

Building a Graduate Community where All Students Thrive: A Statement of Principles

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), an association of 460 universities that grant graduate degrees, recognizes that diversity, equity, access, and inclusion are critical to the excellence of graduate education.

For a nation to prosper, drive innovation, ensure sustainability and maximize impact, its universities must draw from a broad pool of students with the ability, curiosity, and motivation to complete a graduate degree. In the United States, as in many countries, the progress we are making toward this goal is steady, but slow. In order to accelerate progress, universities, funding bodies, and policymakers must work together to develop policies and practices that help attract, retain, and support the success and sense of belonging for all students.

As we pursue this goal, it is important to recognize that opportunities to learn and work in diverse environments are essential to the preparation of all students. As countries and economies become increasingly connected, it is imperative that all students have an opportunity to think, communicate, and collaborate both locally and globally. Given the compelling evidence that diverse teams produce better innovations and results, communities comprised of individuals with broad backgrounds and perspectives will be best positioned to solve problems of local and global scope.

Excellence depends on not only access, but the creation of communities that are inclusive—valuing difference and promoting a sense of belonging. Toward this end, graduate schools and graduate programs must clearly state their commitments to supporting the success of all students. Graduate programs, graduate schools, and the universities of which they are a part must closely examine evidence of what is measured, valued, and rewarded. Along with funders of graduate education, they must also invest time and resources in better understanding the policies and practices that support the successful participation of all.

By upholding these four broad principles—diversity, equity, access, and inclusion—all graduate students, as well as their programs, communities, and nations stand to benefit.

