Synopses of Winning ETS/CGS Award Proposals

2020: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Addressing Systemic Racism Through Structured Learning Communities

The Graduate School of UNC-Chapel Hill, will build on the work of its [Diversity and Student Success](#) (DSS) team which strives to create an environment where students are equipped to not only survive but to thrive during their tenure as graduate students. The current racial unrest, the Black Lives Matter movement, and COVID-19 have elevated the importance of DSS's work. DSS/The Graduate School will pilot the development of intersecting learning communities for both graduate students and faculty/departments to continue building upon innovative diversity and equity efforts, to address various components of systemic racism, and to create an inclusive and welcoming climate for all graduate students. The intersecting learning communities include:

1. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Graduate Student Learning Communities. The intent of these communities will be to provide students with the tools to navigate successfully the academic continuum and toxic working/learning environments, going from merely enduring to flourishing. Through these learning communities, students will be empowered with coping strategies and healthy ways to deal with traumatic events and skills to respond in an empowered way to acts of racism, microaggressions, and implicit bias.

2. CASRGE (Collaborative to Address Structural Racism in Graduate Education). This learning community for faculty and administrators will address issues of departmental culture by creating a safe space in which to raise cultural awareness around bias and structural racism. Through formal trainings, a monthly journal club, and a curriculum of best practices and resources for creating an overall inclusive departmental environment, we will support individual learning communities as they develop department-specific strategies to combat structural racism.

3. Intersecting Activities between BIPOC and CASRGE Learning Communities: We will work with students to develop "Resolution/ Solution" projects that will allow them to engage with campus leadership and become a tangible part of the change that is needed / anti-racism efforts. For example, we will use scripts written and performed by MFA graduate students of color to bring voice and visuals to the lived experiences of UNC BIPOC graduate students. These projects will be utilized for both training sessions and to promote dialogue with the CASRGE and BIPOC Learning Communities.

The intersectional learning communities will build upon the existing mission and philosophy of holistic student success applied in all the DSS initiatives, which includes the Carolina Grad Student F1RSTS, Global Grads, Initiative for Minority Excellence, Military-Affiliated Grads, and Queer Graduate and Professional Students, as well as the Summer Undergraduate Pipeline (SUP) recruitment initiative. DSS was created to better retain students from diverse backgrounds, to see them through degree completion, and have a positive impact on their

experience as graduate or professional students at UNC-Chapel Hill. Central to the creation of each initiative has been the care and encouragement of the "whole" student, not just their academic success, but also their holistic development. By improving individual departmental climates and promoting healthy dialog with students, we will provide a healthy environment for overall student success which should further increase retention and student success.

2019: Wayne State University
Success for Underrepresented students in Graduate Education (SURGE)

Urban universities serve as main entry point into higher education for underrepresented (UR) students. Wayne State University (WSU) is an urban research-intensive university in Detroit where more than a third its undergraduates come from underrepresented backgrounds, yet persistence to graduate programs is low. UR students face many challenges including tuition costs, the need to work to support their families, feelings of isolation on campus, and lack of support in the application process because those closest to them have limited experience with university application and financial aid processes. To address these issues, we have designed an innovative and multi-faceted approach consisting of:

1. **Peer Mentoring**: Undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds will be paired with graduate mentors during one academic year. We will partner with three long-standing student success initiatives on campus: The Center for Latino/a Studies, McNair Scholars, and the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement (OMSE) to enhance our recruitment capabilities and facilitate our ability to focus our support on first-generation, historically underrepresented students. Mentees will work with graduate students to learn about graduate school, develop career goals for post-graduation, explore relevant graduate programs and complete graduate school application materials. The year-long program will be focused on developing a support network, helping students develop a sense of belonging and a growth mindset, and reduce "imposter syndrome".

2. **Mentee and Mentor Training**: Graduate student mentors will participate in inclusive mentoring and leadership training, as well as learn to participate in inclusive mentoring networks. Mentees will participate in graduate application bootcamps, financial literacy seminars, as well as workshops focused on demonstrating critical thinking skills, writing purpose statements; preparing for interviews, selecting and working with faculty and career mentors, and managing conflict and stress.

3. **Scholarship Funding**: Dedicated scholarship funding will be available for students who have completed the program and been accepted into a master's program. Availability of financial support affects university attendance and persistence for students in general, and for UR

students in particular. AGRADE scholarships will reduce both the cost and time required to complete a master's degree thereby supporting persistence.

2018: Vanderbilt University
Supporting the Transformation from Students to Leaders

The Graduate School at Vanderbilt University, with campus and external partners, will promote graduate student leadership development through three innovative interventions. Woven through all three focus areas will be programming that pays particular attention to the needs of first-generation students, those from underrepresented minorities, and women in the academy.

1. **FirstGen Success:** In a structured first-year experience for graduate students who self-identify as first generation (those without a parent who has attended college), students will participate in three streams of support: discussion groups and social events led by a first generation faculty leader; formal training events covering skills, resources, culture norms and career development; and an etiquette dinner providing experiential learning of professional norms.

2. **Training Tomorrows' Mentors:** By providing high-quality intervention for both mentors and mentees, we aim to improve the quality of mentoring at Vanderbilt and beyond, in this generation and the next, because we believe by training mentees we can positively affect the quality of tomorrow's mentors. Programming in this priority area will depend largely on external specialists and train-the-trainer efforts toward training students and faculty to be better communicators as well as training Vanderbilt staff for sustainability of the efforts. Programming will include a specific emphasis on mentoring that fosters an environment of inclusiveness.

3. **Managing Conflict and Difficult Conversations**: Numerous obstacles encountered by graduate students could be ameliorated through building both student and faculty confidence when confronting conflict. External mediation skills trainers will conduct 2 workshops for students, postdocs, faculty and staff. Participants will gain the confidence and skills needed to approach difficult subjects and learn skills to successfully navigate such discussions. Our Graduate Life Coach will then roll these efforts into a sustainable departmental roadshow available upon request by departments, programs and student groups.

2017: University of Washington
U501: Extend the Reach

The Graduate School at the University of Washington will expand its University 501 (U501) online orientation modules and reach more students, staff and faculty at our own university, as well as at other universities. U501 "flips" orientation so all incoming graduate and professional students can view online modules containing text and videos with students, faculty and staff introducing key information before they arrive on campus.

Students may access these at any time - day or night, in any country, at their own pace. It introduces the nuts and bolts of graduate school, gives an overview of the graduate student experience and details resources and support systems.

- Internal to the UW, usage rates and user feedback from the 2017 pilot will be used to refine existing and add new content to further prepare students to transition to the UW. We will also identify individual UW graduate programs interested in tailoring this information to their own orientations, and we will work directly with these programs to pilot their specific versions.
- Externally, we will develop instructional modules to guide other universities -- research and non-research, master's granting, public and private -- in building their own online orientations. Comprehensive modules will ensure greater reach and effectiveness in delivery of their own orientations by taking users through a step-by-step process delivered in a format similar to U501 itself.

2016: Cornell University

Cornell University Innovative Inclusion Interventions (I3): Promoting Graduate Student Success through Advancements in the Climate of Graduate Education

The Graduate School at Cornell University, with campus-wide partners, will promote graduate student success and a more inclusive climate through four innovative interventions supporting the academic and social engagement of graduate students across identities.

1. **Summer Success Symposium**: In an event for new and continuing research degree students who have received fellowships in support of diversity, and/or identify as first-generation college (FGC) students and/or students of color, participants form connections with peers across graduate fields and establish a sense of community, and engage with successful Cornell Ph.D. alumni and faculty from diverse backgrounds.

2. **Interactive Theatre.** Through moderated discussions regarding video recordings of an interactive theatre project, student and faculty participants in *My Voice, My Story: Lived Experiences of Graduate and Professional Students* encounter the diverse lived experiences of Cornell graduate students and achieve listening for understanding, comprehension of the impacts of exclusion and inclusion in the learning and research environment, respect for mutual similarities and differences, and awareness of unconscious bias and how to confront it.

3. **Intergroup Dialogue Project**. Students contribute to transforming the campus climate through participation in the Intergroup Dialogue Project (IDP) immersion program, facilitating communication across social, cultural, and power differences, in a critical and meaningful way.

4. **Inclusive Teaching**. Participants in the Inclusive Teaching Institute (ITI) for Graduate Students and Postdocs, co-sponsored by Cornell University's Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CU-CIRTL) and the Center for Teaching Excellence

(CTE) engage in complex discussions about diversity and inclusion, and learn how to incorporate inclusive teaching practices into their classrooms at Cornell and beyond.

2015: University of California, Los Angeles
Smart Recommendations: Digital Guidance & Support throughout a UCLA Graduate Student's Academic Career

Building on an existing website, GRAPE (Graduate and Postdoctoral Educational Support), this proposal is to build an engine called Smart Recommendations to deliver funding information to students based on their unique backgrounds, academic pursuits, and aspirational goals, and also on choices they previously made on the website. Once the platform is built, it will be expanded to deliver other types of recommendations such as on campus processes, seminars and workshops, professional and career development opportunities, and key deadlines. Smart Recs will push content and empower students to act.

The GRAPES website was redesigned to make it more usable and made information more easily discoverable. The next step which this project will undertake is to make the information retrievable based on past use and to make user-specific recommendations. The first stage will be open to new and continuing UCLA students and postdocs; future plans are to extend access to other populations at UCLA. UCLA is open to sharing underlying technology and infrastructure with other institutions that seek to implement similar functionality.

The program will be assessed with existing pipeline programs through surveys and focus groups. After initial testing, Smart Recs will be rolled out to the entire UCLA graduate student population and will be assessed to characterize user satisfaction, interest and behaviors. Analytics will be used to gauge student interests in specific events and workshops to ad in planning and resource allocation.

2014: Duke University
Duke OPTIONS: Online Professional development Tool for Individual OpportuNitieS

Duke Options is an online professional development planning tool that helps doctoral students identify career opportunities and target their professional development activities to reach their career goals. The tool identifies six core competencies doctoral students should development: teaching and mentoring communication skills, professional adaptability, self-awareness, leadership, and professionalism and scholarly integrity. The tool provides suggestions, resources and steps based on the four broad disciplinary areas at Duke: social sciences, humanities, basic medical sciences and natural sciences and engineering.

Users then can set deadlines for themselves to achieve their goals on a 5-year planning calendar, with suggestions embedded by the tool for appropriate timeframes. Additionally, the tool includes ways students can consult with their advisors to help achieve their goals.

Development of the tool involves cross-campus collaborations, including the Career Center and Office of Postdoctoral Services, Directors of Graduate Studies, key faculty members, and student groups. Lunches with targeted student groups would roll-out the tool to students.

2013: Florida International University
Academy of Graduates for Integrative Learning Experiences (AGILE): A Synergistic Community of Doctoral Scholars

AGILE is designed to meet the need for a learning community of doctoral URM students where interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are integrated with scholarly and research pursuits. The program promotes peer mentoring and coordinated professional development modules. Community meetings will enable socialization and open communication links. The first cohort will include 15 students selected from Hispanic and African American groups and will participate for two years. Participants will prepare and maintain a portfolio and academic diary of their participation in AGILE.

The professional development modules will bring together a variety of campus offices ranging from writing, wellness, research integrity, community engagement, leadership and service, career center and academic planning and accountability. AGILE will facilitate a one-semester long leadership track of events to explore, develop and apply leadership skills. Students will undertake community service/engagement in areas of interest and expertise. The community meetings will provide an opportunity for practicing communication skills.

The collective performance of the cohort will be assessed against the general graduate population using surveys. Conclusions on the effectiveness of the program in improving retention rates, time to degree and student success will be based on the overall performance assessment.

2012: University of Illinois at Chicago
Promoting Success in STEM Graduate Education Scholars Program (PaSSaGE Scholars Program)

In the first phase of the PaSSaGE program, STEM departments will nominate incoming Underrepresented Minority graduate students for the program; six will be selected for the Scholar Transition to Graduate School Program based on recommendations from their research mentors and a student statement addressing research, education and career goals as well as socio-cultural challenges faced. The students will receive a stipend of $4000 each for summer research in their home departments and participation in orientation and skills development workshops. This will allow them to building relationships in the department with the graduate college staff, to get settled in Chicago, and to get a jump-start on graduate school.

In phase two, Scholars Mentoring and Career Development Program, the students will be incorporated in the Fellows Mentoring Initiative which will provide career and psychosocial mentoring and professional and skills development activities. They will meet with graduate college staff members for one-on-one mentoring, interact with a peer mentor/become a peer mentor, and participate in community building activities and career development events such as brown bag research seminars.

Each student completing the preliminary/qualifying examination and advancing to PhD candidacy will receive $500 to present their work at a discipline-specific meeting/conference or to attend a non-UIC discipline-specific course or workshop. As they move toward completion of the doctorate,

they will also be eligible for an additional $500 for travel to interview for postgraduate job opportunities.

UIC will assess how the PaSSaGE program impacts the retention and success of URM students. UIC hopes to secure longer term funding from public and private sectors to continue to increase retention and degree conferrals and to sustain these new initiatives in perpetuity.

2011: Eastern Illinois University
"The Integrative Graduate Studies Institute"

The Integrative Graduate Studies Institute will offer over a two-year period five integrative graduate mentoring programs with related assessment to track the outcomes and guide effectiveness for promoting graduate education. The institute will be staffed by a director and three graduate assistants who have experience working with underrepresented groups. The Integrative Graduate Mentoring staff will identify a graduate advocate in each undergraduate degree program and in selected partner offices. Graduate advocates will be provided with on-line and face-to-face guidance on what to include in graduate preparation materials and websites. Students will be targeted in their sophomore year.

The IGM for Key Educational Institutions program will involve having IGM-KEI staff identify existing and desired undergraduate or graduate institutional partnerships. Graduate recruitment will target key university partnerships using outreach, services and communication to build a strong and diverse graduate community.

First year graduate students will be provided with opportunities to connect with faculty, other students and the community at three key points (1st, 6th and 10th week of study). An on-line network will allow first year students to post questions, raise issues and find guidance. The IGM Goal program will integrate alumni who have entered or completed a doctoral degree as a resource for current students to consider doctoral degrees.

The IGM-Scholars program identifies 20 high-performing undergraduates from underrepresented groups nominated by their departments. The junior year will be the focus. The students will participate in a summer program mentored by graduate faculty and conduct a research as the basis for future graduate study. Stipends for the students and faculty mentors and a summer tuition waiver will be provided.

2010: Michigan State University
The Whole Student Experience: Admissions to Student Success

The proposal will bring together 4 projects as a continuation of the most successful interventions from previous grant programs, focusing on 5-10 departments who participated in other grant programs, and follow 2 cohorts of their students (entering fall 2011 and 2012) from admission to completion. Focusing on interventions that emphasize the "whole student," the topics will include:

1. Admitting students using holistic review
2. Setting expectations early

3. Developing career and professional development plans from the first year of doctoral experience through early years of first job placement
4. Providing development at key transition points at the doctoral program

These activities will draw upon the Setting Expectation and Conflict Resolution program, the PREP program (career and professional development), an AGEP grant, an NSF Innovation through Institutional Integrant grant, and the CGS PhD Completion Project.

1. **Admissions**
   Admissions and outcomes data from the PhD Completion Project will be shared with the admissions committees in participating depart as well as information on the new GRE. The committees will track additional "predictors for success" used in admissions decisions. Student outcomes will be tracked.

2. **Setting Expectations and Conflict Resolution**
   A workshop will be designed for partner departments and offered for doctoral cohorts during their first semester.

3. **Career and Professional Development**
   A workshop will be held for students, focusing on assessing skills, developing a professional plan and using the website to save it, finding professional development activities, and using resources on campus. The follow-up will include yearly focus groups.

4. **Writing**
   Senior graduate students in participating departments will be trained and success will be assessed. A module on writing will be added to the Summer Resources Opportunities Program that encourages an inclusive community of undergraduate to explore research and graduate education.

2009: University of California, Davis
Mentoring at Critical Transitions: Faculty Readiness from Admission to Completion

This pilot project draws upon the best practices of national initiatives in graduate education to enhance faculty preparedness in areas affecting the academic socialization and success of a diverse doctoral student population during the transitions from applicant to student, coursework to research, and research to professional career. Brief proposals from doctoral programs will be solicited and five to eight will be selected representing broad disciplines, different levels of student's diversity and varying strengths/weaknesses at key transition points in doctoral education.

The project will be launched with a retreat for graduate faculty in the programs with themes focusing on socialization, mentoring, and inclusiveness. During the year faculty will participate in a seminar to discuss and review personal contact and interviewing practices to enhance their ability to evaluate potential for persistence and retention of their students. They will also participate in seminars on early career mentoring and a new Iterative Writing and Research Project, which will entail quarterly meetings of faculty and advisees to introduce the new students to the process of research, writing, critique and revision.

Faculty in the MCT project will participate in Career and Professional development seminars to update or strengthen their knowledge of topics such as:
- Careers outside of academia
- Building an effective CV
- Interviewing skills
- Weighing job options and negotiating offers
- Networking strategies
- Academic writing and publishing

Two certified MCT faculty seminars will be offer per quarter and a year-end, da6y- long capstone seminar. Faculty with expertise will facilitate the seminars on topics such as:
- Learning and communication styles
- Diverse scholarship in curricula
- Critical concerns and best practices involving gender, ethnicity, disabilities and sexual orientation in mentoring an detaching
- Admissions, matriculation and retention
- Milestone models for coursework, qualifiers, and dissertation
- Graduate student parent needs
- Professional and academic development
- Retention accountability

The programs will use current and historic data to identify and target areas for improvement in faculty mentoring. At the conclusion of the year, participating programs will receive an updated data report.

The Office of Graduate Studies will work with the pilot programs to identify the best practices and interventions most likely to have impacted changes observed in the data. The data reports will also serve as a model for graduate program reviews.