

# CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

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## STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021



Canadian Association  
for Graduate Studies

Association canadienne  
pour les études supérieures



# FROM THE BOARD

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“Cohesion is important at a time of increased public and political scrutiny around the role of graduate education. Canada is well served by an organization that supports administrators as they respond to change. The nation is well-served by an organization that recognizes current and potential impacts of graduate education on individuals, their communities and their world.”

CAGS Board Of Directors, 2016

## **Graduate education has evolved in the past decade.**

These shifts have taken place in a rapidly transitioning society. This new reality is accompanied by changed expectations from students, governments, and the corporate sector. It is in this context that graduate administrators are working to develop and deliver programs supported by up to date policies and practices that will serve students well, now and in their future careers.

Canadian Institutions have responded to these challenges with creativity and innovation. They scan for emerging trends with attention and vigilance, though the tendency is to focus inward on their own institutions.

Through CAGS, members have the opportunity to share information about successful programs, initiatives, and solutions to common concerns. Whether engagement on major policy questions or new practices suggested by colleagues, member participation in CAGS supports a high national standard of graduate education. Collaboration has the potential to support members’ work and outcomes of the programs they administer, it can shape the public profile of graduate education.

Promoting and facilitating engagement has been a part of CAGS’ work. It will be our primary focus during this planning period.

A core principle throughout the strategic planning process was to design a framework suited to both the needs of members and

the commitment to public advocacy. Through consultation with our membership, regional groups of deans and a strategic planning session of the board of directors, CAGS examined its role as a national organization and its purpose in promoting excellence in graduate education.

Our membership includes innovative and deeply passionate administrators. Our reach includes graduate faculty, partner agencies/organizations and graduate students. It is critical that CAGS provides leadership and supports activities that engage all constituents in a way that is relevant, meaningful and progressive. The Strategic Plan for 2016-2021 charts that path. It is outlined in the following pages.

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**Mission:**

CAGS is Canada’s national organization providing leadership, fostering community, and promoting collaboration to advance excellence in graduate education, research and scholarship.

**Vision:**

CAGS’ goal is to be recognized as Canada’s leader in graduate education, policy and practice to support the formation of individuals who, through scholarship, research, innovation and practice, contribute to the flourishing of societies in Canada and the world.

# STRATEGIC DRIVERS

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Strategic drivers are key factors that underpin the actions that CAGS will undertake to support the achievement of our vision. They provide a framework to align the central activities of the organization, to guide our planning in support of our mission and vision, and to track our progress.

## **Advocating for Graduate Education**

CAGS' central purpose is to promote excellence in graduate education. We understand that graduate education is instrumental in forming individuals who can apply their knowledge, skills and professionalism to the betterment of society.

It is important that CAGS help shape positive public perception through advocacy, strengthening relationships and building new ones.

This should take place with media and a wide range of organizations and institutions.

## **Actions**

- Informal consultations with membership to identify priority issues and the narratives that support those priorities.
- Articulate clear positions on the importance and relevance of graduate education through multifaceted outreach tools designed for a variety of audiences.
- Consult and engage with government, organizations and the public through meetings, speaking engagements and communications.
- Engage with government, agencies, and organizations to lobby for change, actions, and practices that support CAGS' mission and vision.

## **Performance metrics**

- Instances of how messaging (i.e. Graduate education makes a difference") is incorporated into projects and literature of stakeholder/partners' work.

- Number of CAGS-generated stories, opinion pieces that serve to inform and build understanding of graduate education in Canada, profiles of the people involved, and the contemporary issues related to it.

## **Raising Awareness and Profile of CAGS**

CAGS' goal is to be recognized as the voice of graduate education in Canada and as, the 'go to' organization for information and opinion. We initiate and respond to opportunities to undertake or partner in projects relevant to graduate studies and within our available resources.

### **Actions**

- Create a repository for information and resources relevant to graduate education in Canada that is accessible to CAGS' members and the broader community including faculty members, graduate students and the public.
- Build profile for CAGS through promotion of our activities including 3MT, prizes and awards, statistical reports, profiles of student successes, reports on best practices, and commissioned project reports.
- Increase CAGS' profile in multiple sectors through speaking engagements about graduate education, the current graduate landscape, the talent pool of highly skilled and knowledgeable graduates and what they bring to the Canadian and global labour force.

### **Performance metrics**

- Availability and use of new resources made accessible through CAGS.
- Participation of member institutions in CAGS competitions.
- Speaking engagements, meetings with organizations or groups.
- Member satisfaction with the activities of CAGS and perception of its impact

## **Promoting Transformative Graduate Education**

CAGS' focus is on understanding the current landscape, recognizing the drivers for change and the impact (realized and potential) on graduate education. We understand that pedagogy, assessment, learning outcomes and attributes are integral in delivering dynamic, relevant, high quality and high demand graduate education.

### **Actions**

- Undertake activities, including the formation of working groups, production of best practice papers, etc. addressing issues of interest and relevance to the CAGS membership and beyond.
- Partner with other organizations to expand our capacity to conduct research, gather information and generate material that will inform issues around transformative graduate education.

### **Performance metrics**

- Development of new partnerships and enhancement of existing partnerships
- Papers and resources produced as a result of research and collaborative efforts.
- New scholarly initiatives related to graduate education

## **Enhancing the Graduate Student Experience**

Inclusivity, diversity, and access are fundamental values to stimulate rich learning environments and the formation of strong intellectual communities that enable graduate students to thrive. CAGS recognizes that programs and strategies to support student success and development academically, professionally and personally are essential elements in enriching the graduate student experience.

Graduate students are at the core of graduate education and contribute in multiple ways to the vibrancy of our campuses, to research and scholarship, and to our communities.

### **Actions**

- Undertake projects related to issues that directly impact student success including supervision, academic support, health services and counselling, and other matters.
- Disseminate best practice papers, scholarly reports, data and other relevant resources through conference presentations and online fora.
- Engage with the Canada Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS) committee about the inclusion of survey questions relevant to assess elements of the graduate student experience that CAGS identifies as important.

### **Performance metrics**

- Projects launched and completed
- Use of resources from the website
- Session attendance at annual conference.
- Student satisfaction as determined from the CGPSS.

## **Supporting Graduate Administrators and Faculty Members**

CAGS supports its membership of graduate administrators through professional and leadership development, the sharing of best practices and the coordination of events/structures to promote learning, discussion and networking.

CAGS recognizes the essential role that faculty members have in advancing excellence in graduate education. To better engage graduate faculty members, CAGS will optimize access to resources, research, and professional development

### **Actions**

- Promote opportunities for sharing experiences and best practices through the annual conference, webinars and online fora
- Create a regular newsletter that highlights the latest contributions to the website and profiles interesting work being done by our members and stakeholders.
- Develop strategies to promote diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of graduate education.
- Coordinate and deliver a biennial New Deans Workshop alternating with an Educational Development Workshop for Graduate Faculty in association with the annual conference.

### **Performance metrics**

- Generation of new resources adding to our knowledge about inclusivity, diversity and access in graduate education
- Use of resources on the CAGS website
- Uptake and satisfaction to professional development workshops.

# A FORWARD PATH

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In order to carry out the elements of the new strategic plan we envision periodic calls to our membership to participate in CAGS' activities. This includes contributing opinion pieces, providing information resources, participating in working groups such as the current teams reviewing the dissertation and the comprehensive/candidacy exam. We look, also, to members to put forward ideas and actions for consideration.

Our strength is in our membership and our ability to fulfill our mission and achieve our vision relies on engagement of all stakeholder groups. This strategic plan is intended to guide the organization in the next five years and ensure that we move forward with purpose and with a cohesive approach to achieving our goals. The mandate is bold and directive but not overly prescriptive so that CAGS can be responsive to the dynamic landscape that characterizes graduate education.



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