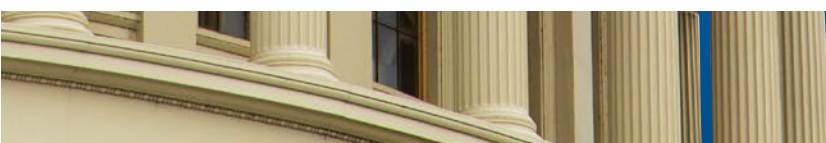
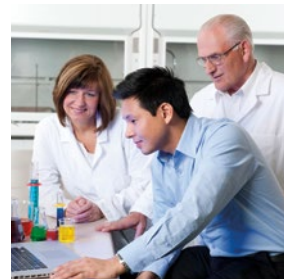




2021-2022 Federal Policy Agenda

For 60 years, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has served as the national organization dedicated to advancing master's and doctoral education and research. The council's membership is comprised of approximately 500 institutions across the United States, Canada, and abroad, representing a total of over 1.8 million graduate students. Collectively, CGS institutions annually award roughly 87% of all U.S. doctorates and a majority of all U.S. master's degrees.

CGS's 2021-2022 Federal Policy Agenda calls upon Congress and the Administration to support policies that, through graduate education, **improve access to graduate education, promote the United States as a global leader, and create a more equitable society for all.**





Federal Student Loans and Financial Aid

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Reforms to **federal student loans**, annual/aggregate caps, interest rates, and borrowing options and repayment options should be designed with graduate students in mind.
- ▶ Increase investments in **federal financial aid programs** for graduate students.
- ▶ Increase investments in **workforce development programs** including scholarship and loan repayment forgiveness programs that recruit and retain graduate-prepared professionals in areas where they are needed most.
- ▶ Promote **transparency and loan counseling** about federal borrowing and loan repayment terms for graduate students and their families.
- ▶ Allow former Pell Grant recipients who remain income-eligible to allocate support towards their **graduate education**, until they exhaust all 12 semesters.

RATIONALE

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.¹ As such, the decision to pursue graduate education is often one that affects not just the individual student, but also their family.

Through 2029, jobs requiring a graduate degree at entry-level will be among the fastest-growing in the U.S. workforce.² Many of these professions are public service-oriented, where financial compensation is not a primary motivation for pursuing them.



Priming Tax Policies to Support Graduate Education

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Simplify and enhance **tax credits** (e.g., the American Opportunity Tax Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit) so that they are more navigable for students and families, and ensure the benefits can be used towards graduate education.
- ▶ Strengthen employers' ability to provide **tax-exempt tuition assistance**, by expanding monetary limits and allow it to include student loan repayment (e.g., Sec. 117).
- ▶ Ensure tax policies support **charitable giving** (e.g., deductions) and maximize the utility of **endowments**, which allow academic institutions to fulfill their missions.
- ▶ Continue to exclude current tuition waivers and remissions from being included as **taxable income**, and exclude future grant aid to students from being income taxable.

RATIONALE

Certain provisions within the U.S. tax code directly affect the ability of employees to pursue a graduate degree as well as the ability of employers to invest in their employees' education. These credits and deductions can serve as powerful tools for recruitment and retention of employees, help cultivate a highly-educated and skilled U.S. workforce.



Promoting the U.S. through International Graduate Education and Research

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Increase investments in programs that facilitate **study abroad opportunities** for U.S. domestic students.
- ▶ Strengthen investments in programs administered under federal agencies that allow U.S. graduate students to participate in **international research opportunities**.
- ▶ Maintain duration of status for international students with **F, M, and J visas**.
- ▶ Uphold **Optional Practical Training** and the **STEM extension**.
- ▶ Expand the number of **H-1B visas** available to holders of graduate degrees from U.S. institutions to enhance the U.S. workforce in an increasingly competitive global economy.
- ▶ Strengthen partnerships between U.S. higher education institutions to advance U.S. policies in developing **higher education systems abroad**.
- ▶ Strengthen inter-agency collaboration with the higher education community on **national security issues**.

RATIONALE

As our world becomes increasingly connected, it is essential that federal policies promote the United States as the premier destination for graduate education. According to CGS data, in Fall 2019, international students (master's and doctoral) constituted 20% of first-time enrolled students.³ International graduate students bring a rich array of ideas and experiences that promote cross-cultural understanding which is necessary for effective diplomacy.

For U.S. graduate education to remain globally competitive, federal policies should support the ability of U.S. higher education institutions to attract top talent from all corners of the world. They should be designed to minimize interruption of a student's academic progress and allow graduates to apply their education and training in the U.S. workforce.



Advancing Research and Innovation

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Increase investments in federal research agencies that provide grants to support **graduate research**.
- ▶ Strengthen future generations of scientists through **postdoctoral traineeships, fellowships, and career development opportunities** provided through federal research agencies.
- ▶ Encourage **collaborations between private sector and non-profit employers with universities** to support graduate students and the impact of their work.
- ▶ Promote **safety, efficacy, and transparency** of research and data sharing.
- ▶ Increase **diversity** of the U.S. research pipeline, including faculty, students, and postdoctoral fellows.
- ▶ Strengthen **mentorship** opportunities as a component of the research process.
- ▶ Support **safe, respectful, and inclusive research environments** by addressing sexual harassment, racism, incivility, and other behaviors that are harmful.

RATIONALE

Research and scientific inquiry are cornerstones of graduate education. The application of resulting discoveries drives advancements across multiple industries and improves the daily lives of the American people. Federal investments in agencies that support basic science research, as well as timely breakthroughs that are responsive to national need, ought to be strengthened.

Moreover, federal policies should bolster the ability of the research pipeline to investigate, evaluate, and translate findings, as well as promote the safety, efficacy, and transparency of research and data sharing. In addition, policies should support programmatic activities that provide U.S. domestic graduate students opportunities to participate and contribute to international research.



Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Increase investments in federal programs that help identify, recruit, retain, and support the advancement of students, postdocs and faculty from **populations historically underrepresented** in academic and research environments.
- ▶ Include representation from the graduate education community on federal **advisory councils and taskforces** that address diversity, equity, and inclusivity in higher education and research.
- ▶ Strengthen federal investments for **Minority Serving Institutions and programs** under the Higher Education Act.
- ▶ Support activities within the Bureau of Indian Education to advance opportunities for **Native American and Alaska Native students** to pursue higher education, including graduate education.
- ▶ Support activities that meet the unique needs of, and create inclusive environments for, members from (including, but not limited to) **underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQI+ community, students with disabilities, and students who embody neurodiversity.**
- ▶ Ensure **veterans** of the U.S. military are able to fully utilize their benefits toward pursuing graduate education.
- ▶ Enact a permanent legislative solution to allow recipients of the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals** program to legally remain in the U.S. with a path toward citizenship.

RATIONALE

Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within graduate education enhances cross-cultural understanding, fosters intellectual collegiality, and enriches the overall experience and quality of the science and scholarship that is produced. As our country becomes more diverse, graduate schools must be committed and prepared to recruit, educate and support the advancement of students who are representative of the nation's population.

Federal policies and practices should enable graduate programs to attract and support students and subsequent postdocs and faculty from marginalized communities and populations historically underrepresented in academia. This not only helps to ensure a rich learning environment, but enhanced productivity and ultimately the creation of a highly-diverse workforce both internal and external to academia. Innovations across multiple industry sectors create new opportunities for collaboration which require a diverse, highly-educated and talented workforce. Master's and doctoral

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Promoting Graduate Student Success and Wellbeing

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Improve **access to healthcare** services for graduate students, including **mental health**. This includes expanding the use of telehealth services.
- ▶ Promote activities that support healthy **mentorship** experiences for graduate students.
- ▶ Promote activities that support **career exploration and professional development** for graduate students.
- ▶ Expand **broadband access** so that students and faculty can successfully participate in remote instruction.
- ▶ Invest in **wrap-around services** for graduate students and postdocs, such as childcare, food security, housing, and respite for those also serving as caregivers.

and participate in their own career trajectories. Mentorship, professional development, and career exploration are key elements in helping students identify how they will activate their skills and expertise in increasingly dynamic career fields and industries. As such, federal agencies, in collaboration with the graduate education community, can integrate these priorities into federal grants that support graduate education, research, and ultimately the workforce.

In addition, the novel coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that virtual environments highlight underlying challenges impacting graduate students, including access to healthcare and mental healthcare services and adequate broadband internet. Supporting infrastructure to ensure access to these services is likely to prove a long-term investment, as pandemic may result in long-term of utilization of remote learning, to some degree.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

programs must provide rigorous and inclusive training experiences that foster collaboration and promote diplomacy. In addition, legislative and regulatory efforts to address campus climate issues should be approached thoughtfully, and discussions that inform federal policies should include a variety of public stakeholders, including those representing graduate education.

RATIONALE

As integral members of the campus community, graduate students are engaged in a variety of activities, such as research and teaching, that advance scientific endeavors and promote undergraduate learning. Their contributions are strongest when they are able to fully thrive and are provided opportunities to explore



The Council of Graduate Schools is committed to working with federal policymakers in a bipartisan manner. To learn more about CGS's policy and advocacy work, including supplemental policy and legislative briefs that further detail the priorities included in this document, please visit: <https://cgsnet.org/public-policy>.



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NOTES

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. (2020). Occupational outlook handbook. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.
3. Okahana, H., Zhou, E., & Gao, J. (2020). *Graduate enrollment and degrees: 2009 to 2019*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.