

PRESS RELEASE

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CGS and PERVADE to Convene Thought Leaders on Ethical Issues in Big Data Research

Washington, DC — Today the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) announced a partnership with the University of Maryland's PERVADE: Pervasive Data Ethics to identify ways to enhance and influence the training graduate students receive when using big data methods in their research. The project, which will convene thought leaders from the big data ethics community and graduate deans from research-intensive institutions, has received funding support from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and Elsevier.

An increasing number of research disciplines and industry leaders embrace big data approaches as they pursue important research questions and product development. However, the methods used to assemble large datasets, and their applications in decision-making contexts, challenge existing ethical paradigms for data management, data integrity, human subject protections, and data use. Unfortunately, current attempts to identify and address these challenges are often focused within specific disciplines or corporate settings and offer little opportunity to integrate these evolving ethical concerns within master's and doctoral programs.

"Graduate deans often oversee professional development and Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training curricula and are uniquely positioned to present the ethical concerns of big data research to their university communities and to bridge potential silos that impede the sharing of best practices to address these evolving challenges," said CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega.

CGS has long been interested in scholarly integrity in graduate education, including training graduate students in the ethical use of big data. The [CGS 2015 Global Summit](#) ("Implications of 'Big Data' for Graduate Education") brought together policy experts from 15 countries to discuss the implications of big data in research but did not develop specific strategies to train graduate students in the ethical issues arising from its use to study human behaviors and activities. The 1.5-day workshop, which has been delayed until February 2021* due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will address a critical gap in our training of graduate students and future researchers: understanding the unique ethical challenges of data ownership and data management within the context of big data research.

Workshop goals include identifying specific ethical challenges that arise from the use of big data resources in graduate student research, critiquing existing resources for training, identifying potential levers for change, and formulating strategies for deploying and embedding resources for big data ethics within the RCR training curriculum. This conversation will empower graduate deans to expand our current training paradigms for scholarly integrity to address the evolving ethical challenges presented by big data.

* Original date was June 2020.

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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.