Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers
Context for the Commission

• Graduate degree holders are critical to our national workforce strategy

• People with graduate degrees contribute to a broad range of occupations

• And yet, employers, policymakers, educators, and students need to learn how to best put this talent to work
# Members

**Business Leaders:**

- **William D. Green**, Chairman, Board of Directors, Accenture
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**University Leaders:**

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- **Jeffery Gibeling**, Dean, Graduate Studies, University of California, Davis
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**Ex Officio Members**

- Kurt Landgraf, President & CEO, Educational Testing Service
- **Debra W. Stewart**, President, Council of Graduate Schools
Why is Career Transparency Important?

- About 2.6 million new and replacement jobs will require an advanced degree
  - 22% increase for jobs requiring a master’s degree
  - 20% for jobs requiring a doctorate or professional degree
- Advanced education levels are associated with higher salaries and lower unemployment rates
- Understanding career options may be an important factor in encouraging students to consider graduate education
The issue and our approach

• Little was known about how the work lives of graduate degree holders develop and how they are prepared for the careers they pursue.

• The report examines the views of three groups—students, universities, and employers—that directly observe and experience graduate career pathways.
What do Students Know?

• Prior to graduate school
  – There is perceived value in obtaining an advanced degree because it provides better career opportunities and increased income potential
  – But this perceived value is tied to limited information about viable careers
  – Prior to graduate school, students consulted informal sources – such as family, friends, and coworkers – but did not consult sources that are better equipped to provide career information – such as employers, career counselors, or placement offices
What do Students Know?

• During graduate school
  – Faculty are the primary source for career information
  – Careers encouraged by faculty are aligned with career interests of students
  – Teaching/faculty and research positions were the two most endorsed careers by both faculty and students
  – Positions in industry, government, and nonprofits were of interest to students but are endorsed less frequently by faculty
  – Very few students discuss options with a career counseling or placement office
What do Students Know?

• Following graduate school
  – Those with graduate degrees work in a broad range of occupations
  – Prior research shows that among new doctorate recipients, about one-half find initial employment in business, government, or nonprofit jobs
  – Our research shows that, even more so than those with doctorates, master’s degree holders work in a variety of settings
    • In business (30%)
    • In teaching/faculty (22%)
    • In nonprofit, public service, government, and research organizations (9% - 12%)
The Role of the University

• Critical in helping students find pathways through graduate school and into careers

• Graduate dean survey focused on four types of programs
  – Professional master’s
  – Research master’s
  – Professional doctorate
  – Research doctorate
Deans’ Perspectives: Career Guidance

• Providing career guidance to graduate students is not often a high priority

• Institutions lack focus in
  – Supporting graduate student career goals
  – Providing career guidance
  – Preparing graduate students for nonacademic careers
Deans’ Perspectives: Faculty Roles

• Faculty and advisors provide advice in two major areas
  – Helping students publish or present research
  – Helping students find employment opportunities

• But faculty are generally knowledgeable only about their own career trajectories which are focused on research and teaching
Deans’ Perspectives: Tracking Graduate Outcomes

• Tracking recent graduates into careers and informing faculty and students of these career paths is needed
• The majority of deans are dissatisfied with their ability to track outcomes
• Major impediments
  – Time, money, lack of personnel
  – Accurate contact information
Interviews with Employers

• Graduate degree holders bring value to their organization

• But some graduate degree holders lack certain other skills necessary for job success
  – Working in a team environment
  – Creating and delivering presentations
  – Business acumen
  – Project management
  – Communicating technical issues to a nontechnical audience
Interviews with Employers

- Employers advocate for stronger ties between graduate school experiences and workforce needs
  - There is a disconnect in the graduate school or program’s curriculum and employer needs
  - A multidisciplinary focus is needed
Recommendations for Universities

• Make early connections with students
  – Build relationships between K-12, community colleges, and four-year colleges

• Make career counseling services available to graduate students
  – Professional skills development
  – Needed resources
  – Guidance in preparing for a variety of career options
Recommendations for Universities

• Track career outcomes and job placement information for graduates
  – Track beyond initial employment following graduate school
  – Provide this information to faculty

• Broaden the focus of graduate education to include the development of professional skills
Recommendations for Employers

• Enhance and expand collaborative relationships with graduate education
• Make strategic investments in graduate education programs
• Provide support for employees pursuing graduate studies while employed
Recommendations for Policymakers

• Establish a Professional Plus Program
• Increase federal government support for graduate education
  – COMPETES doctoral traineeship program
  – New Integrative Graduate Humanities Education and Research Training program
• Create an advisory commission to support workforce priorities
Collaboration among universities, employers, and policymakers is critical in meeting the nation’s need for highly skilled talent with graduate level preparation.
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Materials available at: www.pathwaysreport.org