



Council of Graduate Schools

Advocacy, Research, and Innovation

Completion and Attrition in STEM Master's Programs

Council of Graduate Schools

Annual Meeting

December 3, 2010

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Council of Graduate Schools

Exploratory Master's Project

- Launched April 2009
- Funders:
 - Sloan Foundation and National Science Foundation
- Goals:
 - Clarify current state of knowledge about completion and attrition in STEM master's programs
 - Develop better understanding about why students fail to complete
 - Identify factors that lead to successful completion



Exploratory Master's Project (cont.)

- Activities:
 - Literature review
 - Data on completion and attrition
 - Research on the characteristics of master's programs
 - Sessions at the 2009 CGS Summer Workshop
 - White paper
 - NSF/CGS Workshop
 - Final monograph



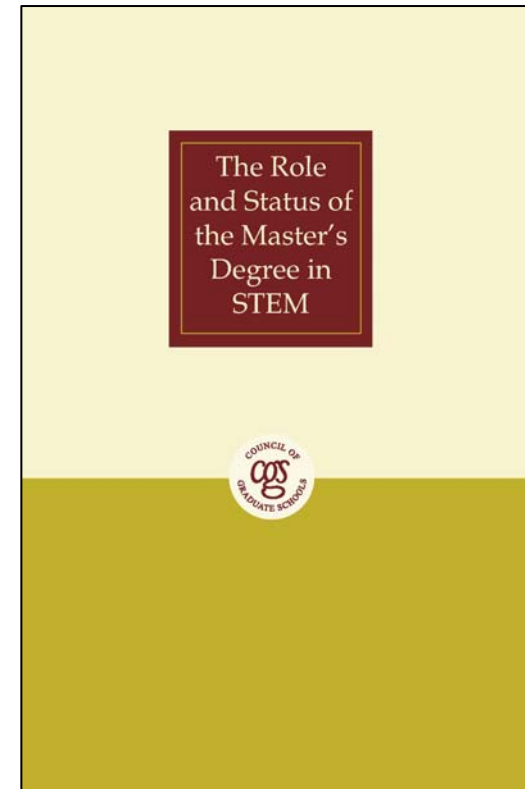
Exploratory Master's Project (cont.)

- Main Findings:
 - Limited data on master's completion and attrition
 - Differing methodologies preclude meaningful comparisons
 - Little research on factors contributing to completion and attrition at the master's level



New Monograph

- Exploratory project findings summarized in:
 - The Role and Status of the Master's Degree in STEM
 - To be mailed to all CGS members in December



New Master's Completion Project

- New Project
 - Completion and Attrition in STEM Master's Programs
 - Sloan Foundation-funded
 - 27-month project
 - Builds on exploratory study



New Master's Completion Project (cont.)

- Research questions:
 - Typology, definitions and templates
 - Completion and attrition rates
 - Factors related to student success
 - Promising practices to improve outcomes
 - Larger project?



New Master's Completion Project (cont.)

- RFP to be issued in February 2011
- Five institutions selected will:
 - Provide completion and attrition data
 - Administer student surveys
 - Host site visits
- Proposal deadline: May 13, 2011
- Awardees will receive \$30,000 each



New Master's Completion Project (cont.)

- Current activities:
 - Typology of master's programs
 - Standard definitions
 - Factors that affect student enrollment and success
 - Criteria for selection of participating institutions
- January, convene groups of deans/experts to refine the research design



New Master's Completion Project (cont.)

- Project timeline:
 - Proposal deadline: May 13, 2011
 - Awardees announced by July 2011
 - Site visits in September 2011
 - Interviews and focus groups
 - Field student surveys
 - Newly enrolled students in fall 2011
 - To graduates in December 2011 and May 2012
 - To non-completers during the 2011-12 academic year



New Master's Completion Project (cont.)

- Project timeline (cont.):
 - Submit completion and attrition data in March 2012
 - Updated data in July 2012
 - Final monograph in January 2013
 - Decide on potential follow-up project



Questions?

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