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April 11, 2007

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

I am writing to commend you for supporting U.S. competitiveness and innovation through the introduction of the Securing Knowledge, Innovation, and Leadership (SKIL) Act of 2007 (S. 1083). The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and its more than 480 member institutions are very grateful for your leadership in addressing the important issue of strengthening American competitiveness and for your recognition of the critical role that graduate education plays in that process.

We are specifically pleased that the SKIL Act includes:

- An exemption from the annual H-1B cap for any professional who has earned a post-graduate degree from an institution of higher education in the United States
- An exemption from the annual immigrant visa or “green card” cap for U.S.-educated workers with advanced degrees
- An exemption from the green card cap for professionals who have earned advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) fields, and who worked in the U.S. for at least three years in a STEM-related field
- An opportunity for employers who seek to hire U.S. educated students full-time upon graduation to begin the green card process while the foreign worker is on a student visa (F-1) during Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- A provision codifying OPT which will allow U.S. educated foreign students to work in their field for up to two years after graduation

The U.S. must take measures to attract and retain foreign students; these researchers, innovators, and leaders are critical components in the highly skilled workforce needed for the U.S. to compete effectively in the 21st century global economy. Thank you for your leadership on this important policy matter. The Council of Graduate Schools looks forward to working with you to implement this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Debra W. Stewart

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