



Engaging with the Council of Graduate Schools

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

**Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools
April 10, 2025**

To Lead in Tumultuous Times, we need three things:

1. Information
2. Community
3. Agency

Information



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New Administration: The First 100 Days

Keeping the graduate education community informed about executive orders, regulatory changes, and other transitions that occur within the first 100 days of the 47th presidential administration.

CGS Letter to the Trump Transition Team

CGS's initial letter to the President-Elect's transition team, introducing the organization and our research, initiatives, and priorities.

[Download Letter](#)

CGS COUNCIL OF
GRADUATE SCHOOLS

GRADUATE POLICY MONITOR

Tracking the First 100 Days
of the Trump Administration

[cgs.org/policy-advocacy](#)

Hello — Your Weekly Briefing on Key Developments in the First 100 Days

We here at CGS hope you are having a great week and staying warm in much of the country. This morning Linda McMahon's **nomination** to be U.S. Secretary of Education was approved by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Her nomination has been sent forward to the full Senate for consideration to be Secretary of Education.

In this edition of the Graduate Policy Monitor we give you updates on the recent Department of Education's Dear Colleague Letter on Racial Preferences, the budget resolution process, changes at the U.S. Department of State regarding visa waivers, and more. For additional updates and archived Graduate Policy Monitor issues, check out our **First 100 Days webpage**.

Congress Moves Forward on Budget Resolutions Despite Differences

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate are moving forward with separate budget plans. The two chambers must come to an agreement and adopt one of the versions of the budget plans which will direct various Congressional committees to begin the **reconciliation process**.

Key Budget Updates:

- On Wednesday, President Trump **backed** the House budget proposal, favoring a single bill over the Senate's two-bill approach. Senate Majority Leader John Thune plans to move forward with the two-bill approach.
- The Senate budget proposal would mandate the House Education and Workforce Committee propose changes to reduce the deficit by at least \$1 billion from 2025 to 2034, while the House proposal calls for \$330 billion in cuts during the same period.

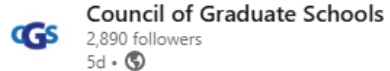
- Section 405 of the House budget proposal champions the **College Cost Reduction Act**. It also calls for increased accountability for universities and the need to "ensure that students and taxpayers receive a return of their investment."
- Here are links to the **House** and **Senate** budget proposals.

The First 100 Days of the New Administration

- **Executive Orders on DEI:** Recent executive orders restricting DEI initiatives are prompting universities to reassess policies while graduate deans work to uphold institutional commitments to access for all.
- **OMB Temporary Funding Freeze:** The Office of Management and Budget's temporary freeze on federal funding has created uncertainty for universities, delaying grant disbursements and impacting research operations.
- **NIH Indirect Costs:** The NIH's proposed 15-percent cap on indirect cost reimbursements has sparked legal challenges, with institutions warning of significant financial strain on research infrastructure and operations.

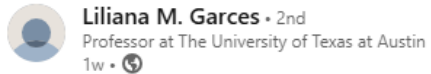
Social Media Communications on First 100 Days

Along with our regular weekly updates on what is happening in Washington, D.C., we have also shared resources and updates on executive actions.

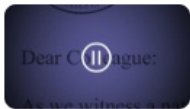


CGS is proud to partner with Dr. Garces and [EducationCounsel](#) on our ongoing work understanding and illuminating the current legal landscape when it comes to race and higher education. Given the alarming and rapid-paced messages coming from the presidential administration, it is critical that institutions of higher education understand what they are - and are not - required to do.

CGS members can learn more about the SFFA opinion and how to uphold both the law and their institutional values here: <https://lnkd.in/gCJ6-TZ4>



The February 14 "Dear Colleague" letter is far-reaching in its enforcement and a widely expansive distortion of the court's ruling. In responding, institutions should remain focused on areas that the Supreme Court addressed in ...more



Hitting Pause on the 'Dear Colleague' Letter
chronicle.com



 Council of Graduate Schools reposted this



NEW PUBLICATION

On February 14, 2025, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education issued a "Dear Colleague" letter regarding the Trump Administration's approach to civil rights enforcement in education, from preschool through higher education.

In this new piece, EducationCounsel's [Art Coleman](#) analyzes the OCR letter, and makes it clear that:

- Not all diversity, equity and inclusion policies and programs are unlawful, as the letter suggests;
- The letter's rendering of the Supreme Court's 2023 decision in SFFA v. Harvard is both skewed and incomplete; and
- The Administration's threat of civil rights enforcement is undercut by the ambiguity of the correspondence, which itself acknowledges that letters like this lack the "force and effect" of law.

Coleman concludes with suggestions for education leaders to consider moving forward.

<https://lnkd.in/gK2TjmEf>



EducationCounsel - Overreaching and Misleading: An Analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's Februar...
educationcounsel.com



57

4 comments • 33 reposts



This memorandum has been rescinded: <https://lnkd.in/ehvhwS4i>

A statement from CGS President Suzanne Ortega on the matter is forthcoming.



On January 27, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memorandum that "temporarily pauses" the obligation and disbursement of funds for all federal grants, loans, and federal assistance programs and other agency activities.

▶ This temporary pause will go into effect on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. EST. ▶

The memo can be read here: <https://lnkd.in/gF5Gw5eT>. A supplementary Q&A document, published today, can be read here: <https://lnkd.in/gzra7KdF>

Direct student loans, federal work-study programs, and Pell grants are not affected by this directive, nor will it affect Social Security or Medicare recipients.

A coalition of states, led by New York State Attorney General Letitia James, are in the process of filing a lawsuit to block the order from taking effect. Among the states joining the lawsuit are California, Illinois, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.

CGS will continue to closely monitor future executive action on this temporary pause and potential legal challenges to it. In the meantime, we encourage CGS members to compile information and data on the impact this temporary pause of disbursement of federal funds may have on their institutions.



1 repost

Community



- Town Halls
- Webinars
- Meetings
- Deans Discussion Board

Townhalls

March 12, 2025

- The impact of anti-DEI executive orders on campuses and how graduate deans and university campuses are responding.
- University strategies for diversifying funding streams to support graduate students amid current and future federal research funding constraints.
- Impact of executive orders on international student recruitment, international collaborations.
- Impact of immigration-related executive orders on Dreamers, DACA-recipients, and undocumented students.

April 9, 2025

- Managing Resources
- International Students
- Potential executive order to eliminate or dismantle the U.S. Department of Education.
 - VISAs Revoked
 - SEVIS Records terminated
- Impact of the reduction in the federal workforce, especially at the federal research agencies on universities and graduate schools.
- Strategy to protect the Grad PLUS loan program.

Webinar Schedule

- *Why Stories Matter*. March 5
- *The Value and Cost of Graduate Education: A Report and Toolkit*. May 12 from 2:00 – 3:00 pm ET.
- *Fundraising for Graduate Education*. May 21 from 2:00 – 3:30 pm ET.

Agency

- Begins with our core values and enduring commitments
- Requires Advocacy
- Depends on Small (and Big) Wins

Our Enduring Commitments

*...to build a graduate education system that provides access to high quality graduate education for **ALL** current and prospective students with the ability, curiosity, and motivation to pursue it*

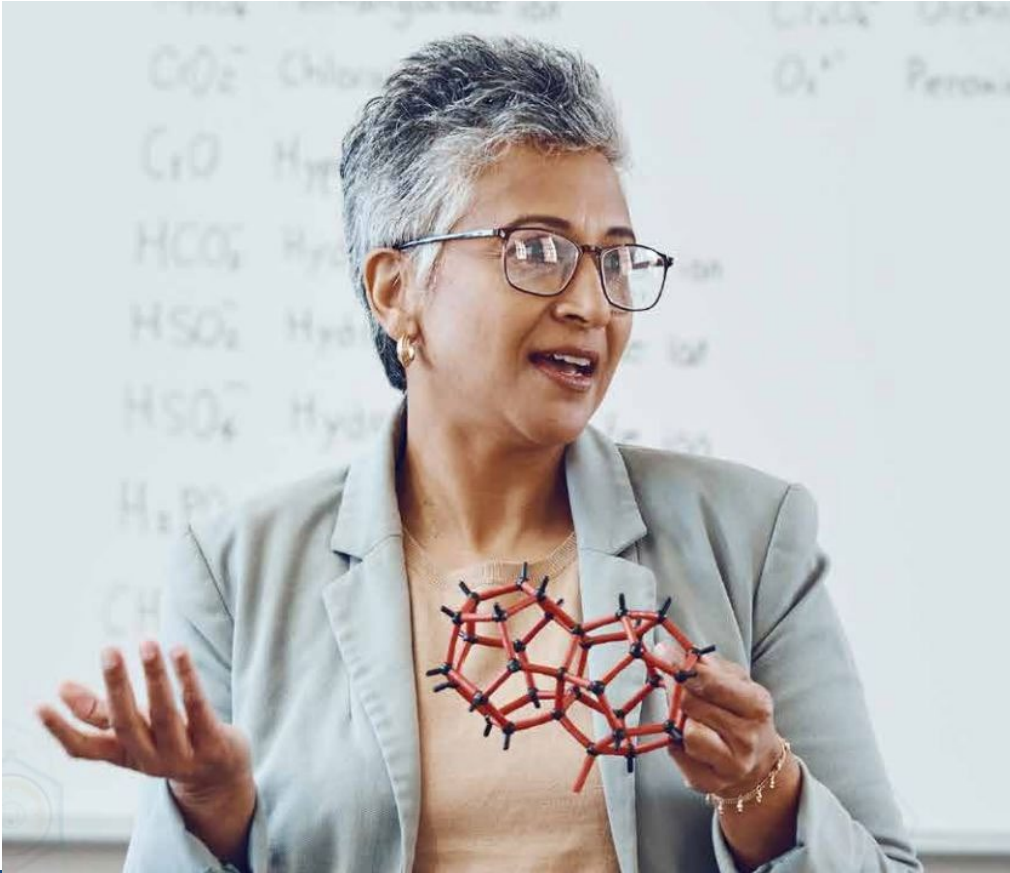
Our Enduring Commitments

...one that optimizes the use of resources to ensure access to and success in programs aligned with students academic and career interests

Our Enduring Commitments

...and makes transparent to all key stakeholders the cost of graduate education AND its personal and public value

Supporting Fair and Inclusive Graduate Programs: A Resource for Faculty and Universities



- Promising practices for supporting equity in changing legal landscapes.
- Examples from equity-minded graduate programs.
- Supporting tools and curated resources.

The National Name Exchange (NNE)

- NNE aims to expand access to graduate education for the purposes of creating a robust and nimble workforce
- Any CGS member institution in good standing is welcome to participate in NNE
- Almost 10,000 students from 112 schools were enrolled in 2024
- Scan the QR to visit the NNE web page on the CGS website and learn how the program benefits institutions and students
- Contact Matt Linton, mlinton@cgs.nche.edu, or Ali Robert, arobert@cgs.nche.edu with questions or to express interest



The Value and Cost of Graduate Education Report & Toolkit

- Since October 2023, a Task Force of graduate deans has been working together to share university-specific strategies for reducing costs, enhancing transparency, and improving student support.
- **Balancing Cost and Quality:** The CGS Taskforce on the Cost of Graduate Education aims to help universities optimize resources to maintain program quality while ensuring affordability and access for students.
- **Transparency and Advocacy:** The toolkit provides strategies for clearly communicating graduate education costs and career outcomes while outlining a policy agenda to support sustainable funding and investment in graduate programs.

Call to Action: The Value and Cost of Graduate Education

- **Graduate Schools:** Improve cost transparency, provide clear financial support details, support timely degree completion with regular guidance, and expand student services such as mental health support, career resources, and access to childcare and housing.
- **119th Congress and Administration:** Invest in graduate education by expanding Pell Grants, sustaining the Graduate PLUS Loan program, supporting public loan forgiveness initiatives, eliminating student loan interest and fees, extending employer tuition assistance, and implementing mandatory loan counseling for graduate students.
- **Funders:** Support research on the effects of stipend levels and types on student success.
- **Employers:** Advocate for investments in graduate education, support policies incentivizing tuition assistance, and explore opportunities to provide funded internships that enhance experiential learning for graduate students.
- **Students:** Make informed decisions, seek info on time to degree and career outcomes, use financial literacy tools

GRAD\$ENSE

- Originally launched in 2015, the site provides current and prospective students with financial information about pursuing a graduate degree
- Updated *GradSense* will launch in April 2025
 - National Financial Literacy Month occurs in April
 - Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, & Assistants (April 15th resolution) - an agreement among signatory CGS member graduate schools to provide graduate program applicants until April 15th to consider offers of admission that also include financial support

Graduate school is a journey. We're here to help!

From admission to completion, from career preparation to fulfilling job aspirations, CGS helps its members support graduate student success.

[Why Grad School](#)[Why Grad School?](#)[Choosing your Program](#)[Funding your Degree](#)[Managing your Money](#)

Tools to Help You Succeed

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Healthy Research Teams & Labs

A CGS Collaboration with University of Toronto

Vision: to foster welcoming, equitable, creative, collaborative, and innovative research teams and labs.

Project supported with a sponsorship from:



Howard Hughes
Medical Institute



Resources for Research Team and Lab Leaders

Statement of Commitment for Advisors

As advisors of graduate students, we commit to enact the shared vision and interconnected values of healthy research teams and labs by demonstrating the following seven commitments in practice.

Note: A variety of supplementary resources and tools to assist and support advisors in facilitating healthy research team cultures are found in the appendix.

- 1. Setting clear expectations for advising and mentorship and engaging in practices that help foster positive, productive, and fulfilling relationships.** We recognize the importance of supportive advisory relationships in facilitating personal, academic, and professional development of research team members.
- 2. Creating an environment where the welfare of all research team members is prioritized.** We recognize that our research team's best work is more likely to be achieved when members feel welcome, supported, and encouraged to strive toward professional and personal goals.
- 3. Explicitly stating our commitment to equitable practices.** We recognize that clearly stating our commitment helps to ensure graduate students are given equitable attention and opportunities.
- 4. Encouraging collaboration rather than competition within our research teams and labs.** We understand the important role that a collaborative and supportive environment has in fostering success and well-being of research team members.

- 5. Engaging in continual learning to refine skills in research leadership and management.** We recognize the importance of elevating our advising and mentorship, research management, and leadership skills through ongoing professional development.
- 6. Promoting professional development opportunities for a variety of career paths.** We understand graduate students have diverse career aspirations and we play a significant role in encouraging them to engage in a variety of professional development activities.
- 7. Encouraging students to be curious, innovative, and open in their work.** We understand that research integrity and rigor can be achieved when students are encouraged to be curious, collaborative, and open throughout the research process.

- Statement of Commitment
- Promising Practices
- Logos and a badge signaling commitment to students and prospective students.



**Healthy Research
Teams & Labs**



Call to Action and Next Steps

1. Visit the Healthy Research Teams & Labs web page to learn more about the initiative.
2. Encourage faculty to commit to creating a healthy research team or lab through the form on the CGS website.
3. Promote your commitment by using the logos in your physical environment and on your personal website and social media.
4. Share the initiative widely in your own graduate community.



Scaling a Systems Approach to Inclusive Graduate Research Environments

- Supported by the National Science Foundation's Innovation in Graduate Education (IGE) program, the project will test strategies for helping all students, and in particular, students underrepresented in graduate education, to succeed in doctoral programs.
- The project will support subawards to 10 member institutions to participate in the data collection activities.
- A call-for-proposals will be sent to eligible CGS member institutions in **April 2025**. The eligibility requirements (which will require institutions submitting proposals to have specific STEM doctoral programs of sufficient size) will be explained in the RFP.



From a letter to the President's Transition Team

CGS recommends:

- The incoming administration's support of U.S. Department of Education programs that benefit graduate students.
- Reinstating the eligibility of graduate and professional students to receive Federal Direct Subsidized loans.
- That the administration support the Graduate PLUS, Parent PLUS programs, and encourage policymakers to explore ways to reduce the interest rates paid by borrowers on Federal Direct Loans.
- The administration work in concert with the graduate education community to make graduate student mental health programs and wrap-around services a policy priority.
- While the expansion of the Pell Grant program is a legislative matter, CGS requests support from the presidential administration to expand financial aid to graduate students.

2025 Advocacy Day

- On April 24, 2025, CGS will host its **Annual Advocacy Day** in Washington, D.C.
- Advocacy Day provides members of the AACAP and the Board of Directors to engage the administration and Members of the 119th Congress on behalf of all CGS members.
- **Key Themes for Advocacy Day:**
 - Potential Funding Cuts to Education and Research Programs
 - Freeze on Federal Grants and Contracts to Universities
 - Proposed 15-Percent Cap on NIH Indirect Cost Rate
 - Future of GRAD Plus Loans

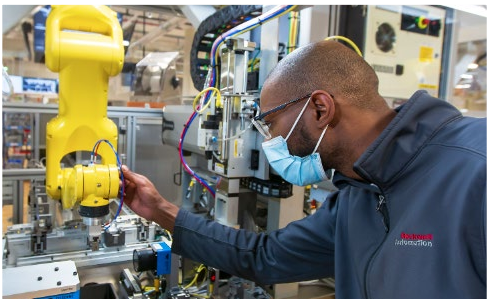
Master's Degrees at Work

- A communication campaign to increase positive communications and advocacy on the value of master's education to state and national workforce needs.
- Encouraging media members and policy makers to focus less on individual ROI and more on the community impact of workers with graduate degrees.
- Focus on sharing the stories of current students or recent graduates that are pursuing jobs in fields that depend on master's degrees:



Link to campaign webpage.

Advanced Manufacturing



K-12 Education



Cybersecurity



Museums & Culture



Biomedical & Healthcare



Master's Degrees at Work

Launched in 2024 with a webpage featuring:

- Facts about master's degrees
- Resources about master's degrees
- A toolkit for our members
- Stories from students on why they are pursuing their master's degree
- CGS policy priorities that would make master's degrees more accessible

Media Coverage:

Is a Master's Degree Worth it?

How to Make Master's Degrees More Affordable

- Mark Drozdowski, BestColleges, August 2024

Column: Graduate education grows careers and communities in Tennessee

- Sharon James McGee, Ph.D, Dean, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City Press, April 2024



sjsugradstudies • Follow



sjsugradstudies Did you know? Entry-level jobs requiring a master's degree are expected to grow by 17 percent over the next decade. With the nursing shortage, healthcare and biomedical fields will be vital to the health and wellness of communities across the United States, while data scientists are vital to the fields of business, healthcare, policy, and manufacturing, to name a few. See what graduate programs SJSU offers to support the healthcare industry. @CouncilofGraduateSchools. #SJSUGradSchool #SJSUGradStudies #SJSUGrad Students

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5 likes

January 26

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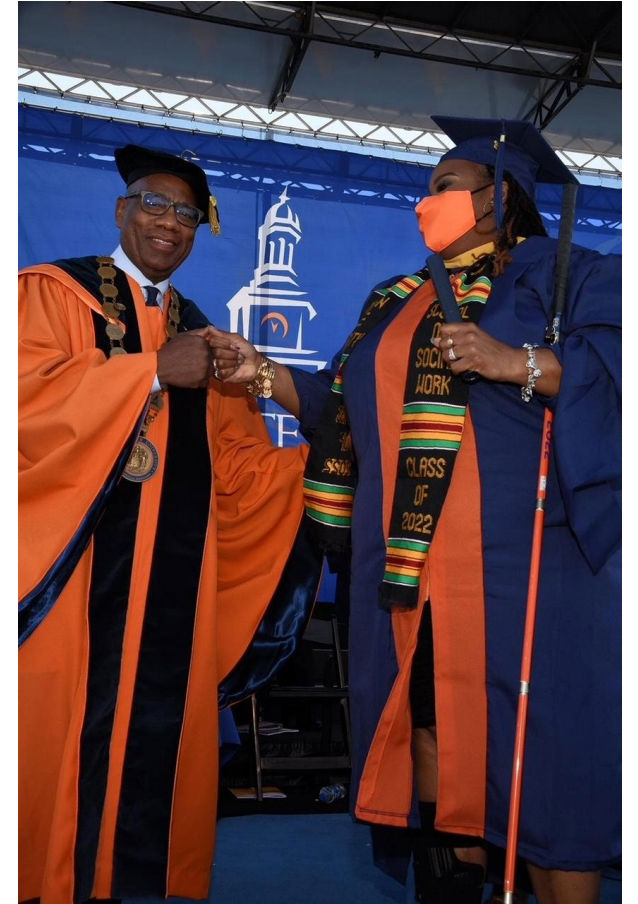
GradImpact: Master's Degrees at Work

A Clear Vision: Using a Master's Degree in Social Work to Empower People with Disabilities

“I’m striving for my community to have a safe space for people with disabilities to go to for encouragement or for resources to help them reach their goals. I’m trying to get everyone to realize that our disabilities don’t define us.”

Mirranda Williams, who is blind, on why she got her master’s degree in social work so she can work with blind seniors and help them thrive in their communities.

She received her master’s degree in 2022 from Morgan State University.



GradImpact: Master's Degrees at Work

How a Master's Degree in Social Work Helped Lindsey Powell Find Her Voice

Inspired by the impact of social workers in her community after a devastating tornado, Lindsay Powell received her master's degree in social work from Western Kentucky University in 2023.

She got involved in a research project to address the wellbeing of social workers and has used that research to advocate for better policies for social workers.

"I went into my master's program with a strong desire to make an impact on my community. I never imagined that I'd be presenting at national conferences," Powell said. "What was important about my degree is that it helped me find my voice."



GradImpact: Master's Degrees at Work

Bringing Work to School to Solve Real-World Challenges

Dupri Grimes received his master's in electrical engineering from Texas State University in 2023.

He worked full time for his employer SitePro while getting his degree, allowing him to find real-time solutions for clients in the water and communications infrastructure industry who benefited from his new skills with AI.

“I think getting a master's degree is 100 percent worth the costs. From a professional standpoint, it's really helped me out in my job, and I've been able to help our customers a lot more.”



GradImpact: Master's Degrees at Work

Confronting Racism and Prioritizing Black Women

When Erin Lee set out to get her master's in public health, she had an ambitious plan to do primary data collection for her thesis project about community-based doula work for women of color.

For her, it is important for public health research to be used to better train practitioners to understand the root causes of public health issues.

“People are saying they want to work with Black and Brown communities, but they’ve only learned a blanket version of what racism is. I think we need to better prepare practitioners to acknowledge and fully understand what racism is and how it impacts entire communities.”

Erin Lee graduated from the University of Washington in 2020.



We Want to Share Your GradImpact Stories

Join CGS in Demonstrating the Power of Graduate Education

Do you have a great story to share about the impact of master's or doctoral education? Do you know a graduate student or alumnus whose work has addressed a need or impacted their community in a positive way?

Send us your stories! Use the QR Code to learn more about submitting a GradImpact Story.



New Deans Institute and Summer Workshop



Join us in Portland in July!

Timely plenary sessions include:

- Making Conflict Constructive: How Universities Can Promote Productive Dialogue Across Divides
- We Will Survive: Protecting Mission and Values in Tumultuous Times
- Creating Inclusive Learning and Mentoring Environments: Professional Development in Inclusive Pedagogy