

PRESS RELEASE

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CGS Statement on the President's State of the Union Address

Washington, DC — *Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) President Debra W. Stewart today released the following statement in response to President Barack Obama's State of the Union address on February 12, 2013. CGS is the only national organization dedicated solely to the advancement of graduate education and research. The organization draws its institutional members from colleges and universities significantly engaged in graduate education, research, and scholarship culminating in the award of the master's or doctoral degree.*

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) applauds President Obama's continued focus on increasing American competitiveness in the world economy and appreciates the recognition that access to higher education will play a major role in that effort.

CGS stands strongly behind the President's commitment to strengthen our economy through investments in research and innovation, expanded access to advanced education opportunities, and increased support for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) training. To summarize the President's point, "To grow our middle class, our citizens must have access to the education and training that today's jobs require."

While calling for investments in these critical areas, the President also warned of the impact of looming sequester cuts on our recovering economy and on our ability to compete globally. CGS shares the President's concerns when he said, "These sudden, harsh, arbitrary cuts would ... devastate priorities like education, energy, and medical research. They would certainly slow our recovery, and cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs."

CGS also supports the President's call for immigration reform and urges the Administration and Congress to recognize the importance of retaining talented international students and their role in keeping our economy competitive. To harness this talent and maximize our economy's dynamism, CGS calls on the Administration and Congress to reduce visa barriers that discourage the most talented international students from attending U.S. graduate schools and creating jobs and businesses after they graduate.

With bipartisan talks on Capitol Hill already underway, President Obama spoke of the broader support for reform by stating, "Our economy is stronger when we harness the talents and ingenuity of striving, hopeful immigrants. And right now, leaders from the business, labor, law enforcement, and faith communities all agree that the time has come to pass comprehensive immigration reform."

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Recent research on skilled immigration and innovation shows that domestic as well as international students make a significant, positive impact on U.S. university research productivity (Stuen et. al). Research from the fall of 2011, the most recent year for which data are available, indicate that domestic enrollment is now in a second year of decline, with decreases of first-time domestic enrollment in fields key to U.S. innovation: Engineering, Biological Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science. With that in mind, CGS urges the President to support policies that seek to bolster enrollment for graduate education for both foreign and domestic talent. As other countries have already recognized through their investments in graduate education, innovation will require highly trained US citizens as well as foreign talent. Shrinking university budgets and rising student debt loads conspire to deny US employers access to this domestic talent.

As President Obama seeks to realize his most ambitious goals for our nation in his second term, CGS looks forward to playing a vital role in ensuring U.S. graduate schools are promoting a creative, innovative workforce that helps ready our country to meet the challenges of the 21st century global economy.

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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 92% of the doctoral degrees and 81% 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 2011 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*