

# Washington Insider

## Commission on the Future of Graduate Education in the U.S. Releases Report

On April 29, 2010, the Commission on the Future of Graduate Education in the United States released the report *The Path Forward: The Future of Graduate Education in the United States*. The report maintains that graduate education is key to U.S. global competitiveness, but the current system is vulnerable to losing ground as a world leader in education and research if a national strategy to increase degree completion and broaden participation is not adopted. The report also includes recommendations for universities, industry, and government to ensure that graduate school is a viable option for a growing number of U.S. citizens. Findings include:

- The number of U.S. jobs requiring a graduate degree is estimated to grow by 2.5 million by 2018 (including a 17% increase in those requiring a PhD).
- Projected population changes will greatly affect the potential applicant pool for graduate schools.
- In many science fields, domestic students comprise less than half of graduate enrollment.
- There is growing international competition for the world's top talent. Europe and China have begun to outpace the U.S. in the number of PhDs they grant, especially in science.

Among other recommendations, the CGS report calls for the National Endowment for the Humanities to undertake a study of the role of the humanities in the 21st century economy. According to the report, "Much of the policy on enhancing innovation and competitiveness has focused on STEM fields, but awareness of the role of the humanities in our national culture is increasing, including its impact on ethics and values, vitality, and competitiveness. . . . The role of graduate education in preparing future scholars and leaders in the humanities should be explored as part of the larger focus on national needs in areas such as language and culture."

The commission guiding the report included eighteen university and industry leaders brought together to examine the role of graduate education in sustaining and enhancing U.S. innovation and competitiveness in the 21st century global economy. The commission is a joint effort between the Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service. Additional information about the report is available at <http://www.fgereport.org/>.

## Federal Agencies Release "Open Government Plans"

On April 7, federal agencies released "Open Government Plans" detailing how they will make their operations and data more transparent and expand opportunities for citizen participation, collaboration, and oversight. In addition, each agency identified at least one "flagship initiative"—a signature open government innovation in the agency. The plans were mandated by President Obama's Open Government Directive issued in December 2009.

The directive also called on the White House's Chief Technology Officer and Chief Information Officer to create an Open Government Dashboard to assess the state of open government in the Executive Branch. The first version of the dashboard, issued in conjunction with the plans, tracks agency progress on the deliverables set out in the directive and links to each agency's Open Government Web page.

More information can be found at the Open Government Web page (<http://www.archives.gov/open/>) at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

## National Science Foundation Celebrates 60th Birthday; Offers Milestones of Discovery

On May 10, 1950, after enactment by Congress and a signature by President Harry Truman, the National Science Foundation (NSF) became an independent government agency. Its mission is to fund fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering.

In May 2010, in honor of NSF's 60th anniversary, the Foundation produced *NSF Sensational 60*. An update of the 50th Anniversary's *Nifty Fifty*, the new report includes "60 discoveries or advances that NSF believes have had a large impact or influence on every American life." Among the sixty are two that specifically reference research in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBE). One is called "Friends and Neighbors" and refers to the several longitudinal surveys and panel studies "that provide researchers with data on how American society functions and changes over time." Cited are the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (one of the Nifty Fifty), the American National Election Studies, and the General Social Survey.

The other SBE example is dubbed "Supply and Demand" and discusses NSF support for researchers "whose work has transformed economic policy." The report notes that over 40 winners of the Nobel Prize in Economics, including every one since 1998, has received NSF funding for his or her research. The work of Finn Kydland and Edward Prescott on macroeconomics and the business cycle and its influence on monetary policy is noted (they won the Nobel in 2004). Also discussed is the research by the 2009 winners Elinor Ostrom and Oliver Williamson for their work on how groups cooperate.

NSF has other activities associated with the anniversary, such as a special report on the agency's history, complete with an interactive timeline as well as an interactive feature which includes video interviews with several of the agency's past directors on the agency's future mission and challenges. All the items can be found at: <http://www.nsf.gov/about/history>. ■

*From the National Humanities Alliance's News (<http://www.nhal-liance.org/news/index.shtml>), the National Coalition for History's Washington Update (<http://historycoalition.org/archives/>), and the COSSA Washington Update (<http://www.cossa.org/communication/update.shtml>).*