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Majority of Graduate Students Stress About Finances, Seek Information on Long-term Financial Security

Multiyear CGS-TIAA Research Initiative on 15 College Campuses Finds High Quality Financial Education Programs Effective

WASHINGTON, DC (November 15, 2016) – Research conducted by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in conjunction with TIAA, a leading financial services provider, found that 60 percent of master's students and 55 percent of doctoral students report feeling stressed about their finances. While most students were able to make ends meet, 38 percent of master's students and 36 percent of doctoral students worry about meeting their monthly expenses.

The majority of students surveyed reported having no exposure to financial education, and fewer than one-third are aware of any financial education programs available at their institution. However, graduate students are at an optimal stage of life to receive financial education, as high-quality financial education can impact degree completion rates, address concerns about educational loan debt, and help increase diversity in academia.

Despite concerns about making ends meet, when offered the choice, surveyed students indicated they are most eager to learn about more complex and longer term financial topics such as investing, selecting employee benefits, and retirement planning. This finding indicates that university financial education programs may be most successful when they are tailored to the needs and interests of the graduate student population.

The findings are from research conducted with 13,000 graduate students as part of a three-year collaboration among CGS, TIAA and more than 30 leading universities. Fifteen universities received grants to ensure a successful project launch, including research to inform campus program development to directly engage students. An additional 19 universities participated as affiliates in the program on a self-funded basis. The program showed that with relatively modest investments, universities can leverage their expertise in teaching and training, tap into existing campus resources, and address their students' unique needs and preferences for learning—something they already do every day as educational institutions.

Key lessons and data from this groundbreaking program are available in a new report: "Financial Education: Developing High Impact Programs for Graduate and Undergraduate Students," available on the [CGS website](#).

"Graduate education has long been one of the drivers of our nation's economic strength and vitality. At a time when global competition is only increasing, it's vital that the U.S. remain committed to maintaining its leadership in graduate education," said Roger W. Ferguson Jr., president and CEO of TIAA. "Central to this is ensuring students have the tools and resources they need – like those which came from this program – to pursue advanced degrees without sacrificing their long-term financial security."

"Financial education helps current and prospective graduate students make more informed decisions about their educational and career plans—from choosing degree programs, to deciding how much money to borrow, to evaluating job offers," said Suzanne Ortega, president of CGS.

“The innovations developed by our partner institutions showed that these programs are effective and needed.”

Each program developed during the Enhancing Student Financial Education initiative used different tactics, tools and resources that would resonate with their student bodies. Some schools opted for traditional approaches to financial literacy, including offering seminars on managing mounting debt and saving for goals such as a car purchase during spring and fall orientations.

Other schools chose to use more non-traditional methods. Loyola University Chicago and Cornell University, for example, hosted versions of Discovery Channel's game show “Cash Cab” where contestants fielded questions on issues like FAFSA and student loans. Winthrop University held a “tweet Night” in residence halls where students were able to live tweet with accounting, finance and economics professors. And the University of Kentucky hosted a public screening of the 2014 film *Ivory Tower*, which was followed by a panel discussion featuring experts in higher education and public policy.

The report identifies the most promising practices employed by each of the 15 participating schools to design results-driven financial education programs. Today, these practices and accompanying resources are available at <http://studentfinancialsuccess.org/>.

“This project has helped graduate schools and other university leaders better inform current and prospective graduate students about the value of advanced degrees as well as the financial options and implications of graduate study on debt and future earnings,” said Ron Pressman, Chief Executive Officer at TIAA. “Partnerships similar to the ones encouraged by this initiative can help ensure a future pipeline of students who are financially, as well as academically, prepared to consider graduate study.”

Through this project, CGS developed GradSense [gradsense.org], an interactive website designed to raise awareness among prospective and current graduate students about issues related to financing an advanced degree.

Research partners participating in Enhancing Student Financial Education ranged in graduate enrollment size and included a diverse mix of institutions: Arkansas State University, Cornell University, Eastern Illinois University, Florida A&M University, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Loyola University, Mississippi University, Ohio State University, University of Colorado System, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Kentucky, University of Maryland Baltimore County, University of South Florida, and Winthrop University.

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About CGS

(CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced 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.

About TIAA

TIAA (www.tiaa.org) is a unique financial partner. With an award-winning track record for consistent investment performance, TIAA is the leading provider of financial services in the academic, research, medical, cultural and government fields. TIAA has \$915 billion in assets under management (as of 9/30/2016) and offers a wide range of financial solutions, including investing, banking, advice and guidance, and retirement services.