

## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

January 19, 2016

**Contact:** Katherine Hazelrigg

(202) 461-3888 / [khazelrigg@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:khazelrigg@cgs.nche.edu)

### **New Report Highlights Promise of Holistic Graduate Admissions to Increase Diversity**

Washington, D.C. — The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) today released a [report](#) that outlines the findings of a year-long research project on holistic graduate admissions. Supported by Hobsons, the project takes a look at emerging best practices and surveys more than 500 university admissions professionals to better understand the current state of graduate admissions at U.S. institutions.

Around the country, colleges and universities are adopting holistic graduate admissions processes in response to research finding that quantitative measures of student merit, such as standardized test scores and GPA, may not accurately predict success in graduate school and may disadvantage underrepresented, non-traditional, and older students. Holistic review, also known as whole-file or comprehensive review, considers a broad range of characteristics, including noncognitive and personal attributes, when reviewing applications. Higher education leaders consider holistic review a promising practice for achieving diverse cohorts of students with varied experience, backgrounds, and expertise.

“This is an opportune moment for graduate schools and programs to prepare to re-evaluate their admissions processes, as graduate institutions await the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on *Fisher II* and continue to grapple with what it means to create inclusive campuses,” said CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega. “This timely report provides context and guidance for graduate schools and their institutional partners.”

*Holistic Review in Graduate Admissions* reports the results of a survey of over 500 universities on their current practices and emerging needs in graduate admissions; a two-day intensive workshop of researchers, graduate deans, admissions professionals and other experts; and a review of the scholarly literature. The study surfaces promising practices and recommendations for graduate institutions seeking to learn more about or to implement holistic admissions processes, and provides an overview of existing resources for institutions.

Among the report’s key findings:

- Decentralized graduate admissions processes pose special challenges for implementing holistic review.
- More data is needed: 81 percent of graduate school staff respondents called for more data that demonstrate the link between admissions criteria and student success in graduate school.
- Articulating their diversity objectives and tying them to the missions of their institutions will make it easier for graduate schools to build a compelling case for the need to review admissions practices.
- Holistic review is widely viewed as a useful strategy for improving diversity of higher education; early evidence also suggests that holistic admissions processes are associated with improved student outcomes.

- The graduate education community would benefit from a clearer understanding of what constitutes a truly “holistic” graduate admissions process for master’s and doctoral candidates.
- 58 percent of all survey respondents reported that limited staff and faculty time is the greatest barrier to performing more holistic admissions processes.

The report recommends deliberately tying admissions processes to institutional and program missions and emphasizes the importance of data-driven decisions. It also encourages universities to ensure that all students, once admitted, are provided learning environments that make it possible for them to succeed.

“While academic achievements are important, we know that long-term student success depends on a variety of factors that make up a whole person,” said Stephen M. Smith, President of Advising and Admissions Solutions at Hobsons. “We’re proud to support the work of CGS to increase access to graduate education and improve graduate student outcomes by helping institutions find applicants who are the right fit during the admissions process and then to provide support on campus until they reach their goals.”

A complimentary copy of the report can be accessed at <http://cgsnet.org/innovation-graduate-admissions-through-holistic-review>.

###

*The [Council of Graduate Schools](#) (CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. The organization’s mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.*

*[Hobsons](#) helps students identify their strengths, explore careers, create academic plans, match to best-fit educational opportunities, and reach their education and life goals. Through our solutions, we enable thousands of educational institutions to improve college and career planning, admissions and enrollment management, and student success and advising for millions of students around the globe.*