



August 21, 2015

The Honorable Cory Gardner
Committee on Commerce,
Transportation and Science
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
Committee on Commerce,
Transportation and Science
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Gardner and Peters:

On behalf of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), I want to thank you for soliciting input with respect to the issues that the Senate Committee on Commerce, Transportation and Science will consider throughout the process of reauthorizing the America COMPETES Act. CGS membership includes over 500 universities in the United States that annually award more than 92 percent of all U.S. doctorates and over 78 percent of all U.S. master's degrees.

America COMPETES provides major support for basic research that is done at many of the institutions of higher education across the country. It is the graduate students at those institutions who work in the laboratories, under the supervision of their faculty advisors, and conduct much of this research. They are dependent on the support provided through these grants to pursue their advanced degrees. They are the future scientists who will produce the next scientific breakthrough through their creativity and innovation. This support is particularly important given the policy changes that have occurred over the past few years to federal student loans, which has resulted in increasing the costs of pursuing master's and doctoral degrees.

I have included the CGS Issue Brief that outlines the principles that we would like to see considered in the reauthorization of the COMPETES Act. One factor is becoming increasingly important as we go forward – to implement or expand research-based reforms in master's and doctoral level programs so that our master's and doctoral degree holders are prepared to successfully fulfill a wide variety of career paths and remain competitive in a global workforce. This outcome can be achieved through support for traineeships, enhancement of professional science master's programs, and integration of professional development activities into research assistantships.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity and look forward to working with you to reauthorize this important law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Suzanne T. Ortega'.

Suzanne T. Ortega
President