

PRESS RELEASE

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NSF Grant Awarded for CGS Pilot Study to Identify Professional Development Needs of STEM Graduate Students

Washington, D.C. — The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) today announced it has received a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study the professional development needs of graduate students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The award was made through the NSF Directorate of Education and Human Resources ([program announcement NSF 13-555](#)).

Enhanced professional development of STEM graduate students has emerged in recent years as a high priority as evidenced by calls from students, employers, funding agencies, and graduate deans. The CGS pilot study will gather perspectives from stakeholders representing each of these groups to answer four key questions:

1. Beyond research skills, what other professional skills are particularly important for STEM graduates?
2. What STEM workforce skills needs are not currently being met by graduate programs?
3. How can resources and investments be most effectively mobilized to meet that demand through enhanced professional development?, and
4. What structures and learning environments are most effective in responding to the career tracks for PhD and master's students?

The project will include a survey distributed to 500 CGS member institutions, interviews with industry leaders, a workshop convening a wide array of stakeholders, a publication of project results that includes a framework for future action, and an online searchable database of existing professional development programs for STEM graduate students.

CGS President Suzanne Ortega stated that "master's and PhD students play a vital role across all sectors of the nation's STEM workforce. This project is an important first step in helping universities answer the call for a more strategic approach to their professional development beyond the bench or lab. Ultimately, this project will help position universities to shape quality programs that provide our students with the essential skills they need to succeed in industry, government, and business, as well as academe."

"This project will help improve our understanding of the professional skills most needed of today's graduate students," said NSF Assistant Director Joan Ferrini-Mundy, who leads the Education and Human Resources directorate. "Through its large and diverse membership, CGS can leverage project findings to result in model programs and meaningful improvements to graduate education that, in turn, will benefit the national STEM workforce."

The project will begin in summer 2014 and conclude in late 2015.

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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 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 2012 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees*