



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Stuart Heiser

(202) 223-3791 / sheiser@cgs.nche.edu

Council of Graduate Schools receives \$2.4 million in grants to expand Ph.D. Completion Project

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has received grants of \$2 million from Pfizer Inc and \$400,000 from the Ford Foundation to improve our national understanding of the causes of student attrition from doctoral programs and to support activities at major research universities that will lead to improvements in Ph.D. completion rates.

The three-year grants will expand and enhance the Ph.D. Completion Project. This major initiative in graduate education is designed to increase degree completion in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics, and the humanities and social sciences. Supported by existing grants from Pfizer and Ford, the current project has funded 21 major research universities in the U.S. and Canada to evaluate the effect of activities on degree completion. The project has already begun to produce the most comprehensive and useful information yet available on attrition and completion in doctoral programs, and is transforming the national understanding of why so many students leave Ph.D. programs before completing their degrees.

The new grants will enable CGS to expand and deepen the project to engage 32 universities in assessing the impact of grant activities on doctoral degree attrition. The enhanced project will especially benefit minorities and women in graduate education, who have historically completed Ph.D.s at lower rates than majority students and men.

The Ph.D. Completion Project is the graduate education community's response to a major leak in the national pipeline of high-end talent. Findings from the first phase of the project indicate that only 50-65% of students who enter Ph.D. programs in the U.S. complete their degrees, precisely at the time where the worldwide demand for highly trained talent is growing. The attrition toll is particularly high for domestic students and women in the sciences, and for minority students across all fields.

“Global competition for the best students is more pronounced than ever before among the world's leading universities,” said CGS President Debra W. Stewart. “It is especially important now that we in the graduate community do all that we can to ensure the success of those that we admit. By focusing on degree completion, especially of minority students and women, this project directly addresses national needs for the next generation of research talent. The partnership with Pfizer and the Ford Foundation represents the combination of corporate,

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One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 430 • Washington, DC 20036

(202) 223-3791 • www.cgsnet.org

foundation, and university collaborations that we believe is necessary for solving the talent development challenges of the 21st century.”

"Pfizer is proud to continue to support the Council of Graduate Schools and the Ph.D. Completion Project," said Joann Eisenhart, Ph.D., Vice President of Human Resources at Pfizer Global Research & Development. "At the core, Pfizer is a science company—a research-based pharmaceutical company that employs thousands of Ph.D.s and other scientists to discover and develop new medicines. Our partnership with the Council of Graduate Schools is a natural for us as we strive to broaden the pool of future scientists and increase the diversity of our workforce."

“We have a real opportunity to boost the number of Ph.D. students who complete their degrees and who are ready to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world that needs their knowledge and skills,” said Gregory Anderson, a program officer in higher education at the Ford Foundation. “The Council of Graduate Schools has stepped up to this challenge and we are pleased to support their work.”

CGS will issue a publication in early 2007 that will highlight strategies for increasing completion rates and discuss data from the project’s pilot stage on doctoral degree completion and attrition.

For more information, please visit the Ph.D. Completion website at www.phdcompletion.org.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 475 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. CGS member institutions award more than 90% of the doctoral degrees and over 75% of the master’s degrees in the U.S. 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.