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PhD Completion Project: Analysis of Baseline Demographic Data

The PhD Completion Project is a seven-year, two-phase project that addresses the issues surrounding PhD completion and attrition. The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), with generous support from Pfizer Inc and the Ford Foundation, has provided funding to 29 major US and Canadian research universities to create intervention strategies and pilot projects, and to evaluate the impact of these projects on doctoral completion rates and attrition patterns. An additional 25 partner universities are participating in various aspects of this project.

One of the goals of the PhD Completion Project is to produce the most comprehensive and useful data yet available on attrition from and completion of PhD programs. Early in 2008 CGS published the monograph, *PhD Completion and Attrition: Analysis of Baseline Program Data from the PhD Completion Project*, the first publication in a series based on completion and attrition data from the 30 universities that provided baseline program data in Phase I of the project.

The second monograph in the series, *PhD Completion and Attrition: Analysis of Baseline Demographic Data*, will be published this summer. This article gives a quick overview of some of the information presented in the monograph and briefly discusses future plans for the project.

Data and Methodology

For Phase I of the PhD Completion Project, demographic completion data were submitted by 24 institutions covering twelve academic years starting in 1992-93 and ending in 2003-04. The data submitted by these institutions constitute two separate databases used in the analyses of completion rates. One database contains the data used to analyze completion rates by gender. It will be referred to hereafter as the gender database. The second database was used to analyze the completion rates for domestic versus international students as well as for US racial/ethnic groups. This database will be referred to in the remainder of this article as the citizenship, race and ethnicity database.

The primary metric of analysis used in this study is the completion rate ten years after starting the PhD program. Only data for students starting from 1992-93 through 1994-95 could be used to compute ten-year completion rates. In order to examine changes in completion rates over time, seven-year completion rates were analyzed for two three-year cohorts of

students. The first cohort group comprises students who started in 1992-93 through 1994-95 (the same cohort used in the ten-year analysis) and the second cohort group comprises students who started in 1995-96 through 1997-98. We refer to these two groups as the A-Cohorts and B-Cohorts, respectively, in the remainder of this article.

The gender database for the A-Cohorts consists of 9,683 students, 36% female and 64% male. There are 9,369 students in the A-Cohorts in the citizenship, race and ethnicity database. Seventy-four percent of these students are domestic and 26% are international. The 6,936 domestic students in the A-Cohorts are distributed across racial/ethnic groups as follows: 6% African American, 8% Asian American, 3% Hispanic, 78% White, and 4% "Other." The "Other" category, which includes Native Americans, is not included in the analysis because, with the exception of Native Americans, its makeup is not known.

The B-Cohorts gender database has a total of 9,396 students, 37% female and 63% male. There are 9,069 students in the B-Cohorts in the citizenship, race and ethnicity database, and 31% of them are international. Of the 6,256 domestic students in the B-Cohorts, 6% are African American, 7% are Asian American, 4% are Hispanic, 76% are White, and 5% are "Other."

Using descriptive statistics, the analysis compares completion rates from various perspectives: overall, by field, by institution type and by time of entry into the PhD program (A- versus B-Cohorts). Both cumulative and annual completion rates are presented for each of the three major demographic characteristics—gender, citizenship, and race/ethnicity, and significance tests are conducted to examine whether the observed differences in completion rates are statistically significant.

Results of analyses of demographic data

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PhD Completion Project: Analysis of Baseline Demographic Data

presented in this article will be limited to cumulative ten-year completion rates for the A-Cohorts and a comparison of the cumulative seven-year completion rates for the A- and B-Cohorts. The forthcoming monograph will present these data in more detail along with information on annual completion rates, late completion (completion in years eight through ten), completion rates as a function of institution type, and the results of statistical significance tests on differences in completion rates among the various demographic groups.

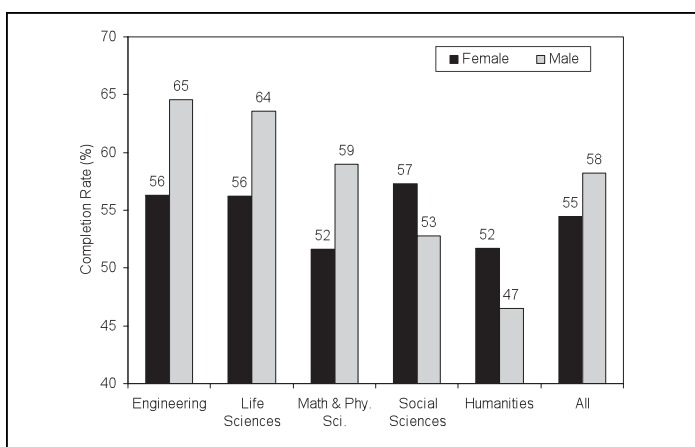
Completion Rates

Gender

Consistent with data presented in the first PhD Completion Project baseline data publication, *Analysis of Baseline Program Data from the PhD Completion Project* (CGS, 2008), the cumulative ten-year completion rate for the A-Cohorts is 57%. The completion rate is three percentage points higher for men (58%) than for women (55%).

There is a great deal of variation in completion rates for men and women across the five broad fields studied, as Figure 1 illustrates. Men complete at higher rates than women in Engineering, Life Sciences and Mathematics & Physical Sciences, while women complete at higher rates in Social Sciences and Humanities. The largest gap is in Engineering where men complete at an eight percentage point higher rate than women. Completion rates for men exceed those for women by seven percentage points in both Life Sciences and Mathematics & Physical Sciences. Women, on the other hand, complete at a five percentage point higher rate than men in Humanities and a four percentage point higher rate in Social Sciences.

Figure 1. Cumulative Ten-Year PhD Completion Rates by Gender and Broad Field



In order to determine if completion rates changed over time, cumulative seven-year completion rates were computed for female and male students in the A- and B-Cohorts. The overall

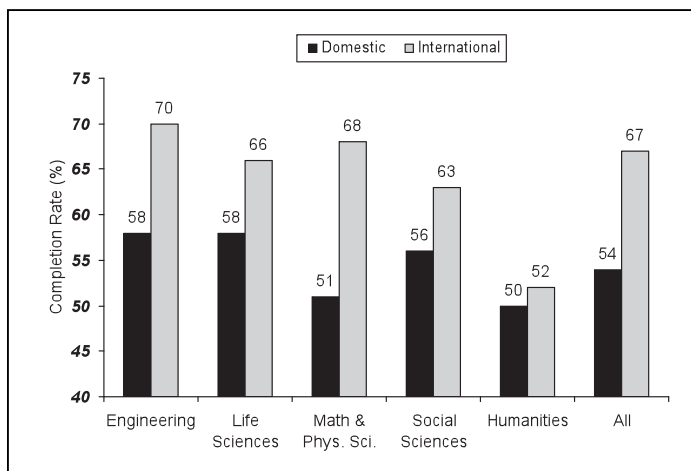
differences are very small with the B-Cohorts completing at slightly higher rates, up to two percentage points for both female and male students. Men in both the A- and B-Cohorts complete at rates six to seven percentage points higher than women.

Citizenship

Results of analyses of the PhD Completion Project demographic data indicate that international students complete at a significantly higher rate than domestic students. The cumulative ten-year rate for international students is 67%, 13 percentage points higher than domestic students.

International students also complete at higher rates than domestic students in all five broad fields in the study (see Figure 2). The differences range from 17 percentage points in Mathematics & Physical Sciences to two percentage points in Humanities.

Figure 2. Cumulative Ten-Year PhD Completion Rates by Citizenship and Broad Field



Cumulative seven-year completion rates improved over time for domestic students, but not for international students. Domestic completion rates increased three percentage points between the A- and B-Cohorts, while international completion rates decreased by four percentage points.

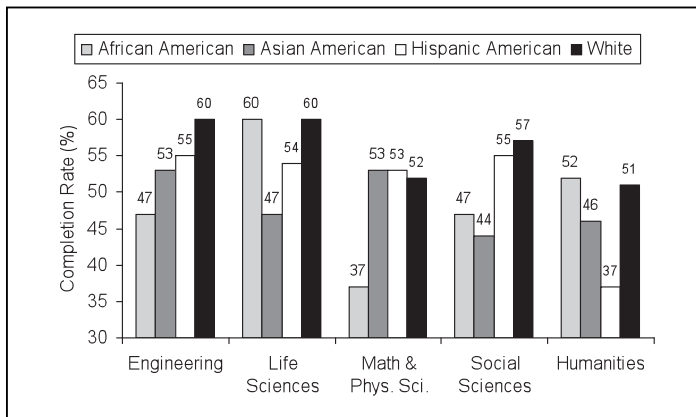
Race and Ethnicity

Among the four racial/ethnic groups in this study, White students have the highest cumulative ten-year completion rate at 55%. Rates for the other racial/ethnic groups are: Hispanic American—51%, Asian American—50%, and African American—47%.

The cumulative ten-year completion rates for the racial/ethnic groups vary widely across broad fields (see Figure 3). African Americans and Whites complete at the highest rate (60%) in the Life Sciences. White students also complete at the highest rate in Engineering (60%), five percentage points ahead of Hispanic Americans and seven points ahead of Asian Americans. Asian Americans (53%), Hispanic Americans (53%) and Whites (52%) complete at similar rates in Mathematics & Physical Sciences. African American students have the highest rate (52%) in the Humanities, followed closely by White

students (51%). White students complete at the highest rate (57%) in Social Sciences, two percentage points ahead of Hispanic Americans.

Figure 3. Cumulative Ten-Year PhD Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Broad Field



Cumulative seven-year completion rates were determined for the A- and B-Cohorts for each of the four racial/ethnic groups. The B-Cohorts completed at higher rates than the A-Cohorts for all groups, with differences ranging from less than one percentage point to slightly more than three percentage points.

Future Plans

CGS plans to publish one additional report based on the quantitative data from Phase I of the PhD Completion Project. This publication will focus on exit surveys collected both from students who complete their programs and from those who do not complete. Further publications will report on self-assessments and interventions being implemented by the participating institutions.

Phase II of the PhD Completion Project, with continued funding from Pfizer Inc and the Ford Foundation, is now underway. The purpose of the second phase is to evaluate the specific impact on PhD completion and attrition of the policies and activities now being put into effect as a part of this project. During this phase, four additional years of completion and attrition data will be provided by the participating institutions. In 2010, CGS will issue a final project publication, which will include a comprehensive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data submitted by the partnering universities in both phases, as well as a comprehensive description of those policies and practices that appear to have had a demonstrated effect on completion rates and attrition patterns over time.

More detailed information about the project, including a full list of research and project partners for both phases, is available on the PhD Completion Project website at www.phdcompletion.org.

Contacts: Robert Sowell, Ting Zhang, Nathan Bell and Kenneth Redd

Data Sources: Preliminary Results of the 2007 Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey

Over the past 22 years, the Graduate Record Examinations Board (GRE) and the Council of Graduate Schools have jointly sponsored the Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees. The resulting annual *CGS/GRE Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey* report is designed to provide important information on graduate student enrollment, application, and degrees conferred. Both organizations believe that graduate education is a vital part of US higher education, and that providing an annual examination of differences in enrollment and degrees awarded by gender, race/ethnicity, and citizenship status is vital for understanding the graduate education enterprise. This article provides a summary of the enrollment and degrees conferred data from the 2007 Enrollment and Degrees survey. Please note that the results shown here are preliminary and are based on an initial analysis of the data collected as of May 2008. These numbers may change when the final survey report is released and sent to graduate deans in September.

The CGS/GRE Enrollment and Degrees Survey is sent electronically to the US-based institutions that as of November of each year are members of the Council of Graduate Schools or one of the four regional American graduate school associations—the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS), the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS), the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools (NAGS), and the Western Association of Graduate Schools (WAGS). This year's survey was sent to 769 colleges and universities. Of these, usable responses were received from 682 (89%) of the survey population, with the response rate among CGS members being even higher (94%). While the total number of responding institutions represent just 25% of the approximately 2,800 colleges and universities in the US that offer graduate programs, they enroll 73% of the national total of 2.2 million graduate students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007a). These survey respondents also award 73% of the master's degrees and more than 90% of the doctoral degrees granted by US graduate institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007b).

In fall 2007, CGS member and affiliated graduate institutions enrolled more than 1.62 million students in master's, doctoral, and post-baccalaureate certificate programs. As Table 1, shows, about 59% of these students were women, and 52% were enrolled full-time. The plurality of graduate students (47%) were enrolled at Doctoral/Research Extensive institutions (also known as Research I universities), followed by Master's & Specialized institutions (35%) and Doctoral/Research Extensive (Research II) universities (18%).

This year, for the first time, CGS is reporting the number of students by their degree level (master's versus doctoral). In fall 2007, approximately 74% of all students were seeking master's degrees (the master's number

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Data Sources: Preliminary Results of the 2007 Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey

includes post-baccalaureate certificates and other non-doctoral awards) and 26% were enrolled in doctoral programs. The number of doctoral students includes institutions' best estimates of students enrolled in programs where a master's degree is earned en route to a doctorate.

Table 1. Number of Students Enrolled at U.S. Graduate Schools, by Various Characteristics, Fall 2007

	Number of Students	Pct. of Total
Total	1,621,327	100%
Gender*		
Men	611,518	41%
Women	871,038	59%
Attendance Status*		
Full-time	825,041	52%
Part-time	759,564	48%
Institutional Control		
Public	1,028,575	63%
Private*	592,752	37%
Carnegie Classification**		
Research/Doctoral Extensive	755,725	47%
Research/Doctoral Intensive	291,620	18%
Master's & Specialized	573,982	35%
Degree Level*		
Master's	1,090,208	74%
Doctoral	390,283	26%
Citizenship Status*		
Domestic	1,205,868	84%
International	236,207	16%
Race/Ethnicity (U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents Only)*		
Native American/Alaska Native	11,022	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	77,216	6%
African American	159,143	13%
Hispanic/Latino	95,817	8%
White, non-Hispanic	862,670	72%

Due to rounding, details may not total to 100%.

*Includes private, non-profit and private, for-profit colleges and universities.

**Based on the 2000 Carnegie Classification System. Research/Doctoral Extensive institutions are those that award 50 doctoral degrees across at least 15 disciplines. Research/Doctoral Intensive institutions are those that award at least 10 doctoral degrees across three or more disciplines. Master's & Specialized institutions are those that primarily award master's degrees but may award a limited number of doctorates.

*Because not all institutions responded to all items, detail variables may not sum to totals.

Source: CGS/GRE Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey, Fall 2007 Preliminary Data file.

Perhaps the most important information collected by the Enrollment and Degrees Survey are the numbers of graduate students by citizenship status and racial/ethnic categories. In the fall of 2007, non-US citizens accounted for 16% of the total graduate enrollment at CGS member and affiliated institutions. Among the US citizen and permanent resident graduate students, 28% were members of racial/ethnic minority groups. African Americans accounted for 13% of total US citizen enrollment, followed by Hispanics/Latinos (8%) and Asian/Pacific Islanders (6%).

In academic year 2006-2007, responding institutions conferred nearly 515,000 graduate degrees and certificates.

More than 85% of these awards were master's degrees, 11% were doctorates, and 4% were post-baccalaureate certificates and other non-master's or doctoral awards. As Table 2 illustrates, two fields—education and business—represented 49% of master's degrees. Biological sciences, physical sciences, and engineering programs, on the other hand, accounted for 16% of master's awards. In contrast, business and education represented just 23% of total doctorates, versus 39% for science and engineering programs.

Table 2. Graduate Degrees Awarded by Field, 2006-2007

	Number of Master's Degrees	Pct. of Total	Number of Doctoral Degrees	Pct. of Total	Number of Certificates	Pct. of Total
Total	439,233	100%	56,714	100%	18,994	100%
Biological Sciences	10,099	3%	6,533	12%	365	2%
Business	70,322	19%	2,327	4%	2,310	11%
Education	108,503	30%	10,208	19%	9,357	46%
Engineering	26,645	7%	7,828	14%	1,091	5%
Health Sciences	29,192	8%	5,924	11%	2,519	12%
Humanities & Arts	22,319	6%	4,998	9%	1,026	5%
Physical Sciences	21,906	6%	7,328	13%	727	4%
Public Administration & Services	20,732	6%	1,180	2%	996	5%
Social Sciences	27,212	8%	6,782	12%	1,018	5%
Other Fields	25,145	7%	1,767	3%	793	4%

Due to rounding, details may not total to 100%.

Because not all institutions responded to all items, detail variables may not sum to totals.

Source: CGS/GRE Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey, Fall 2007 Preliminary Data File.

About 46% of certificates were awarded in education-related disciplines. Health sciences (12%) and business (11%) also accounted for large shares of certificate awards. Science and engineering fields collectively represented just 11% of certificates.

The CGS/GRE Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Survey results provide very important clues to the future direction of graduate education in the United States. These preliminary results suggest that women, international students, and racial/ethnic minorities appear to be growing segments of the US graduate school population, and that education and business continue to be important fields in terms of degrees and certificates awarded. The forthcoming full report on the survey results will examine both the current and past trends in enrollment of students with these important demographic characteristics.

By Kenneth E. Redd, Director, Research and Policy Analysis

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National Center for Education Statistics. 2007a. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Fall 2007 Enrollment Survey. Dataset.

National Center for Education Statistics. 2007b. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System 2006-2007 Completions Survey. Dataset.

Strong Growth of English as the Language of Instruction in European Higher Education, With a Focus on Graduate Studies: A European Perspective

According to the latest data from UNESCO, there were 2.7 million international students world-wide in 2005, up from 1.8 million in 2000 and 600,000 in 1975. The numbers are expected to rise rapidly in the coming years. A fierce competition has set in over these students, and the strongest contenders in this competition are countries where English is the domestic language, with a global market share of over 50 percent. Countries where English is not the standard language of instruction—and especially those with rarely spoken languages—are perceived as disadvantaged in this competition. This linguistic handicap is one of the reasons why continental European countries started, some ten years ago, to introduce instruction in English. In 2002, the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) produced the first ever empirical study on this phenomenon. Six years later, this organization has now published a follow-up study. The present article presents the key findings from this publication.

Strong Growth and Uneven Distribution

The ACA study is based on the results of various surveys of a total of 2,200 higher education institutions in 27 European countries where English is not the domestic language of instruction. The surveys targeted undergraduate (bachelor-level) and graduate (master's) programs, and excluded the PhD level. They identified about 2,400 English-medium programs in the responding institutions (38%). This translates into a three-fold increase since 2002, the year when the predecessor study was published. Despite this impressive growth, courses taught in English still represent only a modest share of overall European instruction.

It is important to note that English-medium instruction is very unevenly spread across Europe. Nearly one third of all identified programs are offered by institutions in the Netherlands, the uncontested European leader in this form of education. In this country, more than one third of the total program provision in responding institutions is in English. Germany, the number two provider in absolute numbers, occupies only a modest, middle-rank position when allowing for size. The Nordic countries, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, all score strong. Higher education institutions in southern Europe, on the other hand, offer very few programs in English. In institutional terms, it is the PhD-awarding, multi-disciplinary (comprehensive) universities with a large student enrollment rather than the smaller, college-type institutions which offer most courses taught in English. Interestingly, there is no clear correlation between the number of English-taught programs and the number of international students at an institution. There are indications that institutions with a modest proportion of international students—above all in countries with internationally less

often spoken languages—use English-taught programs as a means of 'counter-steering'. They introduce these programs because they cannot attract sufficient numbers with educational provision delivered in the domestic language.

Focus on Graduate Studies

English-medium education is very predominantly offered at the master's level, with a share of almost four fifths of all programs. In some countries, such as Germany, France, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium, the postgraduate share even exceeds 90 percent. Only in very few countries is the share of graduate programs conducted in English below two thirds. Since 2002, when the postgraduate proportion stood at 68 percent, the trend towards the 'second cycle' (master's level) has thus been further strengthened. The predominance of master's-level programs reflects the institutional focus and the national strategies for internationalization in most European countries. Graduate-level education is also at the forefront of national and institutional higher education promotion and marketing campaigns in Europe.

Across Europe, the subject area in which English-taught programs are most frequently offered is engineering and technology (27 percent), followed by business and management studies (24 percent) and the social sciences (21 percent). Together, these three subject area groups make up 72 percent of the total programs offered in English. The subject area distribution has changed remarkably since 2002, when business and management led the second ranked subject area, engineering, by more than double, and when the social sciences were only in fourth place.

English-medium education in Europe is still a very young phenomenon. Or, to put it another way, growth is fast. The majority of the programs (51 percent) identified were created in the four years prior to the surveys. More than a quarter came into being in the last two years. Amongst master's-level programs, the share of new creations from the last four years is upward of 90 percent. Only about one fifth of all programs was set up before the year 2000.

Students enrolled in English-taught programs are, in the majority, foreigners in their country of study. Their share is almost two thirds (65 percent), up from 60 percent in the 2002 surveys. Domestic students, with an overall share of 35 percent, tend to concentrate in bachelor's programs, where they make up more than half of all students. The share of master's-level students amongst international students ranges from about 83 percent amongst European foreigners to a mere two percent from North America. Again looking only at the group of international students, the largest group is made up of other Europeans (36 percent), closely followed by Asians (34 percent). The largest single nationality group across Europe consists of Chinese, with about 23 percent, but

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Strong Growth of English as the Language of Instruction in European Higher Education

the regional origin of students differs considerably between receiving countries. North Americans (US and Canada) make up only five percent of foreign enrollment, a percentage hardly changed from that of the predecessor study of 2002. But then, American and Canadian students do not need to leave their country in quest of English-medium instruction.

More than two thirds of all programs (70 percent) charge tuition fees, a share considerably up from 2002. Only Europe's north (Finland, Sweden and Norway) is still almost 'fee-free'. On a European average, the annual fee for domestic students and those from European Union countries is about 3,400 Euros (\$5,270). The one for international students from outside the EU is roughly 6,300 Euros (\$9,765). Programs in Denmark were most expensive, at 11,000 Euros (\$17,050) on average. Ultimately, it is unclear to which extent these fee amounts are peculiar to provision in the English medium, or if they reflect general tuition fee levels in the countries in question—but a lot speaks for the latter.

The Language Debate: Normalcy – At Last

Especially in the early years, the introduction of the provision of education delivered in English led to a heated—not to say: ideological—debate in Europe. Critics of English-medium teaching and learning maintained that it would inevitably lead to a loss of quality in teaching and learning, due to the deficiencies in the command of English both on

the side of the teachers and the students. Others critical of the new trend claimed that it would ultimately lead to the extinction of many a small language as a medium of scientific expression. Defenders admitted that there were problems, but they insisted they were not nearly as serious as the critics believed. In this respect, the results of the study are revealing.

The results of the 2002 surveys already seemed to support the defenders. The present study does so even more clearly. Only 16 percent of respondents identified an insufficient command of English of international students. And only nine percent found the mastery of English of domestic students inadequate. Perhaps surprisingly, the most frequently stated linguistic problem concerns the (lack of) mastery of the domestic language by international students. There are indications not so much that the problem has changed—if it ever was one—but that perceptions of those confronted with it have accommodated the trends. Europe's higher education institutions have gotten used to the challenging communication situation in the international classroom. What once created frustrations is today viewed as quite normal.

by Bernd Wächter

Bernd Wächter is the chief executive of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), a Brussels-based European association specialized in the internationalization of higher education (bernd.waechter@aca-secretariat.be). The present paper presents the main results of the publication: "Wächter, Bernd & Maiworm, Friedhelm, English-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education." The Picture in 2007, Bonn: Lemmens, 2008.

Welcome New Staff

Nathan Bell joined the Council of Graduate Schools in March 2008 as a Program Manager and Empirical Research Associate, working on the Professional Science Master's (PSM) Initiative and the PhD Completion Project. Nathan comes to CGS following six years with the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology (CPST), where he served most recently as Associate Director. Prior to joining the CPST staff in 2002, he served as a Program Associate in the Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs at the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Nathan is the co-author of a number of publications about the education and employment of scientists and engineers, including *Professional Women and Minorities: A Total Human Resources Data Compendium* and *Salaries of Scientists, Engineers and Technicians: A Summary of Salary Surveys*. He holds a B.M. degree in Music Education from the State University of New York, Potsdam.

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Welcome New Members

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Oceanographic Institute

Universidad del Turabo

Proposals Sought for 2009 CGS/Peterson's Award for Innovation in Promoting an Inclusive Graduate Community

Proposals for the 2009 CGS/Peterson's Award for Innovation in Promoting an Inclusive Graduate Community must be postmarked on or before September 5, 2008. The award provides support in the form of a matching grant for the purpose of effecting institutional changes to enhance diversity and inclusiveness. More information is available on the CGS website or by calling Cheryl Flagg at 202-461-3852.

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