historically underrepresented groups.

During the past 36 years, graduate schools have created a variety of approaches to identify, recruit, retain, and graduate such students. In the series, *Achieving an Inclusive Graduate Community*, the Council of Graduate Schools highlights a variety of successful programs in graduate schools across the country. They range from summer research opportunity programs for undergraduates to community outreach activities designed to introduce the idea of graduate school to parents and their children. A number of programs have focused on accessibility issues and ways of increasing financial support through tuition scholarships, fellowships, traineeships, and assistantships with funds from a variety of public and private sources. These programs have been developed through graduate schools and supplement many others based in departments and colleges. As central university offices, graduate schools are able to work with different departments and disciplines to establish broad approaches for dealing with common concerns and for sharing ideas about program design and effectiveness.

These efforts have been and continue to be successful. Today, over half of all graduate students are women, and more American minority students are earning graduate degrees than at any time in our history. The success of these students has led to increased awareness of opportunities lost and aspirations unfulfilled because of past exclusionary practices. Their accomplishments underscore the importance of recognizing and nurturing intellectual ability wherever it exists. Clearly, there is great potential for advanced study among populations previously

underrepresented in graduate education. Their numbers in many fields, however, still are small, and continuing effort is needed to maintain the momentum.

There can be no question that admission to graduate school must be based on the intellectual and creative capabilities of the students and their potential for advanced study. Universities must continue to refine and improve procedures for assessing these capabilities. They also must retain the authority to select from among qualified applicants those who have the potential to bring new ideas and different perspectives to graduate education. Affirmative action, broadly conceived, has been an effective strategy for accomplishing this objective. Regardless of the legal and political future of affirmative action, universities must continue to develop strategies that are effective in helping to make graduate education responsive to the intellectual aspirations of students. In so doing, universities will contribute to creating a truly pluralistic society.

Statement of Principles initially adopted by the Membership of the Council of Graduate Schools on December 13, 1996, as updated and reaffirmed by the Executive Committee of the Council of Graduate Schools' Board of Directors on June 23, 2003 and March 24, 2009.

For more information, contact the [President's Office](#).