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Expressing the Voice of Graduate Education: CGS Government Relations

by Debra W. Stewart, President, Council of Graduate Schools and Heath Brown, Director of Research and Policy Analysis, Council of Graduate Schools

Advocacy in the federal policy arena has been central to the CGS mission since our founding in 1961. Capitalizing on our location in Washington, we have maintained a presence in Congressional and regulatory affairs for decades. But recently, several factors have coalesced to spur the CGS Board's commitment to a reinvestment in government relations. At this year's annual meeting in D.C., we will introduce to the membership the Board-adopted strategic plan for government relations. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce the thinking behind our strategic plan. This thinking encapsulates recent trends and builds on the rich history and unique capabilities of CGS. It forms a solid foundation for governmental relations going forward.

National Trends and Our Unique Approach

From K-12 through graduate education, two important trends are sweeping the system of education in the U.S. The first trend has been a move to require experimental or scientifically based research to justify federal spending. Educational research has long been criticized for relying on techniques that fail to demonstrate causation and rely on imprecise methodology. Some contend the result of this research has been federal and state spending on unproven programs that inevitably fail to produce results. In response, policy makers, school officials, and others have called for greater guarantees that educational programs will indeed help students learn. Now the U.S. Department of Education encourages randomized experiments to demonstrate the effectiveness of school interventions.

The second trend is occurring closer to home for graduate education. Increasingly, federal programs for higher education are tied to new standards and accountability policies, with an emphasis on undergraduate programs. The recently proposed Higher Education Act (HR 4283) includes several provisions that increase federal control through more reporting requirements, federal standards for accreditation, and federal involvement in student transfers. Implicit in these provisions is the demand by Congress and

the federal government for a greater degree of accountability in exchange for federal funding and support. CGS has been working with the higher education community to limit these federal burdens; however, the longer term challenge is the need to convince policy makers of the importance of graduate education by demonstrating its successes. Many policy makers share our tacit sense that federal investment in graduate education is good for the country. But going forward there will be an increasing burden on institutions and the graduate education community to demonstrate a clear return on federal investment.

CGS is uniquely poised to respond to these trends through our graduate research and best practices programs. The Council has long been known for its high quality research. The CGS/GRE Enrollment Survey provides one of the most important data sources on graduate education and has served as a model for many other national surveys. Issue-targeted surveys have routinely provided the information to inform specific public policy debates. For example, our current CGS Survey of International Applications provides timely empirical data on application declines. These data inform major policy discussions about the impact of current visa practices. CGS is able to contribute to the national and international debate because of our capacity to gain understanding from those most knowledgeable about the issue: graduate school deans. Also in recent years, CGS has launched a major effort to achieve continuous improvement in graduate education through our best practices initiatives. The Ph.D. completion project and the professional master's initiatives are both powerful examples of programs that promote the piloting of interventions designed to improve practices in graduate education. And in this area, information generated informs the policy agenda by pilot testing a wide array of strategies, some of which will ultimately merit federal support.

The future success of CGS to lead the national conversation about graduate education depends in part on the continued engagement of graduate deans in our research and our best practice endeavors. Going forward,

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the commitment of members to respond to periodic surveys and other active involvement in best practice projects will reinforce our government relations activities capacity.

History of government relations at CGS

CGS has always participated in the national debate and federal policy making on graduate education. Programs such as the Jacob K. Javits, Graduate Assistance for Areas of National Need (GAANN), and the Ronald E. McNair Fellowship program -- to name just a few -- are all providing targeted federal funds for graduate students in part due to the active engagement of CGS staff and graduate deans. And even in the arena of research, CGS has lent its support toward doubling the NIH budget and achieving significant increases at NSF.

Notwithstanding these important and valuable efforts, graduate education is simply not on the policy agenda in Washington. Today 75% of college freshmen intend to get a graduate degree. They see a graduate education as a critical component of a successful career. But graduate education as a vital component of a high functioning society is not part of the mindset of policy makers today. So it falls to CGS to create an awareness of graduate education and its value in a thriving society.

Developing the Strategic Government Relations

Given the national demands for accountability and the CGS's capacity to generate data and research in response, a new strategic direction for our government relations effort is fitting. At last year's annual meeting, the Board committed to developing a planning process that would result in a strategic plan for government relations at CGS. Part of that effort involved a targeted research project that was conducted with key stakeholders on Capitol Hill and with CGS deans. One of the primary findings of that research was while graduate education was viewed as important, it lacked a coherent voice in Washington. Acting on that information, CGS formed a government relations task force composed of members of the CGS Board. Through the leadership of Suzanne Ortega, Chair-Elect of the CGS Board and Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for

Advanced Studies at the University of Missouri, and the excellent work of a small group of deans, a strategic plan was finalized and presented to the Board at its July meeting. The Board enthusiastically adopted the Task Force Plan.

Going Forward

More than anything else, the strategic plan ensures that CGS will continue to focus its advocacy efforts on core issues in graduate education. Rather than taking on every issue, we will target our work around those issues that are central to our membership and our mission.

Of course, these issues will change and evolve over time. Federal and Congressional priorities change, and CGS must frame its agenda with those priorities in mind. But our plan adopts four strategic directions to shape our agenda currently: maintaining and promoting access and opportunities for graduate school to all students, particularly for underrepresented groups; linking graduate education to the workforce, scholarship, and scientific research; insuring security-conscious policies permit international graduate students' access to the U.S.; and supporting the connections between graduate education and the larger system of education in the U.S. We will work with leaders on these issues to ensure the priorities of CGS members are best represented in Washington.

Effective communication is critical to making this plan a reality. First, CGS will turn to the membership for their views on critical and pressing issues in graduate education. Second, CGS will proactively communicate member perspectives to policy makers in Washington. Maintaining this two-way-street of communication is vital to an effective CGS government relations program moving forward.

We have provided a snap-shot of our efforts over the past year to re-envision the government relations activities at CGS. With the wise guidance and terrific support of our CGS Government Relations Task Force and our board, we are confident that the strategic directions set will yield dividends for our members. We welcome the engagement of CGS deans in all our activities as we move forward to represent our members' agenda in Washington.

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Federal Relations Update

by John Yopp, Director of Federal Relations

Due to the absence from Washington of significant numbers of legislators and their staff, the federal relations activity at CGS has certainly diminished since the last issue of the *Communicator*. This was the period of the Democratic and Republican Conventions and the summer recess of Congress until Labor Day. Members of Congress who remained devoted time to hearings on the 9/11 Commission. The hearing of relevance to the issue of international student attitudes toward study in the United States was held on August 23 by Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT), Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations. Its title was "The 9/11 Commission Recommendations on Public Diplomacy: Defending Ideals and Defining the Message." Witnesses included former Undersecretary of State for Public Affairs Charlotte Beers, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Patricia Harrison, and President of Business for Diplomatic Action Inc., Keith Reinhard. The issues raised included the absence of long term diplomacy efforts of message and programs, the need for more funding and more accountability for public diplomacy initiatives, and the urgent need to address our public diplomacy efforts "so that we as a nation can work not only to rebuild bridges of trust abroad, but also to help defuse the hatred that spawns terrorism" (Mr. Reinhard). Ms. Beers noted that international student exchanges were an important element of public diplomacy but we have to "do it in large enough numbers to make a difference." It is important to acknowledge, and have Congress recognize, this role of the international students who come to U.S. campuses for study.

CGS was part of the community association effort this Spring (*Communicator*, March 2004) to call attention to visa issues that affect international students which continues to yield results. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) acknowledged the messages in the visa policy recommendations and plans to extend by this fall the period of security clearance for international students beyond the current one-year time frame. The graduate academic community had expressed grave concern over the delays experienced by inter-

national scholars seeking to reenter the U.S. after returning to their home country for a visit. Constructive dialogue involving CGS and the other associations and the DHS and Department of State (DOS) continue with the promise of additional progress regarding visa processing that will ensure security and facilitate access. To make explicit the specific changes in visa processing as a result of the cooperation between the DOS and the DHS, a hearing was held September 9 before the House Committee on Government Reform by its chairman, Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) on "Creating Secure Borders and Open Doors: A Review of DHS-State Collaboration on U.S. Visa Policy." Those testifying were Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services Janice Jacobs and the Inspector General of DHS, Clark Kent Ervin. From the testimony and comments from Committee members, it was evident that progress in reducing the time between application and acquiring a visa (now less than 30 days) and "improving the inter-agency security clearance process . . . by moving from a paper-based system to electronic transmission (Ms. Jacobs). Continued progress was pledged on the Visas Mantis security check as well. Committee member, Rep. Betty McCallum (D-MN) strongly represented the need to ensure the evolution of processes that will increase the access of international students and scholars to U.S. university campuses. She cited the results of CGS's recent 2003-4 Survey II on international student admissions, also cited in a USA Today article on September 8, 2004.

Finally, CGS has heard from the program officer for GAANN in the Department of Education that there are not sufficient funds for new awards in FY 2005. As CGS has reported, appropriations to the program have been flat, necessitating their use for continuing grants only. This is not good news for our membership organizations that use this program to support new graduate students in a period of declining overall support.

As the fall semester begins and Congress returns, CGS expects interesting pre-election activities on the federal relations front. We will keep you informed.

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Communicator encourages and welcomes members to submit articles of interest for inclusion in the newsletter. Current research, hot topics in graduate education, new legislation, and other pertinent information are desired. All manuscripts will be reviewed by a small group of graduate deans and if selected for publication will be scheduled for publication at the editor's discretion. Articles will be edited to conform to style. Inquiries about proper formatting for submissions and comments about *Communicator* may be directed to the Council of Graduate Schools.

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Editor: Heidi Miller, Director, Meetings and Member Services

A New Resource for the Deans of Graduate Schools

by Alyson Reed, Executive Director, National Postdoctoral Association

The time and resources that universities invest in postdoctoral education and training are crucial investments in the nation's research enterprise. Postdocs make essential contributions to the process of discovery and to the development of new ideas in a diverse array of research disciplines. But the postdoctoral experience for emerging researchers is sometimes hampered by insufficient mentoring, a lack of resources and the absence of standard policies governing the treatment of postdocs.

In recent years, a number of national organizations have issued reports and recommendations calling for changes in the postdoctoral experience; calls to place greater emphasis on mentoring, professional development, and the transition to independence. These organizations include the National Academies, the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). These efforts have been driven by policy leaders, academic officials, and professional societies, and until now, the voices of postdoctoral scholars have not been fully represented.

The National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), established in January 2003, is a member driven organization that provides representation for postdocs and other individuals and institutions concerned with postdoctoral issues. Organized under the auspices of the AAAS with a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the NPA has partnered with many national organizations and local institutions to advocate for change in postdoctoral policies that affect postdoctoral training, mentoring, compensation and benefits, the transition to independence, and uniform data collecting and reporting on postdocs.

At a recent meeting of the Fellowship Roundtable hosted by the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington, DC, the role of the NPA in advancing postdoctoral education and training was highlighted. The Roundtable is a group of individuals who administer graduate and postdoctoral fellowship programs for a variety of national organizations. The NPA is working to establish dialogue with national organizations representing a broad spectrum of academic and research disciplines, and we understand that graduate school deans play a key role in addressing the quality of the postdoctoral training experience. In our mission to positively affect postdoc policy, we are anxious to involve more graduate schools in the national debate on enhancing the postdoctoral experience. Furthermore, the NPA is currently developing resource materials that graduate schools could employ to comprehensively address a number of postdoctoral issues including:

1) Developing Effective Policies and Procedures:
Establishing a Definition of a Postdoctoral Scholar, Developing

Postdoc Policies, Creating a Standardized Appointment Process, Creating an Orientation Package, Creating a Standardized Annual Review/Evaluation Process, Educating Faculty on Policies and Procedures, Conducting Audits to Ensure Compliance with Postdoc Policies, Developing a Postdoc Database.

2) Forming an Office of Postdoctoral Affairs:
Determining Structure: School; Campus; System, Hiring Staff Members, Budget Structure, Creating Liaisons with all Appropriate Institutional Offices that Serve Postdocs; Creating a Postdoc Advisory Committee with Faculty and Postdoc Representation; Forming a Partnership with your Postdoc Association; Addressing Diversity and Minority Issues, Evaluating Your Policies & Programs; Conducting Exit Interviews, Collecting and Reporting Data on Postdoc "alumni."

3) Programs and Services for Enriching the Postdoctoral Experience:
Providing Faculty Support for Recruitment, Training, and Retention of Postdocs, Providing Professional Development Programs for Postdocs including: Research Skills, Experimental Design, Critical Literature Analysis, Peer Review, Grant Writing, Presentations and Posters, Information Management, Research Integrity, Career Planning; Providing Complementary Skills for Postdocs such as Budgeting, Management Skills, Negotiating, Conflict Resolution, Communication Skills, Teamwork, Intellectual Property, Entrepreneurship, Teaching, Mentorship.

The NPA welcomes inquiries from graduate school deans and their colleagues on the best strategies and methods for proactively developing the policies, programs and infrastructure identified above. The NPA's professional staff, volunteer leadership, website, meetings and publications are a tremendous resource available to those who interact with the postdoctoral community. In its first months of operations, the Association has developed resource materials on visa issues confronting international postdocs, a database of institutional policies governing the training of postdocs at campuses across the U.S., and is working to develop tool kits on how to establish and maintain effective postdoctoral associations and administrative offices to better meet the needs of postdocs and their allies. Membership in the NPA provides access to the full library of NPA resources, discounts on national meetings, and support for our national advocacy programs. We encourage you to visit our website, www.nationalpostdoc.org, or contact us directly (areed@nationalpostdoc.org) for more information about how the NPA can help you to address the range of issues affecting postdocs at your institution. Together, we can make a difference in the training experience of postdoctoral scholars to enhance the national research enterprise.

Data Sources: Declines in International Graduate Students Applications and Admits: A Campus-Based View of the Issue

by Heath Brown, Director of Research and Policy Analysis

Introduction

As we recently reported, there has been a dramatic drop in international applications and offers of admissions (admits) to U.S. graduate schools from 2003 to 2004. That report (Findings from U.S. Graduate Schools on International Graduate Student Admissions Trends available at <http://www.cgsnet.org/VirtualCenterResearch/policyanalyses.htm>) showed a 28 percent decline in international graduate applications and an 18 percent drop in international graduate admits. From a national perspective, these are important findings because of what they suggest about overall demand for graduate education from abroad. They are also important because of what they suggest for declines in first-time enrollment of international graduate students this fall.

The causes of these declines are multiple, in part increased global competition in graduate education, post-9/11 visa policy changes, and changes in perceptions of the United States as well as other macro economic factors.

These factors combine to threaten a great change in the historic pattern of international graduate student flows that have resulted in large numbers of international graduate students enrolled and earning degrees at U.S. institutions (See "Data Sources: Rough Waters Ahead?," *Communicator* July 2004). Many of these students have gone on to remain in the U.S. and contribute to scholarship, scientific discovery, and economic growth.

For those reasons, the findings of the report have national connotations and are suggestive of potential policy changes at the federal level. Another perspective on these findings is at the campus level. For instance, have these declines been experienced similarly by different types of institutions or have larger institutions seen larger changes? Have institutions that enroll different members of international students engaged in different policy actions? This article analyzes the survey results from a campus-perspective to better understand how institutions are experiencing these issues.

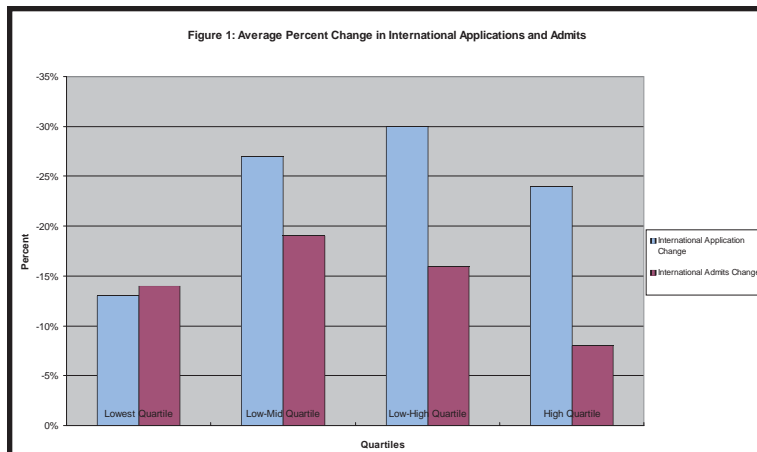
Survey Design

As many of you know, we distributed the second survey on International Graduate Admissions in June. This survey targeted international and domestic admits -- the second part of the admissions process -- as well as some specific questions about policy changes after September 11th to ease the admissions process for international students. We allowed roughly three weeks for institutions to respond and a total of 126 institutions returned the survey. Our response rate for this survey was 30 percent, similar to what we received for the first survey in February.

Analysis

Size of International Student Population

We have long known that the majority of international graduate students are concentrated at a relatively small number of institutions nationwide and this survey supports this belief. The survey results show that 60 percent of the applications were received in 2004 by a quarter of the responding institutions. Given this skewed distribution, we wondered whether there was a relationship between the extent of international admissions at an institution and changes in international applications and admits. To pursue this, we divided responding institutions into quartiles based on the number of applications received from abroad (this



measure of size, not total enrollment, is referenced throughout the rest of this article). What we found was nearly 100 percent of those institutions in the upper quartile had a decrease in applications, while 80 percent in the upper quartile had a decrease in admits. In comparison, 68 percent of institutions in the lowest quartile had a decrease in applications, and 64 percent had a decrease in admits.

The magnitude of the decrease was also different for these groups of institutions. The average decline in international graduate applications at large institutions was 24 percent, while at small institutions it was 13 percent (See Figure 1). The change in admits was also somewhat different. Large institutions saw an 8 percent decline in admits, while small institutions saw a 14 percent decline. What this suggests is that smaller institutions had a roughly

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proportional decline in applications and admits, while larger institutions had large decreases in applications, but relatively small declines in admits. Therefore, the ratio of applications to admits for smaller institutions remained relatively steady, whereas larger institutions saw that ratio decrease significantly.

Policy and Practice Changes

One of the most interesting findings of the original report on this survey was that so many institutions were enacting new policies to address these issues. An enhanced use of technology, streamlined admissions processes, and changed deadlines are just a few of the interventions that graduate deans have put in place to make the admissions process easier for international applicants. We expect that these same interventions will make the process easier for domestic students, since online applications and more efficient methods will make the whole admissions process better. To probe this issue more deeply, we wondered whether institutions that have large numbers of international students are enacting more policy changes than others. One would anticipate that schools that have large numbers of international students would be more attuned to these issues and would be at the forefront of leading campus-based changes.

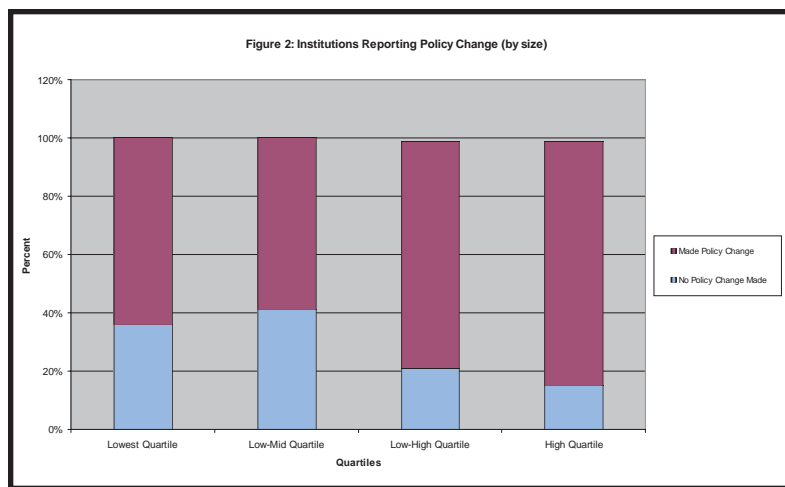
In fact, what we found was larger institutions in terms of international students are doing more than smaller ones, though the evidence is not completely clear (See Figure 2). Thirty-five percent of institutions in the lower quartile responded that they were not engaging in new policies and practices versus only 15 percent of those in the top quartile. We then looked to the questions about specific interventions (setting earlier deadlines, giving earlier notification of decisions, providing information on visa processes). Half of those schools in the bottom two quartiles responded that they did not do any of these things versus about one fourth of those in the top two quartiles. On the contrary, roughly the same percent of smaller institutions (21 percent) and larger institutions (26 percent) reported taking all three of these policy actions.

Interpreting the Results

One of the obvious risks associated with analyzing any two data-points is the potential to draw spurious conclusions about a trend that may in fact be a one-time change. For that reason, it is important to keep in mind that this survey examined the change between 2003 and 2004. We will be pursuing these issues with additional surveys over the next three years in order to better understand whether this year's findings were an anomaly or the start of a longer term change in international graduate student admissions.

It is also important to reiterate that while we asked for institutions to report new policies and practices, it seems likely that some new interventions, such as the use of technology, may represent an enhancement of policy decisions made prior to, or independent of, the events of September 11th. While this does not minimize the findings, it is a limitation on drawing too strong of a conclusion.

With that said, we are encouraged by the aggressive moves being made by so many graduate deans. Despite the evidence that larger institutions seem to be adopting more policy changes for international students, we still see noticeable actions by graduate schools of all sizes. What this suggests is that these larger schools may be at the forefront of making policy changes, but that there is wider recognition that campus-based policy changes are necessary to ease the admissions process. Since many of these changes will provide benefits



for international and domestic students alike, even institutions with fewer international students can learn from the experience of larger institutions.

Conclusions and Next Steps

As we mentioned earlier, this survey was the second of a three-part survey. By the time this article is published in October the third survey on final fall enrollments will be on your desk. We encourage you to complete it, particularly if you have not submitted the first two surveys. Our ability to help federal policy makers understand the dimensions of this issue depends on our member deans to participate in these surveys. By the annual meeting, we will have a final report available.

Announcing Web-Based CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment

The CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment has always been a paper-based survey. Starting December 1, 2004, we will automate this survey by converting to a user-friendly web-based format.

The web-based format will maintain the look and feel of previous surveys, but with all of the benefits of the web. For example, the web-based application will handle the summation of rows and columns, substantially reducing the amount of data entry needed to complete the survey. At the same time, the survey form will cross check the data entered to make sure that rows and columns sum consistently, thus increasing the accuracy of the survey data. In addition, graduate schools will have the ability to complete the survey centrally or assign specific components of the survey to users at the program level.

If you have any questions, please send them to Peter Syverson, psyverson@cgs.nche.edu, or Heath Brown, hbrown@cgs.nche.edu.

New Deans and Titles

Katherine A. Black is Assistant Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Hartford. She replaces Diane Prusank.

Thomas A. Clark is Interim Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Colorado at Denver. He replaces Mark Gelernter.

Don C. Dodson is Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Santa Clara University. He replaces Gerdenio Manual.

A. Gordon Emslie is Associate Vice President for Research and Dean, Graduate College at Oklahoma State University. He replaces Alfred Carlozzi.

Teresa M. McDevitt is Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Graduate School and International Admissions at the University of Northern Colorado. She replaces Allen Huang.

Gay Gullickson is Associate Dean, Graduate School at University of Maryland, College Park.

Robin Morris is Interim Vice President for Research at Georgia State University. She replaces Charles Louis.

Barbara Pennypacker is Assistant Dean at The Pennsylvania State University.

Gail Potts is Director, Graduate Admissions at Georgia Institute of Technology. She replaces Keith Oden.

J. Bruce Rafert is Dean, Graduate School at Clemson University. He replaces Bonnie Holaday.

David D. Reed is Vice President, Research and Dean, Graduate School at Michigan Technological University. He replaces J. Bruce Rafert.

Clarence Sanchez is Vice President for Institutional Research and Graduate Studies at New Mexico Highlands University. He replaces Linda LaGrange.

Stephanie Schmitt is Assistant Dean for Academics at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Laurens H. Smith is Interim Dean, School of Graduate Studies at Utah State University. He replaces Thomas Kent.

Darrin Thornton is Director, Fellowships and Awards at The Pennsylvania State University.

Shirley Wagner is Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at Fitchburg State College.

A. Elizabeth (Liz) Thurston is Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Gregory Woodward is Dean of Graduate Studies at Ithaca College. He was the former Interim Dean.



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