



Council of Graduate Schools

PRESS RELEASE

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CGS Launches Project to Prepare Future Faculty to Assess Student Learning

(May 7, 2010) The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has been awarded a grant from the Teagle Foundation to explore an area of growing national need: the preparation of graduate students to assess student learning outcomes. The project will examine how Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) programs, which currently involve over 300 colleges and universities, might best train graduate students in the assessment of student learning and the use of outcomes measures to improve teaching and course design.

Quality assessment of student learning is a key responsibility of faculty and higher education institutions. While there is no consensus about how learning outcomes should be measured, there is a growing body of evidence about what works to promote learning, and best practices are emerging. The new CGS initiative will lay the foundation for long-term improvement in the assessment of student learning outcomes by identifying:

- Gaps and potential linkages between national assessment expertise and existing faculty development programs; and
- Ways in which existing professional development programs for graduate students could enhance their skills and understanding of assessing student learning.

Donna Heiland, Teagle Foundation Vice President, said, "Ensuring that students are achieving at the highest possible levels is an important item on the national higher education agenda and a Teagle Foundation priority. Assessment of undergraduate learning is essential to realizing that goal. If today's graduate students move into faculty careers understanding the power of good assessment to spark curricular change and growth, students and faculty alike will benefit." She added, "We are therefore delighted to support the Council of Graduate Schools as it integrates work on assessment into its well-known and widely-respected initiative to prepare future faculty."

"We are grateful that the Teagle Foundation has recognized the potential in the Preparing Future Faculty program and the graduate education community for expanding the scope of serious inquiry and expertise in the assessment of student learning," said CGS President Debra W. Stewart. "Quality assessment of student learning is not only about accountability, it is also about innovative pedagogy, excellence in scholarship, and improving the quality of U.S. higher education."

The one-year grant of \$75,000 will fund a survey of existing PFF programs, a national conference, and the development of a white paper and a culminating publication. This new project is part of CGS' broader national efforts to prepare graduate students for faculty careers across the full spectrum of higher education institutions. Since 1993, CGS has supported over 40 universities working in collaboration with 300 masters-level institutions, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges to establish PFF programs, which provide the most comprehensive and recognizable models for preparing graduate students who aspire to careers in teaching.

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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 95% of the doctoral degrees and 78% 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 2008 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees

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