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March 26, 2007

The Honorable Silvestre Reyes
United States House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4316

Dear Chairman Reyes,

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) applauds the formation of the Diversity and Innovation Caucus. Increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM fields) is critical to enhancing competitiveness in the 21st century. Deepening and broadening the domestic talent pool must be a priority in our nation's education system.

Enhancing inclusiveness in graduate education through programs, advocacy, and research is a strategic priority of the Council of Graduate Schools. Two projects that aim to broaden participation and degree completion of underrepresented minorities in graduate education include the Professional Science Master's initiative and the Ph.D. Completion project.

The Professional Science Master's (PSM) is an innovative graduate degree program that combines advanced study with professional and interdisciplinary training. The curricula are developed with the advice of business leaders from the community and prepare graduates for careers beyond academia; graduates go on to work in the industry, government and nonprofit sectors that need STEM expertise. By expanding the career opportunities for graduates, the PSM project seeks to broaden participation in the STEM fields by underrepresented minorities and women.

The continued strength of doctoral education in the U.S. is the cornerstone of innovation in science and technology, solving social issues and promoting cultural understanding. The vitality of doctoral education is thus essential to national as well as global prosperity. CGS is leading a major project addressing issues surrounding Ph.D. completion and attrition. The attrition problem is particularly severe for women and minorities, who are underrepresented in many science and engineering fields. Through the Ph.D. Completion Project, CGS has provided funding to 21 major research universities to create intervention strategies and pilot projects, and to evaluate the impact of these projects on doctoral completion and attrition. Working with 24 additional university partners, this project will produce the most comprehensive and useful data on attrition from doctoral study and completion of Ph.D programs yet available.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with the Diversity and Innovation Caucus and to sharing relevant information from our various initiatives.

Sincerely,

Debra W. Stewart
President

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 480 institutions of higher education engaged in graduate education, research and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. CGS member institutions award 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.