Synopses of Winning ETS/CGS Award Proposals

2018: Vanderbilt University
Supporting the Transformation from Students to Leaders

The Graduate School at Vanderbilt University, with campus and external partners, will promote graduate student leadership development through three innovative interventions. Woven through all three focus areas will be programming that pays particular attention to the needs of first-generation students, those from underrepresented minorities, and women in the academy.

1. **FirstGen Success:** In a structured first-year experience for graduate students who self-identify as first generation (those without a parent who has attended college), students will participate in three streams of support: discussion groups and social events led by a first generation faculty leader; formal training events covering skills, resources, culture norms and career development; and an etiquette dinner providing experiential learning of professional norms.

2. **Training Tomorrows' Mentors:** By providing high-quality intervention for both mentors and mentees, we aim to improve the quality of mentoring at Vanderbilt and beyond, in this generation and the next, because we believe by training mentees we can positively affect the quality of tomorrow's mentors. Programming in this priority area will depend largely on external specialists and train-the-trainer efforts toward training students and faculty to be better communicators as well as training Vanderbilt staff for sustainability of the efforts. Programming will include a specific emphasis on mentoring that fosters an environment of inclusiveness.

3. **Managing Conflict and Difficult Conversations**: Numerous obstacles encountered by graduate students could be ameliorated through building both student and faculty confidence when confronting conflict. External mediation skills trainers will conduct 2 workshops for students, postdocs, faculty and staff. Participants will gain the confidence and skills needed to approach difficult subjects and learn skills to successfully navigate such discussions. Our Graduate Life Coach will then roll these efforts into a sustainable departmental roadshow available upon request by departments, programs and student groups.

2017: University of Washington
U501: Extend the Reach

The Graduate School at the University of Washington will expand its University 501 (U501) online orientation modules and reach more students, staff and faculty at our own university, as well as at

other universities. U501 "flips" orientation so all incoming graduate and professional students can view online modules containing text and videos with students, faculty and staff introducing key information before they arrive on campus.

Students may access these at any time - day or night, in any country, at their own pace. It introduces the nuts and bolts of graduate school, gives an overview of the graduate student experience and details resources and support systems.

- Internal to the UW, usage rates and user feedback from the 2017 pilot will be used to refine existing and add new content to further prepare students to transition to the UW. We will also identify individual UW graduate programs interested in tailoring this information to their own orientations, and we will work directly with these programs to pilot their specific versions.
- Externally, we will develop instructional modules to guide other universities -- research and non-research, master's granting, public and private -- in building their own online orientations. Comprehensive modules will ensure greater reach and effectiveness in delivery of their own orientations by taking users through a step-by-step process delivered in a format similar to U501 itself.

2016: Cornell University
Cornell University Innovative Inclusion Interventions (I3): Promoting Graduate Student Success through Advancements in the Climate of Graduate Education

The Graduate School at Cornell University, with campus-wide partners, will promote graduate student success and a more inclusive climate through four innovative interventions supporting the academic and social engagement of graduate students across identities.

1. **Summer Success Symposium**: In an event for new and continuing research degree students who have received fellowships in support of diversity, and/or identify as first-generation college (FGC) students and/or students of color, participants form connections with peers across graduate fields and establish a sense of community, and engage with successful Cornell Ph.D. alumni and faculty from diverse backgrounds.

2. **Interactive Theatre.** Through moderated discussions regarding video recordings of an interactive theatre project, student and faculty participants in *My Voice, My Story: Lived Experiences of Graduate and Professional Students* encounter the diverse lived experiences of Cornell graduate students and achieve listening for understanding, comprehension of the impacts of exclusion and inclusion in the learning and research environment, respect for mutual similarities and differences, and awareness of unconscious bias and how to confront it.

3. **Intergroup Dialogue Project**. Students contribute to transforming the campus climate through participation in the Intergroup Dialogue Project (IDP) immersion program, facilitating communication across social, cultural, and power differences, in a critical and meaningful way.

4. **Inclusive Teaching**. Participants in the Inclusive Teaching Institute (ITI) for Graduate Students and Postdocs, co-sponsored by Cornell University's Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CU-CIRTL) and the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) engage in complex discussions about diversity and inclusion, and learn how to incorporate inclusive teaching practices into their classrooms at Cornell and beyond.

2015: University of California, Los Angeles
Smart Recommendations: Digital Guidance & Support throughout a UCLA Graduate Student's Academic Career

Building on an existing website, GRAPE (Graduate and Postdoctoral Educational Support), this proposal is to build an engine called Smart Recommendations to deliver funding information to students based on their unique backgrounds, academic pursuits, and aspirational goals, and also on choices they previously made on the website. Once the platform is built, it will be expanded to deliver other types of recommendations such as on campus processes, seminars and workshops, professional and career development opportunities, and key deadlines. Smart Recs will push content and empower students to act.

The GRAPES website was redesigned to make it more usable and made information more easily discoverable. The next step which this project will undertake is to make the information retrievable based on past use and to make user-specific recommendations. The first stage will be open to new and continuing UCLA students and postdocs; future plans are to extend access to other populations at UCLA. UCLA is open to sharing underlying technology and infrastructure with other institutions that seek to implement similar functionality.

The program will be assessed with existing pipeline programs through surveys and focus groups. After initial testing, Smart Recs will be rolled out to the entire UCLA graduate student population and will be assessed to characterize user satisfaction, interest and behaviors. Analytics will be used to gauge student interests in specific events and workshops to ad in planning and resource allocation.

2014: Duke University
Duke OPTIONS: Online Professional development Tool for Individual OpportuNitieS

Duke Options is an online professional development planning tool that helps doctoral students identify career opportunities and target their professional development activities to reach their career goals. The tool identifies six core competencies doctoral students should development: teaching and mentoring communication skills, professional adaptability, self-awareness, leadership, and professionalism and scholarly integrity. The tool provides suggestions, resources and steps based on the four broad disciplinary areas at Duke: social sciences, humanities, basic medical sciences and natural sciences and engineering.

Users then can set deadlines for themselves to achieve their goals on a 5-year planning calendar, with suggestions embedded by the tool for appropriate timeframes. Additionally, the tool includes ways students can consult with their advisors to help achieve their goals.

Development of the tool involves cross-campus collaborations, including the Career Center and Office of Postdoctoral Services, Directors of Graduate Studies, key faculty members, and student groups. Lunches with targeted student groups would roll-out the tool to students.

2013: Florida International University
Academy of Graduates for Integrative Learning Experiences (AGILE): A Synergistic Community of Doctoral Scholars

AGILE is designed to meet the need for a learning community of doctoral URM students where interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are integrated with scholarly and research pursuits. The program promotes peer mentoring and coordinated professional development modules. Community meetings will enable socialization and open communication links. The first cohort will include 15 students selected from Hispanic and African American groups and will participate for two years. Participants will prepare and maintain a portfolio and academic diary of their participation in AGILE.

The professional development modules will bring together a variety of campus offices ranging from writing, wellness, research integrity, community engagement, leadership and service, career center and academic planning and accountability. AGILE will facilitate a one-semester long leadership track of events to explore, develop and apply leadership skills. Students will undertake community service/engagement in areas of interest and expertise. The community meetings will provide an opportunity for practicing communication skills.

The collective performance of the cohort will be assessed against the general graduate population using surveys. Conclusions on the effectiveness of the program in improving retention rates, time to degree and student success will be based on the overall performance assessment.

2012: University of Illinois at Chicago
Promoting Success in STEM Graduate Education Scholars Program (PaSSaGE Scholars Program)

In the first phase of the PaSSaGE program, STEM departments will nominate incoming Underrepresented Minority graduate students for the program; six will be selected for the Scholar Transition to Graduate School Program based on recommendations from their research mentors and a student statement addressing research, education and career goals as well as socio-cultural challenges faced. The students will receive a stipend of $4000 each for summer research in their home departments and participation in orientation and skills development workshops. This will allow them to building relationships in the department with the graduate college staff, to get settled in Chicago, and to get a jump-start on graduate school.

In phase two, Scholars Mentoring and Career Development Program, the students will be incorporated in the Fellows Mentoring Initiative which will provide career and psychosocial mentoring and professional and skills development activities. They will meet with graduate college staff members for one-on-one mentoring, interact with a peer mentor/become a peer mentor, and participate in community building activities and career development events such as brown bag research seminars.

Each student completing the preliminary/qualifying examination and advancing to PhD candidacy will receive $500 to present their work at a discipline-specific meeting/conference or to attend a non-UIC discipline-specific course or workshop. As they move toward completion of the doctorate, they will also be eligible for an additional $500 for travel to interview for postgraduate job opportunities.

UIC will assess how the PaSSaGE program impacts the retention and success of URM students. UIC hopes to secure longer term funding from public and private sectors to continue to increase retention and degree conferrals and to sustain these new initiatives in perpetuity.

2011: Eastern Illinois University
"The Integrative Graduate Studies Institute"

The Integrative Graduate Studies Institute will offer over a two-year period five integrative graduate mentoring programs with related assessment to track the outcomes and guide effectiveness for promoting graduate education. The institute will be staffed by a director and three graduate assistants who have experience working with underrepresented groups. The Integrative Graduate Mentoring staff will identify a graduate advocate in each undergraduate degree program and in selected partner offices. Graduate advocates will be provided with on-line and face-to-face guidance on what to include in graduate preparation materials and websites. Students will be targeted in their sophomore year.

The IGM for Key Educational Institutions program will involve having IGM-KEI staff identify existing and desired undergraduate or graduate institutional partnerships. Graduate recruitment will target key university partnerships using outreach, services and communication to build a strong and diverse graduate community.

First year graduate students will be provided with opportunities to connect with faculty, other students and the community at three key points (1st, 6th and 10th week of study). An on-line network will allow first year students to post questions, raise issues and find guidance. The IGM Goal program will integrate alumni who have entered or completed a doctoral degree as a resource for current students to consider doctoral degrees.

The IGM-Scholars program identifies 20 high-performing undergraduates from underrepresented groups nominated by their departments. The junior year will be the focus. The students will participate in a summer program mentored by graduate faculty and conduct a research as the basis for future graduate study. Stipends for the students and faculty mentors and a summer tuition waiver will be provided.

2010: Michigan State University
The Whole Student Experience: Admissions to Student Success

The proposal will bring together 4 projects as a continuation of the most successful interventions from previous grant programs, focusing on 5-10 departments who participated in other grant programs, and follow 2 cohorts of their students (entering fall 2011 and 2012) from admission to completion. Focusing on interventions that emphasize the "whole student," the topics will include:

1. Admitting students using holistic review
2. Setting expectations early
3. Developing career and professional development plans from the first year of doctoral experience through early years of first job placement
4. Providing development at key transition points at the doctoral program

These activities will draw upon the Setting Expectation and Conflict Resolution program, the PREP program (career and professional development), an AGEP grant, an NSF Innovation through Institutional Integrant grant, and the CGS PhD Completion Project.

1. **Admissions**
   Admissions and outcomes data from the PhD Completion Project will be shared with the admissions committees in participating depart as well as information on the new GRE. The committees will track additional "predictors for success" used in admissions decisions. Student outcomes will be tracked.

2. **Setting Expectations and Conflict Resolution**
   A workshop will be designed for partner departments and offered for doctoral cohorts during their first semester.

3. **Career and Professional Development**
   A workshop will be held for students, focusing on assessing skills, developing a professional plan and using the website to save it, finding professional development activities, and using resources on campus. The follow-up will include yearly focus groups.

4. **Writing**
   Senior graduate students in participating departments will be trained and success will be assessed. A module on writing will be added to the Summer Resources Opportunities Program that encourages an inclusive community of undergraduate to explore research and graduate education.

2009: University of California, Davis
Mentoring at Critical Transitions: Faculty Readiness from Admission to Completion

This pilot project draws upon the best practices of national initiatives in graduate education to enhance faculty preparedness in areas affecting the academic socialization and success of a diverse doctoral student population during the transitions from applicant to student, coursework to research, and research to professional career. Brief proposals from doctoral programs will be solicited and five to eight will be selected representing broad disciplines, different levels of student's diversity and varying strengths/weaknesses at key transition points in doctoral education.

The project will be launched with a retreat for graduate faculty in the programs with themes focusing on socialization, mentoring, and inclusiveness. During the year faculty will participate in a seminar to discuss and review personal contact and interviewing practices to enhance their ability to evaluate potential for persistence and retention of their students. They will also participate in seminars on early career mentoring and a new Iterative Writing and Research

Project, which will entail quarterly meetings of faculty and advisees to introduce the new students to the process of research, writing, critique and revision.

Faculty in the MCT project will participate in Career and Professional development seminars to update or strengthen their knowledge of topics such as:
- Careers outside of academia
- Building an effective CV
- Interviewing skills
- Weighing job options and negotiating offers
- Networking strategies
- Academic writing and publishing

Two certified MCT faculty seminars will be offer per quarter and a year-end, da6y- long capstone seminar. Faculty with expertise will facilitate the seminars on topics such as:
- Learning and communication styles
- Diverse scholarship in curricula
- Critical concerns and best practices involving gender, ethnicity, disabilities and sexual orientation in mentoring an detaching
- Admissions, matriculation and retention
- Milestone models for coursework, qualifiers, and dissertation
- Graduate student parent needs
- Professional and academic development
- Retention accountability

The programs will use current and historic data to identify and target areas for improvement in faculty mentoring. At the conclusion of the year, participating programs will receive an updated data report.

The Office of Graduate Studies will work with the pilot programs to identify the best practices and interventions most likely to have impacted changes observed in the data. The data reports will also serve as a model for graduate program reviews.