



Supporting Diversity in Graduate Education: Next Steps in Advancing the Agenda

A Proposal by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)
submitted to the Educational Testing Service (ETS)

Overview

Even after decades of reform, the underrepresentation of women and minorities in graduate education remains a persistent problem across a variety of global higher education systems. National and regional organizations supporting graduate education have attempted to tackle this underrepresentation with different projects and approaches. Focused primarily on the U.S. context, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has developed several projects that prioritize [diversity and inclusion](#), including the Doctoral Initiative on Minority Attrition and Completion, the Ph.D. Completion Project, and the ETS/CGS Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admission to Completion. Meanwhile, the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies [Imagining Canada's Future Project](#) takes into account the experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal Peoples; the Australian Council for Graduate Research names [Indigenous Graduate Research](#) as a key initiative; the [European University Association](#) has identified diversity and inclusion as a primary issue for engagement; and the Association of African Universities [Strategic Plan](#) identifies equity and inclusiveness as a core value and outlines strategic goals to achieve it. While these efforts seek to improve diversity in graduate education at a regional or national level, to date, there is no broader global effort to tackle diversity issues at master's and doctoral institutions, nor is there a common terminology for understanding the problems faced by universities in this area.

Addressing this gap was a goal of the 2018 Strategic Leaders Global Summit on Graduate Education co-sponsored by CGS, ETS, and the University of Johannesburg, which explored a range of issues related to diversity in master's and doctoral education. Summit topics included clarifying and comparing definitions of diversity and inclusion, creating an inclusive campus and program culture, student recruitment, curriculum and pedagogy, retention and completion, and supporting successful career paths for all students. Under the theme, *Supporting Diversity in Graduate Education*, participants in the summit discussed current strategies for improving diversity, existing roadblocks, and future priorities.

In spite of the fact that national, community, and university systems confront unique challenges, and diversity often depends on national context, CGS and summit attendees agreed that the global graduate community would benefit from two areas of work:

1. a system for classifying issues in diversity in graduate education. This system or taxonomy would help global leaders share a common language for discussing diversity goals and would be useful for measuring improvements in access, inclusiveness, and success in graduate education within and across nation states. This codification would also be helpful in helping universities better understand and compare the issues others face and adopt relevant strategies and best practices.
2. a resource library that would be based on this taxonomy of diversity concepts and include example policies, diversity metrics, research frameworks, promising practices, and case studies.

In order to begin this undertaking, developing a better understanding of what metrics currently exist for tracking should be prioritized, and data collected within and across nations to track progress of diversity and inclusion should be shared.