



## News Release

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### The University of Montana Receives ETS®/CGS Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education

Washington, DC – Today the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and ETS presented the University of Montana (UM) with the 2021 ETS/CGS Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admission through Completion. Dr. Scott Whittenburg, vice president for research and creative scholarship and dean of the Graduate School, accepted the co-sponsored award on the University of Montana's behalf during an awards ceremony held at the CGS 61st Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

The ETS/CGS Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education recognizes promising, innovative proposals to enhance student success and degree completion at the master's and doctoral levels while promoting inclusiveness. The winning institution is selected on the strength of its proposal to meet the award's goals and to serve as a model for other schools. The winner receives a two-year, \$20,000 matching grant.

The University of Montana's initiative, *Completing the Circle: Supporting the Success of Native Graduate Students*, focuses on a sub-population of underrepresented students, who are a significant regional population in the cultural life of the West: Native American graduate students. The university, which occupies the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispell people, aims to address a gap in the "circle of support" that is a key component of graduate school success: peer-to-peer encounters, especially outside of the context of graduate programs, that facilitate the fullest intellectual and professional growth of our students.

The initiative includes four components: Peer Cohort Meetings, A Native American Visiting Scholar Series, A Peer-to-Peer Mentor Fellowship Program, and Tribal Listening Sessions. Through these efforts, the university hopes to recruit more Native American students into their graduate programs, to increase retention and completion, and to strengthen connections with regional tribes to foster a reciprocal emphasis on community improvement by elevating the visibility of Native graduate students.

"The Graduate School of the University of Montana is proud to accept the 2021 Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admissions through Completion! Our proposal reflects our institution's acknowledgement of the distinctive contribution our Native communities make to local, state, and regional culture, including the wisdom of their traditional knowledge," said Scott Whittenburg, vice president for research and creative scholarship and dean of the Graduate School at the University of Montana. "We look forward to investing the funding in ongoing support of Native graduate students through a new peer-mentoring program, as well as in outreach efforts to deepen our relationships with tribal partners, who can help us shape graduate education with relevance and impact."

"Through their *Completing the Circle* initiative, the University of Montana commits to leveraging existing resources, programs, and relationships to substantially enhance Native

American student success in graduate education. While our recent graduate enrollment and degrees data show modest increases in American Indian/Alaska Native students pursuing graduate degrees, the graduate education community still has so much work to do. This project's success will provide CGS members with new approaches to better engage and support Native graduate students," said CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega. "We are so grateful to ETS for their support in recognizing this innovative way to promote best practices among graduate schools."

"We are proud to recognize the outstanding innovation in diversity by the University of Montana with the 2021 ETS/CGC Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admission through Completion," said Alberto Acereda, associate vice president of global higher education at ETS. "The institution's approach to advancing diversity, innovation and success in graduate studies addresses a critical gap and serves as an excellent example for other institutions in serving graduate students."

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### **About ETS**

At ETS, we advance quality and equity in education for people worldwide by creating assessments based on rigorous research. ETS serves individuals, educational institutions and government agencies by providing customized solutions for teacher certification, English language learning, and elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, as well as conducting education research, analysis and policy studies. Founded as a nonprofit in 1947, ETS develops, administers and scores more than 50 million tests annually — including the *TOEFL*® and *TOEIC*® tests, the *GRE*® tests and *The Praxis Series*™ assessments — in more than 180 countries, at over 9,000 locations worldwide. [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)

### **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.