



Data Sources: Results from the 2010 CGS Pressing Issues Survey

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Graduate student financial support is the top issue facing graduate deans in 2010, according to the Council of Graduate Schools' (CGS) annual *Pressing Issues Survey*. Each year, CGS asks graduate deans at member institutions to identify the three most important or "pressing" issues or challenges they currently face. The findings from this *Pressing Issues Survey* inform CGS about the concerns of graduate deans and help to shape sessions at Summer Workshops, Annual Meetings, and other forums, as well as future best practices projects. The survey has been conducted annually as part of the *CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase I: Applications* since 2004 and through the CGS membership survey and other surveys in prior years.

The 2010 *Phase I* survey was sent to 505 U.S. colleges and universities that were members of CGS as of January 2010. A total of 240 institutions responded to the survey, for a response rate of 48% (Bell, 2010). About 90% (217) of the *Phase I* survey respondents wrote in one or more pressing issues in response to this open-ended question, and the analyses below are limited to these 217 respondents. They included 146 doctoral institutions, 57 master's-focused institutions, and 14 institutions classified as baccalaureate or specialized in the 2005 basic Carnegie Classifications. Sixty-two private, not-for-profit institutions responded to the *Pressing Issues Survey*, along with 154 public institutions, and one private, for-profit institution. By geographic region, 53 of the responding institutions were in the Midwest, 40 were in the Northeast, 36 in the West, and 88 in the South. Responses to the *Pressing Issues Survey* were coded into broad categories. Since respondents were able to write in up to three pressing issues, the percentages sum to more than 100%.

Pressing Issues in 2010

The top pressing issue identified by graduate deans was graduate student financial support, mentioned by more than half (53%) of all respondents (see Table 1). Respondents from doctoral institutions were more likely to mention this issue than graduate deans from master's & specialized institutions (58% vs. 45%), and respondents from public institutions were more likely to indicate that this was a pressing issue than those at private institutions (56% vs. 46%).

Enrollment management and student recruitment was ranked second, with 45% of all respondents saying this was a concern. Graduate deans from master's & specialized institutions were far more likely to mention this issue than those from doctoral institutions (58% vs. 38%). Respondents from public and private institutions were nearly equally likely to note enrollment management and student recruitment as a pressing issue (45% and 43%, respectively).

Dealing with budget cuts and graduate program financing ranked third (43%). Similar percentages of respondents from doctoral institutions and master's & specialized institutions mentioned this as a pressing issue (43% and 42%, respectively), but respondents from public institutions were more likely to

indicate that budget cuts/graduate program financing was a pressing issue than those from private institutions (46% vs. 35%).

Graduate school management was ranked as the fourth most pressing issue this year (42%), followed by international student issues (23%); student services (12%); program assessment, review and accreditation (11%); program development (8%); research ethics (7%); retention, completion and time-to-degree (7%); and job placement and career outcomes (6%). Some respondents (20%) wrote in a range of issues that did not fit into the 11 broad categories listed in Table 1. These included online program issues, the NRC report, interdisciplinarity, and health insurance for graduate students, among others.

The top issues of respondents from doctoral institutions were graduate student financial support (58%), budget cuts and graduate program financing (43%), and enrollment management and student recruitment (38%). In contrast, the top issues of respondents from master's and specialized institutions were enrollment management and student recruitment (58%), graduate school management (52%), and graduate student financial support (45%). Respondents from master's & specialized institutions were more likely to mention enrollment management and student recruitment than respondents in other categories, but they were least likely to mention student services and job placement/career outcomes.

Graduate student financial support was the top pressing issue of respondents from both public and private institutions (56% and 46%, respectively). Among respondents from public institutions, budget cuts and graduate program financing (46%) and enrollment management and student recruitment (45%) were the second and third ranked pressing issues, compared with graduate school management (44%) and enrollment management and student recruitment (43%) among respondents from private institutions.

Table 1. Results from the 2010 CGS Pressing Issues Survey

Pressing Issue	Total	Percentage of Respondents			
		Doctoral	Master's & Specialized	Public	Private
Graduate Student Financial Support	53%	58%	45%	56%	46%
Enrollment Management/Student Recruitment	45%	38%	58%	45%	43%
Budget Cuts/Graduate Program Financing	43%	43%	42%	46%	35%
Graduate School Management	42%	37%	52%	41%	44%
International Student Issues	23%	23%	21%	24%	19%
Student Services	12%	16%	3%	12%	11%
Program Assessment & Review/Accreditation	11%	12%	8%	10%	13%
Program Development	8%	8%	7%	5%	14%
RCR/Research Ethics	7%	10%	3%	8%	5%
Retention, Completion and Time-to-Degree	7%	8%	6%	6%	10%
Job Placement/Career Outcomes	6%	8%	1%	3%	14%
Other	20%	16%	28%	22%	16%

Notes: 'Master's & Specialized' includes 57 master's institutions and 14 institutions classified as baccalaureate or specialized in the 2005 basic Carnegie Classifications. 'Private' includes 62 not-for-profit institutions and one for-profit institution.

Source: 2010 CGS Pressing Issues Survey

Pressing Issues by Geographic Region

Responses to the *Pressing Issues Survey* varied by the geographic region of the responding institutions. As shown in Table 2, the top pressing issue identified by graduate deans at institutions located in both the Northeast and the South was graduate student financial support (55% and 57%, respectively). But, among respondents from institutions in the Midwest, the top pressing issue was budget cuts and graduate program financing (53%), and among respondents from institutions in the West, graduate school management issues (50%) were ranked as the most pressing issue. Respondents from institutions in the Northeast were more likely to mention student services and job placement/career outcomes than respondents from other regions. Similarly, respondents from the West were most likely to indicate that program assessment and review/accreditation was a pressing issue, and respondents from the Midwest were most likely to mention RCR/research ethics.

Table 2. Pressing Issues by Geographic Region, 2010

Pressing Issue	Percentage of Respondents				
	Midwest	Northeast	West	South	Total
Graduate Student Financial Support	51%	55%	47%	57%	53%
Enrollment Management/Student Recruitment	51%	40%	36%	47%	45%
Budget Cuts/Graduate Program Financing	53%	38%	42%	40%	43%
Graduate School Management	43%	35%	50%	41%	42%
International Student Issues	25%	23%	25%	20%	23%
Student Services	9%	18%	11%	10%	12%
Program Assessment & Review/Accreditation	4%	5%	22%	13%	11%
Program Development	4%	10%	14%	7%	8%
RCR/Research Ethics	17%	8%	8%	1%	7%
Retention, Completion and Time-to-Degree	6%	5%	3%	11%	7%
Job Placement/Career Outcomes	4%	15%	3%	5%	6%
Other	17%	15%	17%	26%	20%

Source: 2010 CGS Pressing Issues Survey

Historical Comparison of Pressing Issues

Variations in coding among researchers prevent an exact comparison of changes in pressing issues over time, but the trends indicate that graduate student financial support and enrollment management/student recruitment have been consistently ranked among the top issues for graduate deans, ranking first and second, respectively, in four of the past five years (see Table 3). Furthermore, graduate student financial support has been ranked number one or two in every survey from 2001 to present. Graduate school management has been ranked third or fourth in each of the past five years. Budget cuts/graduate program financing, last year's top ranked pressing issue and this year's third ranked pressing issue, has never been ranked higher than fourth until the past two years.

Table 3. Rank Order of Pressing Issues Among Graduate Deans, 2006 to 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Graduate Student Financial Support	1	1	1	2	1
Enrollment Management/Student Recruitment	2	2	2	4	2
Budget Cuts/Graduate Program Financing	4	5	4	1	3
Graduate School Management	3	4	3	3	4

Sources: *CGS Pressing Issues Survey*, 2006 to 2010

Conclusion

The results of this year's *Pressing Issues Survey* reveal that the majority of graduate deans view financial support for graduate students as their top concern. They also remain concerned about enrollment management and student recruitment, including attracting high quality students and recruiting a diverse student population. While budget cuts/graduate program financing is no longer the top pressing issue of graduate deans, it does remain a concern to many deans. Budget issues also were reflected in deans' responses in other categories, including cuts to recruiting budgets and managing the graduate school with fewer staff. As graduate schools continue to feel the effects of the economic recession, deans will likely remain concerned about providing appropriate and adequate financial support to graduate students, as well as recruiting and enrolling high-quality students and operating the graduate school with a limited budget.

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References:

Bell, N. 2010. *Findings from the 2010 CGS International Graduate Admissions Survey, Phase I: Applications*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.