



Council of Graduate Schools
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Ph.D. Completion Project

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) invites proposals for grants to participate in Phase II of the Ph.D. Completion Project. Grant opportunities are available for individual institutions in three categories: (1) to create and pilot intervention strategies and to evaluate the effect of these strategies upon doctoral degree attrition patterns and completion rates; (2) to enhance and expand intervention and assessment activities begun under the Phase I period (2004-2007); and (3) to assess doctoral degree completion and attrition through the collection, submission, and analysis of data. This project aims to significantly increase Ph.D. completion and to provide practical models that can be promulgated as best practice for implementation by graduate schools nationwide, including strategies to improve Ph.D. completion for minorities and women and recommendations for implementing these strategies. Now in its second phase, the project has received renewed support from Pfizer Inc for activities in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics and from the Ford Foundation for activities in the social sciences and humanities. Institutions will be selected to participate based on the quality of their utilization of current research in proposing strategies for reducing attrition and increasing completion rates for all students, especially for minorities and women.

Background and Scope

Starting in 2004, three-year grant funding from the Ph.D. Completion Project supported significant university-wide changes at 21 “Research Partner” institutions in the U.S. and Canada. Research Partners collected data and implemented and evaluated institutional and departmental policies and practices affecting doctoral degree completion and attrition. Many more universities that submitted proposals have also actively participated as “Project Partners” in data collection and analysis.

The Ph.D. Completion Project builds on prior research that has identified a number of key factors believed to influence student outcomes in areas such as: selection processes, financial support and funding structures, mentoring, program environment, curricular processes and procedures, and the research mode of the field and its conventions (e.g. for incorporating students into the practice and culture of scholarship and for developing work-related skills) [*see supplemental table*]. The majority of the enhancements being implemented and evaluated by project participants fall under these six categories.

While the data submitted by participating universities have already contributed immensely to our national understanding of doctoral degree completion and attrition, it is too early to discern the impact that the reforms have had on Ph.D. completion rates and attrition patterns. More data are needed to understand the impact of policy and practice changes on students from underrepresented groups, and more recent data are needed to understand what effect the project has had, especially on late attrition, at participating universities and in selected disciplines. To these ends, Phase II (2007-2010) is designed to expand the number of participating universities and enable current partners to apply to extend and enhance activities for an additional three years. CGS recognizes that each program faces different challenges and therefore requires different solutions, and we encourage innovation both in the development and implementation of interventions and in the strategies for using data.

Selection Criteria (all proposals)

Institutions selected for funding to participate in this initiative will reflect a cross-section of both private and public universities that produce the bulk of Ph.D. graduates in science, engineering, and math (SEM)

fields and social science and humanities disciplines. Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to collect completion and attrition data and use these data to benefit prospective students, as well students currently enrolled in SEM and social science and humanities programs. **Proposals must define the doctoral attrition problem(s) for students, particularly minorities and women**, that each program is trying to address and articulate the specific sets of interventions that will be initiated to reduce attrition and increase completion within the specific institutional and program contexts. These interventions may include university-wide policies and resources as well as practices and policies tailored to each participating department.

Priority considerations in the selection process will include: the scope of the applicant's doctoral programs; their past record of effecting change through systemic interventions; a demonstrated ability to collect relevant data; the quality of the proposed interventions; and evidence of the institution and each department's commitment to sustaining project activity and evaluation beyond the three-year duration of the grant period. All proposals must demonstrate: 1) institutional commitment to the goals of the project through endorsement by senior administrative officials and concurrence of the project with institutional missions and strategic plans, and 2) departmental commitment to the project's goals and proposed activities through letters of endorsement from faculty of participating departments [*see eligibility requirements*].

Project Activities and Responsibilities

These projects will produce accurate data on attrition and completion rates, generate empirical knowledge concerning successful intervention practices, and serve as the basis for intervention models and future dissemination projects. To this end, the Ph.D. Completion Project will grant awards in three categories (*N* = *New Research Partners*; *C*=*Continuation Grants*; and *D*=*Data-only Partners*) to support the following project activities and responsibilities:

- Administer an exit questionnaire to all doctoral degree recipients and to those who leave their doctoral degree program, and share the results with department/program faculty and chairs. Submit individual exit survey responses to CGS for inclusion in collective assessment and results. *The exit questionnaire developed by CGS (administered by Research Partners in Phase I) and guidelines for administering an electronic version are available online at: www.phdcompletion.org. [*see commitments*] [*N,C, optional for D*]*
- Submit quantitative institutional data to CGS for presentation of collective results on a CGS website. [*N,C,D*]
- Conduct ongoing project assessment of the proposed interventions at the program/department level as well as at the graduate school level. *CGS and the Advisory Board will establish a core set of outcome measures and assessment templates, as well as common guidelines for their administration and suggested use. [*N,C, optional for D*]*
- Highlight the institution's participation in this national effort by: taking the lead in national discussions on the topic of Ph.D. completion (e.g. at CGS Annual Meetings and/or Summer Workshop sessions); sponsoring events at the participating institutions to raise the visibility of completion and attrition issues; fostering dialogue across programs, disciplines, and fields; and convening groups of students and faculty to discuss promising practices. [*N,C, optional for D*]

Eligibility

New Research Partners [N]

CGS member institutions that did not receive grants during Phase I are eligible to apply to for these highly competitive three-year grants of \$80,000. Approximately five institutions will be selected based upon demonstration of the potential of their proposed projects to have a significant impact on Ph.D.

completion, with special attention to increasing completion rates of underrepresented minority groups and women.

Continuation Grants [C]

CGS member institutions that submitted a proposal to participate in Phase I and have actively participated, either as Research Partner or as Project Partner, in the submission of project data are eligible to apply for grants to enhance and expand activities begun under Phase I. Approximately 22 universities will be selected to receive three-year continuation grants of \$50,000.

Data-Only Partners [D]

All CGS member institutions who meet the Selection Criteria (see section above) may apply to receive grant funds to participate in the submission and analysis of quantitative completion and attrition data. Approximately five three-year awards of \$15,000 will be made in this category. Individualized reports and benchmarking tools generated by CGS for new research partners and recipients of continuation grants will also be provided to data-only partners.

Requirements

To be eligible to apply for awards [N=New; C=Continuation; D=Data-only], institutions must meet the following criteria:

- Propose to engage in activities to increase Ph.D. completion in a minimum of: five programs drawn from the following broad SEM fields: physical sciences and mathematics, engineering and life sciences; and 3 programs drawn from the social sciences and humanities. *[N,C]*
- Be able to present, at the time of application, Ph.D. program completion and attrition data for the programs selected for a recent 10-year period. *[N and D (unless currently submitting data), please use attached template to report this data.]*
- Submit, at the time of application, completed factor assessments for the graduate school and each of the programs selected detailing current policies and practices and the duration of each. *[N and C (unless “Pre-project Assessments” submitted during Phase I), please used attached template to report these data.]*
- Show evidence of prior institutionalization of a reform effort in graduate education. [A non-exclusive list of reform efforts includes: CGS’s Preparing Future Faculty (PFF); CGS’s Responsible Conduct of Research program; the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID); the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation’s Responsive Ph.D.; NSF’s Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) and Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP); Mellon Foundation’s Graduate Education Initiative]. *[N]*
- Demonstrate the commitment of the institution to the project including a graduate dean willing to take a leadership role, program directors willing to participate, and the support, evidenced by a letter of endorsement, of the university president or chief academic officer. *[N, D; new letters of commitment not required for continuation grant proposals.]*
- Demonstrate the commitment of each participating program/department to the project by a letter of endorsement from a department chair or DGS who will be designated as program contact. *[N; letters not required for continuation grant proposals.]*

Commitments

To qualify for selection for awards [N=New; C=Continuation; D=Data-only], institutions must make the following commitments:

- Collect data on entering cohorts of students by field, race/ethnicity, citizenship/residency, and gender, and submit these data (aggregated by broad field) to CGS for the three-year grant period. [A commitment to collecting such data beyond the grant for a period at least equal to the duration of the

grant will be a priority consideration in the proposal review process.] Note: CGS requests these quantitative data in aggregated form to protect the identity of individual students in participating programs; CGS will not publish demographic data submitted in a way that reveals the identity of participating institutions.] [N,C,D]

- Conduct an exit survey of all students leaving the programs (completers and, **whenever possible**, non-completers) and submit completed individual surveys to CGS. CGS has developed a common set of questions to be used at all project institutions; the survey tool is available in short form at <http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/ExitSurvey-Short.doc> and in long form at <http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/ExitSurvey-Standard.doc>; instructions for online administration of either of these surveys will be provided to all participants. Universities electing to use independently developed surveys or modified institutional surveys must articulate a plan for submitting data to CGS for students completing or withdrawing from participating programs. [Priority consideration for continuation grants will be the successful administration of exit surveys and submission of data or data summaries to CGS during Phase I; institutions who had inadequate success implementing exit surveys must articulate a clear strategy for improving the administration and response rate of exit surveys.] [N,C]
- Develop an institutionally consistent policy on how they will track and report students who stop out or transfer to other programs or institutions; [N,C,D]
- Address how your institution will identify, track, and report on those students who enter as master's degree students and then enter Ph.D. programs; [N,C,D]
- Projects may select from the portfolio of optional policies and practices [see supplemental table] and/or propose other innovative practices not listed that they believe could contribute to a potential increase in Ph.D. completion rates. Priority consideration will be given to institutions that propose to newly implement at least 6 interventions in at least 3 areas, linked to research findings in Ph.D. attrition and completion, that the institution believes will increase completion and that fall within the categories of improved selection processes; faculty and peer mentoring; financial support; processes and procedures; program environment; and research mode of field; [N] OR
- Propose a plan for implementing evidence-based mid-course corrections and enhancements of intervention strategies proposed during Phase I; [C]
- Set targets for Ph.D. completion based on institutional research and propose a mechanism for evaluating the success of the interventions to be tested; [N]
- Convene graduate dean (PI), graduate school project staff, and departmental/program leaders at least once each year for an evidence-based discussion of completion rates and completion targets, the causes of doctoral attrition, and strategies for enhancing Ph.D. Completion; [N,C, optional for D]
- Report semi-annually to CGS on the outcomes of the data collection [D] and/or ongoing evaluations [N,C] via annual written reports and/or oral presentations at CGS annual meetings and/or summer workshops. [N,C,D]

Reporting

Annual Reports will be required beginning in December 2007 [N,C]

Timeline

March 16, 2007 (Friday)

- Deadline for completed proposals in all categories

April 17, 2007 (Tuesday)

- Award announcements after proposal review by external selection committee.

Spring-Fall 2007

- Provide for site visits by CGS project personnel and peer project PI's [C]

May-June 2007

- Submit finalized quantitative data [*N and D*] and second-round quantitative data [*C*]
- Submit first round of exit survey data [*see exit survey data submission below*]

July 2007

- Participatory session at CGS summer workshop
- Project Conference (PI's/Project Directors/Institutional Researchers)

December 2007

- Session on Ph.D. Completion Project at CGS annual meeting

Spring-Fall 2008

- Provide for a site visit by CGS project personnel and peer project PI's [*N*]

July 2008

- Summary session on Ph.D. Completion at CGS Summer Workshop

May-June 2009

- Quantitative Data required from Research Partners (second phase of data submission).

Submission of Exit Survey Data

Submission of completed exit surveys required in May, July, and December from May 2007 through December 2009 for universities that did not submit exit survey data in Phase I [*optional for Data-only institutions*].

****Deadline for completed proposals: Friday, March 16, 2007****

Page limit for New and Continuation grants = 10 pages (single-spaced, not including supplemental materials); page limit for Data-only grants = 5 pages (single-spaced, not including supplemental materials).

Because the Ph.D. Completion Project has the goal of impacting the general climate of graduate education at participating institutions and across fields, **graduate deans** (or primary institutional officials responsible for graduate education) **must be the Principal Investigators and primary institutional contacts** on these proposals. The graduate dean may appoint a project director and/or other staff to assist with project activities and responsibilities such as data collection, reporting, implementation, and evaluation.

Universities that submit proposals for New Research Partner and Continuation grants will automatically be considered for Data-only grants and need not apply separately for the latter.

Send completed proposals via e-mail (preferred) to: Daniel Denecke, ddenecke@cgs.nche.edu. Proposals sent via U.S. mail will also be accepted, but *must be accompanied by an e-mail notice that a proposal is being shipped* to:

Council of Graduate Schools
Ph.D. Completion Project
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 430
Washington, DC 20036

Questions? For more information, please contact:

Daniel Denecke, ddenecke@cgs.nche.edu, (202) 223-3791

Requirements Table

Requirement	New Research Partners	Continuation Partners	Data-only Partners
Administer exit survey to completers and, whenever possible , non-completers	X	X	Optional
Submit quantitative completion & attrition data	X	X	X
Conduct ongoing project assessment	X	X	Optional
Propose a plan for mid-course corrections and enhancements	--	X	--
Publicize project within university and to broader public	X	X	Optional
Engage 5 SEM fields and 3 social science and humanities fields	X	X	X
At the time of application, submit Ph.D. program completion and attrition data for the programs selected for a recent 10-year period.	X	-- *	X
Submit, at the time of application, completed factor assessments for the graduate school and each of the program	X	X	Optional
Show evidence of prior institutionalization of a reform effort in graduate education	X	--	--
Letter of endorsement, of the university president or chief academic officer	X	--	X
Letter of endorsement from each participating department's chair or DGS	X	--	--
Develop an institutionally consistent policy on how to track and report on students who stop out or transfer to other programs or institutions	X	X	X
Address how your institution will identify, track, and report on those students who enter as master's degree students and then enter Ph.D. programs	X	X	X
Set targets for Ph.D. completion and propose a mechanism for evaluating interventions' success	X	X	--
Convene graduate dean (PI), graduate school project staff, and departmental/program leaders at least once each year for an evidence-based discussion of completion rates and completion targets, the causes of doctoral attrition, and strategies for enhancing Ph.D. Completion	X	X	Optional
Report semi-annually to CGS on the outcomes of the data collection	--	--	X
Report to CGS annually on the outcomes of data collection and ongoing evaluations	X	X	--

* For Continuation Partners, the dash (--) means that they have either already met the requirements, or that these are required elements, but not in conjunction with proposals for Phase II funding.

Supplemental Table
A Portfolio of Optional Interventions

STUDENT SELECTION AND ADMISSIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-admission visits to graduate programs • Program completion data provided, in print or on website, for prospective students • Selection criteria in addition to GPA and GRE scores • Program information and requirements provided to admits • Program-sponsored new graduate student orientation
ADVISING, MENTORING, AND RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise graduate program handbook • Workshops or seminars about selecting or switching advisors • Periodic progress evaluations (written report and/or advisor/advisee discussion) • Web-based system for tracking student degree progress and milestones • Research activities or lab rotations early in graduate career • Teaching assignment early in graduate career (e.g., TA) • Workshops or seminars about teaching techniques or pedagogy • Clear articulation of program expectations/academic milestones • "Hint" or "tip" sheets for students about program completion • Student travel grants for conference presentations, etc. • Co-publication opportunities with faculty • Full-time program graduate counselor • Professional development workshops or seminars • Conflict resolution programs, workshops, or materials • Faculty training or workshops on advising and student supervision
FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING STRUCTURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merit-based graduate fellowships/scholarships, research or teaching stipends • Need-based graduate fellowships/scholarships, research or teaching stipends • Guaranteed multi-year support • System to track student aid (e.g., web) • Number of semesters students can teach limited • Information about external fellowships for graduate students actively promoted/shared • Mechanisms and programs to foster academic integration into graduate program of students on external fellowships (e.g. through required TA or RA appointments or program activities) • Completion/attrition data used by program in allocation decisions
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals for completion and/or attrition established • Family Leave Policies/Family Services • Personal/mental health/issues counseling • Inter/intra program communication (chat rooms, etc) • Milestone recognition: e.g. ceremonies for candidacy • Exit interviews of completers and non-completers • Student outcomes objectives established • Periodic review of graduate program conducted • Students involved in program evaluation • Graduate student outcomes included in program evaluation • Graduate student workshops held on topics related to completion
PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal gatherings of faculty and graduate students encouraged • Student/peer support groups encouraged or supported • Lounge, mailbox, or office space for graduate students available • Graduate students invited to serve on faculty committees • Faculty-student discussions about graduate program encouraged • Graduate student organization/group exists within program • Orientation sessions for graduate advisors and program staff

Data Tools and Templates

Completion & Attrition Templates:

Institutions submitting proposals as New Research Partners or Data-only partners (unless currently submitting data) must be able to present, at the time of application, Ph.D. program completion and attrition data for the programs selected for a recent 10-year period. These data should be submitted for each Ph.D. program using the Excel template provided on the Ph.D. Completion Project website, link below. Instructions for each template are also available on the project website.

<http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/Template-CompletionAttrition.xls>

Instructions for completing the Completion & Attrition Templates:

<http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/Instructions-CompletionTemplate.pdf>

<http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/Instructions-AttritionTemplate.pdf>

Factor Assessment Templates:

Proposals for both New Research Partners and Continuation Grants must include, at the time of application, completed factor assessments for the graduate school and each of the programs selected detailing current policies and practices and the duration of each (unless “Pre-Project Assessments” were submitted to CGS during Phase I). These data should be submitted using the Excel template provided on the Ph.D. Completion Project website, links below.

<http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/Template-FactorAssessment-Institution.xls>

<http://www.phdcompletion.org/tools/Template-FactorAssessment-Program.xls>