



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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Graduate Education Leaders Share Best Practices and Identify National Needs in Research and Scholarly Integrity

(November 1, 2010) Senior university leaders, researchers, and federal funders of science met over the weekend to discuss future directions for graduate student education in research integrity. The event was hosted by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) to highlight the achievements of a three and a half year collaborative project with universities to develop model programs for integrating scholarly integrity into graduate education.

Seven universities received awards to participate in the project: Columbia University, Emory University, Michigan State University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Arizona, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Thirteen additional universities participated in the project as affiliates.

Federal funders such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) have new training requirements in responsible conduct of research with broad implications for graduate education. Universities across the country are looking for direction and national models that not only comply with these requirements but also address the needs of students and the research community in a more comprehensive way. The Project for Scholarly Integrity seeks to provide such models.

Conference participants discussed challenges facing universities in this area including faculty engagement, campus coordination, and a lack of evidence as to what works in educating graduate students about research integrity. They highlighted key project innovations such as new survey instruments (to assess campus activities and the institutional climate for scholarly integrity) and new approaches (to developing model programs that pull in experts and faculty from across campus). Preliminary survey data suggest that while most graduate programs report that faculty already address core topics informally through mentoring and advising, more mentoring and formal instruction (courses, workshops, or web modules) on these topics would be welcomed by students. Graduate schools participating in the project are sharing data with faculty that suggest possible gaps in current training, and they are using project funds to create incentives for faculty-designed curricula, and host campus discussions.

The group agreed that the capacity of US universities to develop quality research integrity programs is limited until four vital needs are addressed:

- 1) That more universities develop comprehensive rather than merely-compliant programs, e.g. through an incentive or sub-award program;
- 2) That teaching and mentoring in research ethics and scholarly integrity is integrated into existing successful programs to prepare future faculty;

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3) That programs adapt to meet the unique needs of international students, and of domestic students who go on to conduct research in international settings, who are often overlooked in current training; and
4) Assessment efforts of the kind begun in the Project for Scholarly Integrity are extended and expanded to allow for the identification of “best practices” and the use of evidence as to what works to promote broader adoption of such practices.

The Project for Scholarly Integrity is sponsored by the Office of Research Integrity, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). John Galland, Director of the Division of Education and Integrity at HHS said, “The Office of Research Integrity supports the Council of Graduate Schools’ Project for Scholarly Integrity because the information derived from it will help to enhance the education of graduates in responsible research.”

CGS President, Debra Stewart, said “This meeting and the agreement stemming from it would not have been possible without the investment from HHS.” She added, “That support, combined with the commitment from our graduate deans and other stakeholders, has brought us one step closer to ensuring we use proven and effective methods for incorporating research ethics into our graduate education system.”

Assessment instruments and benchmarking data from this project will provide graduate schools with key tools to enhance the quality and reach of their programs. A publication on the project will appear in early 2011.

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The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of over 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. Among U.S. institutions, CGS members award 93% of the doctoral degrees and 76% of the master’s degrees. 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.*

** Based on data from the 2009 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*