

## Graduate Education in 2018: Working Together to Demonstrate Impact

*Suzanne T. Ortega, President, Council of Graduate Schools*

### The Challenge Before Us

As I reflect on this past December's Annual Meeting, an image sticks in my mind: a group of talented, diverse graduate students coming together to share the impacts of their research. The students, winners of the regional 3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) competitions, showed us graduate education at its best. We heard about the experiences of adult learners pursuing

empowerment through English language instruction, power sources for cardiac pacemakers, and new approaches to caring for people living with chronic diseases, among other important topics. It is undeniable that these students' work has the potential to benefit our entire country and perhaps even communities across the globe.



Why, then, is graduate education often such a tough sell in the current policy environment? As Michael Crow, President of Arizona State University and our meeting's kick-off speaker described it, it is because we need to do a better job of making the case for the relevance of graduate education to all of society, including those who do not, will not or cannot pursue higher education themselves. Our 3MT® winners, and the many students and alums featured through the CGS [GradImpact](#) project, give me hope that we are making progress on this front. Increasingly, graduate

deans understand that students need not only high-level skills of research and professional practice, but also the ability to communicate the value of their skills and knowledge to the various publics they will serve.

To ensure that this progress continues, it is critical that we consider the challenges our community faced over the past year and work together to confront the challenges and opportunities ahead.

## What We've Accomplished

Over a year ago, the higher education community came together to develop a tax bill advocacy strategy. We knew the issue was on the horizon, so a coalition with representation from key education stakeholders began meeting regularly to create materials and talking points. Meetings also were held with staff and members of Congress to brief them on the coalition concerns.

All that time and energy paid off when tax reform became a top priority for Congress in November. The House Ways and Means committee reported a tax bill removing most, if not all, tax code provisions benefiting graduate students – the Lifetime Learning tax credit, the deduction for interest paid on student loans, the employer education assistance tax credit, and the exclusion of tuition waivers as taxable income. This provision alone could have impacted roughly 145,000 graduate students who receive tuition reductions. The Senate, however, did not eliminate these provisions, allowing the possibility of retaining these benefits once the House and Senate resolved the differences in the two bills.

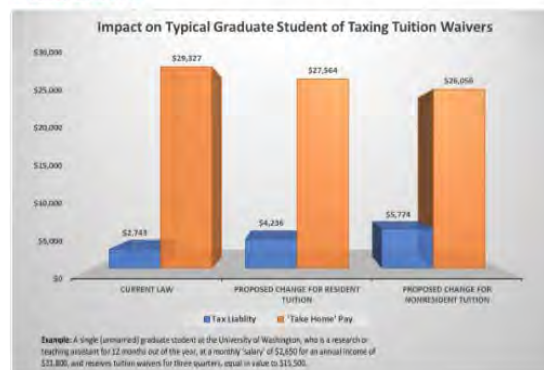
The higher education community capitalized on this opportunity, and we were prepared. The resources developed in the early days of our coalition meetings became the foundation for a joint website that could be accessed by everyone, including students. This helped to ensure consistent and unified messaging. Specifically related to graduate education, CGS used a coordinated strategy. There were calls to graduate student national organizations ([including NAGPS and SAGE](#)) encouraging them to use the information on the community website and work with their deans to “put a face” on the impact that the tax proposals would have on graduate students. CGS shared its materials and the materials from the community website through two CGS newsletters: *Government Affairs Weekly Update* and *News Network*. In addition, we used our CGS social media channels ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#)) to regularly share relevant materials and news articles highlighting the negative impact of the tax reform proposals on graduate education and graduate students. We also called upon a network of graduate deans, who are highly engaged

in advocacy efforts, to make the case for graduate students.

The outcome of this coordinated strategy was much greater than the result of past advocacy efforts. For example, one graduate dean took several graduate students to meet with their U.S. Senator, who in turn made a floor statement about the negative impact of the House tax proposals using specific examples she'd learned from those students. Another dean was interviewed on a statewide public radio station about the impact of taxing tuition waivers.

 Council of Grad Schools  
@CGSGradEd

How would eliminating IRC Sec. 117(d)(5) impact grad students? Here's one example  
[#taxreform](#)



1:34 PM - 7 Nov 2017

46 Retweets 19 Likes

2 46 19 2

Another graduate dean took information from a graduate student at his university and calculated what the tax implications would be for that student. CGS turned it into an infographic which, to date, is our most successful social media post.

Our coordinated advocacy efforts were ultimately successful. None of the original House proposals to eliminate tax benefits for graduate students were included in the final bill, which was signed into law the end of December.

## The Road Ahead

The agreement passed by the House and Senate is far from perfect, and the higher education community remains concerned about the overall impact on institutions of higher education. However, graduate students and deans working together did make a

significant difference, and there are other challenges to higher education on the horizon. These include the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that has implications for student borrowing and debt, US immigration policies and DACA, and funding for science and research. One of the biggest takeaways

from 2017 is that if we continue to work together, we can achieve positive outcomes and help ensure that graduate students can pursue their educational goals and contribute to our national security and economic future.

## **The Master's Degree Admissions Study: Your Opportunity to Shape the Future of Master's Education**

*Robert Augustine, Senior Vice President, Council of Graduate Schools*

The need for fundamental research on practices associated with the master's degree is long overdue: CGS enrollment and degree data consistently document the growing demand for master's education. The most recent data (Okahana & Zhou, 2017) revealed that master's students composed 83.4% of first-time graduate enrollment and 72.4% of total graduate enrollment in the Fall of 2016. Further, 82.4% of the graduate degrees conferred in 2016 were master's degrees. This level of participation continues a trend outlined previously by Allum & Okahana, 2015; Augustine, 2016; and Okahana, Feaster, & Allum, 2016.

Yet many of the practices surrounding the master's degree have not kept pace with student and workforce needs. Replacing well-established practices with more innovative approaches is a challenge, but also a path for graduate deans to develop programs that benefit both students and the fields they enter.

How can you help? You can take part in a new study, *Master's Admissions Attributes: Current Status and Missing Evidence*. The project, a collaboration of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and Educational Testing Service (ETS), investigates admissions practices for the master's degree. In the coming months, you will have an opportunity to engage in the first of a series of studies to align the master's degree with promising practices for the future. In March, CGS member institutions will be invited to work with their master's degree program directors as they complete the project's surveys on admissions practices. The data collected will inform our understanding of practices in master's degree admissions across multiple degree

types. The results of the project will be shared broadly in September of 2018.

I often hear from the graduate community that changing master's degree practices is critically needed to support the degree's continuing evolution; so, this is your opportunity. Let me tell you why this study is so important and why the participation of your institution is crucial.

In 2016, the Steering Committee on the Master's Degree, composed of graduate deans who offer exemplary leadership for advancing the quality and value of the master's degree, initiated a comprehensive assessment of what we currently know about the degree. They were guided by a review of the literature and a series of discussions held at CGS annual meetings and CGS summer workshops. They engaged the CGS membership in intensive discussions through a webinar and a colloquium that formed the basis for the *Alignment Framework for the Master's Degree* (Augustine, 2017), a conceptual model for informing the practices associated with the master's degree (Augustine, 2017). Using this model, several studies emerged to address gaps in our knowledge about the degree. This master's admissions study is the first funded project to emerge. Additional projects are expected to follow.

### **Setting the Stage for Success**

In October 2017, the CGS/ETS study *Master's Admission Attributes: Current Status and Missing Evidence* launched with series of focus groups hosted by the graduate deans of Georgia State University, the University of Connecticut, California State University Fresno, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Through day-long facilitated discussions, participants considered these questions: 1) How do you define the potential for success in your master's program? 2) What attributes of applicants and evidence associated with those attributes are currently used to predict that potential? 3) How effective are current attributes/evidence at predicting that potential? 4) What attributes/evidence are urgently needed but not available?

The graduate program directors and graduate deans, representing 72 master's degree programs across multiple university classifications and disciplines, captured the parameters of master's admissions criteria, identified the gaps, and shared the frustrations. Considering admissions attributes and evidence from research/scholarship-based and from practitioner career-focused master's degrees set the stage for securing the depth and breadth of data essential for the survey. In November, the CGS team summarized the discussion from the focus groups and found that some attributes, such as past academic performance and research experience, were weighted differently in master's admissions based on degree type. Other attributes, such as assessments of critical thinking and written and oral communication skills, were essential in identifying applicants' potential success in master's programs across many disciplines. Still other attributes, such as collaboration skills, curiosity, multicultural competency, and persistence, were weighted differently based on the mission of a degree program.

CGS project staff shared the initial list of attributes with the CGS Research Committee and the CGS Steering Committee on the Master's Degree during the 2017 Annual Meeting. The committee agreed that understanding success expectations may be a crucial factor when aligning admissions evidence with degree outcomes. Members of the Master's Degree Steering Committee expressed the view that having a way to understand the overall value of different criteria may

be among the most important new knowledge needed to address the gaps in our understanding of admissions practices. So far, twenty attributes of master's applicants have emerged as having high potential for inclusion in the final survey. An Advisory Board will further review these prior to sharing the final survey in March.

### **Promising Future Practices**

We look forward to our upcoming convening and sharing the findings of the study with the graduate community. Join the CGS Steering Committee on the Master's Degree, the CGS Research Committee, and the Master's Admissions Attributes Advisory Board by contributing to these promising practices by participating in the March survey! I look forward to sharing the results with you and am available for any questions you may have. I can be reached as follows: Bob Augustine, senior vice president, [raugustine@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:raugustine@cgs.nche.edu) or 202-461-3854.

### **References**

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## Graduate Education 2030: Imagining the Future

*Katherine C. Hazelrigg, Assistant Director of Communications, Council of Graduate Schools*



In 2006, CGS and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) marked the twentieth anniversary of the CGS/GRE Enrollment and Degrees Survey launch with the [Graduate Education 2020](#) project, a program supporting an important international conversation on the future of graduate education. The goal was to challenge leading scholars to consider technological, demographic, and global trends shaping graduate education around the world, and to use the best evidence available to predict what the future of graduate education might look like. 2006 was also the year CGS and the European University Association (EUA) held a transatlantic dialogue in Salzburg to discuss reforms in doctoral education. That meeting led to the creation of the Strategic Leaders Global Summit, which was expanded to include master's education. The first official Global Summit convened in Canada in 2007.

The changing global landscape of the past decade provided the perfect opportunity to revisit some of our early thinking on the future of graduate education and to look ahead to 2030. The 2017 Summit theme, “Graduate Education 2030: Imagining the Future,” revisits that earlier CGS project, Graduate Education 2020. With the year 2020 within sight, we took the opportunity to reconsider the future these scholars had imagined. Looking even farther ahead, to 2030, we invited international leaders in graduate education to describe the global forces transforming graduate education in their countries and regions: How will the nature of graduate education in 2030 differ from what is available in 2017?

CGS and ETS invited representatives from 16 countries across six continents to explore these ideas at a two-day summit in Alaska last September. What follows provides an abbreviated synopsis of a rich and thought-provoking dialogue on the future of graduate education.

### Overview of Panels

Summit attendees created a vision of the potential futures of graduate education, and how individually and collectively we might help influence these forces for the benefit of students, universities, and broader communities. Panels were organized around six topics for discussion: global and regional demographic shifts, trends in technology, generational perspectives, globalization, workforce demands, and conceptualizing the university. While not intended as an exhaustive list of topics relevant to the future of graduate education, they provided a framework to begin our conversations.

Over the course of two days, panelists presented short papers to the group, followed by Q&A and discussion. During the panel on global and regional demographic shifts, discussions focused on what exactly it means to be a global university and the effect international students have on the economy. The second session involved conversations on necessary resources, including specialized staff, to keep up with constantly evolving technology. Panelists and attendees also considered the ways in which technology has affected the issues of compliance, ethics, and skills training in graduate education. Generational perspectives, primarily how millennials are changing education as students and new faculty, were emphasized in panel three. This led to discussions in the fourth and fifth sessions on adequate career preparation. Panel four focused on instilling competencies of international study through joint master's and doctoral programs. Several attendees also raised the point that between concerns about climate impact and economic costs, universities must conceive of ways to instill international competencies without necessarily

requiring foreign travel. The fifth session dealt with efforts to meet workforce demands and adequate preparation of our graduate students for a wide range of careers. Discussions included the idea that research and learning is about risk-taking and being adventurous, which in turn will inspire confidence and creativity. During the final panel, attendees considered what societal role the university should fill, particularly with regard to ideas of nation building, nationalistic tendencies, and borderless aspirations.

### Final Session and Next Steps

The goal of the final session of the Summit is to identify action steps to assist our efforts to advance the work of the summit when we return home. These “practical actions” reflect the priorities of our varied national and institutional contexts, as well as some common themes of the meeting. These recommended actions are also intended as a menu of options for graduate institutions and organizations seeking to better prepare themselves and their students for the future.

## The Advocate Dean

*Nancy Marcus, Dean Emeritus, The Graduate School, Florida State University*



A major responsibility of the Graduate Dean is to champion the importance of graduate education to the mission of the university. This is the case, regardless of how your institution organizes and administers graduate education.

To champion the cause of graduate education you must be an effective and passionate spokesperson. This means you need to learn as much as you can about your graduate programs and the issues confronting graduate students, faculty, and staff. So where do you start? When I first became Dean, I reviewed information and data related to graduate education e.g., on graduate enrollment, retention and completion, time to degree, stipend amounts, and financial aid. I examined temporal trends in these data and the contribution of each college to graduate

One of the first actions is to explore the possibility of joining the European University Association’s “[Refugees Welcome Map](#)” campaign, an effort to “showcase and document the commitment of higher education institutions and organizations in supporting refugees.” Other actions include: creating standards and best practices for the delivery of online graduate education programs; encouraging the use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) across all disciplines; creating opportunity for internationalization without traveling; and examining the relationship between micro-credentials and master’s and doctoral degrees.

CGS has published the proceedings of this Summit, including the panelists short papers and the final version of our “practical actions,” on the [CGS website](#). We hope you will read through these materials and think about how they relate to the future of graduate education on your campus.

enrollment and degrees. I compared our data to other institutions in our region, our peer group, aspirational institutions, and research doctoral universities in general. I relied on various sources for these data e.g., CGS reports, IPEDS, and the NSF Graduate Student Survey. I then developed a “mental” message that I relied on to describe graduate education at my institution and articulate its importance to the mission of my institution. I became the authority on graduate education.

Once I developed this message, I informed key campus constituents (e.g., Provost, Deans, Graduate Program Directors, Chairs etc.) about the issues (e.g., the need for competitive support packages; how graduate students contribute to teaching and research) and have continued to do so for the past 12 years. I met at least twice each year with the college deans, and department chairs and faculty as appropriate. At these

meetings, we discussed various types of data that related to their programs and the university in general (e.g., graduate enrollment numbers, degrees awarded, time to degree, stipend amounts, financial aid etc.). We highlighted key facts about graduate education and the accomplishments of graduate students on our website, in flyers (e.g., a 1-page fact sheet), newsletters, and brochures. We also developed brief graduate student success stories for the website and shared these with legislators. I forwarded articles on graduate education, which appeared in the Chronicle for Higher Education and the Council of Graduate Schools newsletters, briefs, and reports to campus constituents.

While the Provost is my direct supervisor, the President of the institution is an important constituent as well. I invited the President to participate in our key events. For example, I asked the President to welcome attendees at our annual Celebration for Graduate

Student Excellence and to congratulate doctoral recipients at our Doctoral Recognition Reception held at the end of each semester. The next day at commencement, the President and I went to the doctoral robing room to congratulate the doctoral recipients and their major professors just prior to the processional. I also met with the President's speechwriter to ensure that elements about graduate education were included as appropriate in his speeches and I sent suggestions for stories about graduate education to the Office of University Communications.

To be an effective champion requires vigilance and persistence. There is turnover in all of the positions I have mentioned, so as the Graduate Dean you will likely need to update and repeat your message over and over to new people and sometimes even to the ones who have been in place for a while!

## Your Graduate Student Applicants Are Talking about the April 15 Resolution

*Jeffrey A. Engler, Vice President, Special Projects, Council of Graduate Schools &  
Brian Mitchell, CGS Dean-in-Residence 2015-16*



You don't think your prospective graduate students talk about the April 15 Resolution? Here's an actual exchange from Reddit (find the full post [here](#)):

### Original Post:

*My friend was accepted into her number 2 school's graduate program, and was offered an assistantship. This is great, however, they said she must make a decision by this Friday [prior to April 15] or else she would be at risk of losing funding. Is this normal? By my understanding that would be breaking the resolution. Thanks guys!*

### One Response:

*Yeah, so, I mean schools can do this. It isn't like you and I are part of the body which could bring punitive damage against them. In fact, I don't know if such a body exists. It is just sort of lay of the land. I understand it as a really bad strategy. It made me toss out programs that I was considering - it sends a signal of desperation and shadiness (two things that will end up*

*hurting me down the road as a grad student). I made the choice to not go to a shady program.*

There are other examples as well, not to mention the conversations that are going on off-line. Aside from avoiding bad publicity, what are the intents and purposes of the April 15 Resolution?

The "[Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees and Assistants](#)," also known as the "April 15 Resolution" was developed by CGS in the 1960s to protect both the institutions that offer financial support to admitted students and the prospective students who receive them. The resolution has been endorsed or adopted by other organizations as well, including the [Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology](#), the [Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health](#), and the [Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology](#).

From the applicant perspective, a common deadline for acceptance of a financial support offer provides

them with sufficient time to receive and carefully consider all offers prior to making an important career decision. For the institutions and programs offering financial support, the common deadline ensures that all participating institutions will compete fairly for high-quality applicants, and that their scarce time and financial resources are not put in jeopardy. In the worst case, programs that do not adhere to the April 15 Resolution run the risk of pressuring prospective students into early commitments who may later renege upon their commitment when they receive an offer that better aligns with their career aspirations. Prospective students who are forced to retract their acceptance of financial support due to early commitment may feel as though their careers have been put in jeopardy even before they are started, especially in professional communities that are small. Requiring – or even suggesting – that admitted students formally accept an offer of financial support prior to April 15 puts both parties in awkward and potentially embarrassing positions.

Happily, the April 15 Resolution has proved effective. The vast majority of programs at participating

institutions abide by both the spirit and the letter of the guidelines, and public exchanges of displeasure like the one opening this article are rare. Program officers that give earlier deadlines are often simply unaware of the resolution and impose decision deadlines that may be arbitrary but seem appropriate, for example, two weeks after receipt of the offer. To combat the misinformation, CGS recommends that you reaffirm your institution's endorsement of the April 15 resolution – even if you are not formally a signatory member – and communicate this information to your graduate admissions community in a timely manner. A [draft letter](#) is available to assist graduate schools in the communication process. It can be sent out at the beginning of your periodic admissions cycles and again as the April 15 deadline approaches.

As with your own institutional policies and procedures, the April 15 Resolution undergoes periodic revision and renewal. Until the next such time that the resolution is reviewed, CGS welcomes your thoughts and concerns regarding the purpose and effectiveness of the April 15 Resolution.

## **CGS Seeks Applications for 2018-19 Dean-in-Residence**

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) established its Dean-in-Residence (DIR) Program in 1983. The program offers an opportunity for graduate deans, associate or assistant deans to spend an academic year at the Council's Washington, D.C. office. Each year one dean is selected from CGS member institutions to participate in the program to work with CGS staff and to engage in the on-going work of the Council.

Application for the Dean-in-Residence position is made by submitting a letter of interest, including mention of a specific project or projects that the applicant is interested in pursuing, and a curriculum vitae to the Council's president. Applications are accepted at all times, but to ensure the applicant's institution adequate time to coordinate sabbatical and administrative leaves, the Council encourages early submission. Applications can be submitted one year in advance of the year in which the applicant is

interested. Applications from associate or assistant deans should be accompanied by letters of support from their deans.

CGS provides a stipend to assist with relocation costs. Benefits are not included. CGS funding for this position is based on the assumption that the individual's institution will provide additional support through either sabbatical or administrative leave.

Applications should be sent to:

Suzanne Ortega, President  
Council of Graduate Schools  
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 230  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202-223-3791 (p)  
202-331-7157 (f)

For more information on professional activities and benefits, contact CGS or visit the [CGS website](#).



## 2017 CGS Annual Meeting Award Winners

### CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Biological and Life Sciences

Chad Johnston, *New Techniques Facilitate the Discover and Study of Modular Microbial Natural Products*

### CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities and Fine Arts

Leif Fredrickson, *The Age of Lead: Metropolitan Change, Environmental Health, and Inner City Underdevelopment*

### Gustave O. Arlt Award in the Humanities (Classical Studies/Archaeology)

John North Hopkins, *The Genesis of Roman Architecture* (Yale UP, 2016)

### ETS/CGS Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admission through Completion

University of Washington -- U501: Extend the Reach

### Debra W. Stewart Award for Outstanding Leadership in Graduate Education

John C. Keller, Dean of the Graduate College, Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Education, and Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development, University of Iowa

## CGS New Members

- **Austin Peay State University** (Tennessee) – *returning member*
- **Nazareth College** (New York)

## CGS New Deans & Titles

- **Chad Brooks**, Interim Associate Provost for Research and Dean, College of Graduate Studies, Austin Peay State University\*
- **Lisa Durant-Jones**, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Graduate Initiatives, Nazareth College\*
- **Steve Fetter**, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Interim Dean, Graduate School, University of Maryland, College Park
- **Kathleen Groves**, Executive Director, Graduate School, The College at Brockport, State University of New York

- **Kurt Jefferson**, Dean of Graduate Education, Spalding University
- **Barry Milligan**, Interim Dean of the Graduate School, Wright State University
- **Michael Puthoff**, Dean of Graduate Studies, St. Ambrose University
- **Richard Venneri**, Associate Provost, Saint Xavier University
- **Ian Waitz**, Vice Chancellor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **Matt Wood**, Interim Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies, Texas A&M University – Commerce

\*Deans at new CGS member institutions.

## 2018 Regional Affiliate Meetings

### Conference of Southern Graduate Schools 2018 Annual Meeting

February 22-25, 2018

Chancellor Hotel | Fayetteville, Arkansas

### Western Association of Graduate Schools 2018 Annual Meeting

March 18-21, 2018

The Palms Casino Resort | Las Vegas, Nevada

### Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools 2018 Annual Meeting

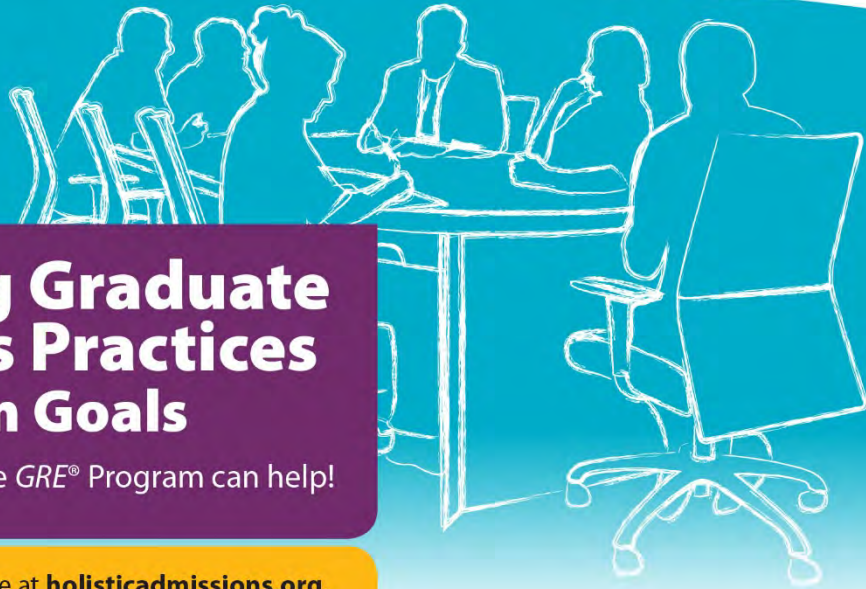
April 4-6, 2018

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel | Grand Rapids, Michigan

### Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools 2018 Annual Meeting

April 19-21, 2018

Omni Mont-Royal | Montreal, Canada



## Connecting Graduate Admissions Practices with Program Goals

Start the conversation. The GRE® Program can help!

Free discussion guide and more at [holisticadmissions.org](http://holisticadmissions.org).

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