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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 18, 2021

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New CGS Project Examines Role of Master's Education in STEM Workforce Preparation and Development

Washington, DC — Today the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) announced grant funding from The National Science Foundation (NSF# 2100343) for a project that will explore the role of master's education in preparing, upskilling, and reskilling the STEM workforce. The project will expand our understanding of how master's education across all fields prepares the STEM workforce, examining the extent to which skills, expertise, and competencies instilled through master's education align with rapidly evolving jobs and industries of the future.

The project, *Understanding Roles of Masters Education in Entry Into, and Upskilling and Reskilling for, the STEM Workforce*, will contribute to the development of a data infrastructure for future research on master's education while providing more nuanced insights into labor market outcomes of master's degrees by various fields of study, gender, race/ethnicity, and career stages. Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data reveal that many of the fastest-growing fields will require master's degrees, but little information exists about professional pathways. This research will shed light on how master's education may facilitate transitions to STEM careers for non-STEM undergraduate majors.

"This project has the potential to bolster institutional capacities to gather comprehensive outcomes data on master's education at the program level. This is critically important for graduate programs seeking to better align their curricula with core competencies and to make career outcomes more transparent to prospective students," said Suzanne Ortega, president of the Council of Graduate Schools. Ortega noted that the project will also address the role of master's programs in creating a more diverse STEM workforce. "By illuminating the role of master's education in entering and advancing in STEM careers--- not to mention building bridges to STEM doctoral education— the project has the potential to inform efforts to broaden the participation of women and persons of color in advanced scientific and engineering occupations."

The value of this project is echoed by members of the CGS Employer Roundtable. "As a leading government contractor, Peraton's ability to support national security missions of consequence relies on employing a diverse group of people who have the deep technical knowledge demanded in the space, cyber, defense, homeland security, and citizen services markets," said Chris Valentino, chief strategy officer, Peraton. "I support this new CGS project because it will help us better understand the role of master's education in preparing students for careers in critical STEM fields."

Over the three-year project, a census of all master's degree recipients will be conducted through an exit survey at ten CGS institutions, serving as a complement to the NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). The ten universities will be chosen through an RFP process that will assess applications based on the number of master's programs offered and degrees conferred. The RFP will be issued in fall 2021.

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About CGS

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.