

67th Annual
WAGS
Conference

Elevating
Graduate Student
SUCCESS:
Summiting
Peaks of
EXCELLENCE



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GRADUATE SCHOOLS

March 16–19, 2025
Magnolia Hotel | Denver, Colorado

67th Annual Conference

Elevating Graduate Student SUCCESS: *Summiting Peaks of EXCELLENCE*

All times are listed in Mountain Standard Time (MST).



Sunday, March 16, 2025

Time	Session	Room
3:30–4:30 p.m.	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
5–6:30 p.m.	WAGS Welcome Reception	Magnolia Lounge

Monday, March 17, 2025

7:30–9 a.m.	Breakfast	Magnolia Lounge
7:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
8 a.m.–4 p.m.	Exhibits	Magnolia Lounge
9–9:20 a.m.	Welcome to the 67th Annual WAGS Conference	17 th by Magnolia
9:20–10:30 a.m.	PLENARY I: What Is and What Can Be: Graduate Education for the Late 21 st Century	17 th by Magnolia
10:30–11 a.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge
11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Exploring Regional Challenges in Graduate Education: A Roundtable Discussion	Magnolia Lounge
12:15–1:30 p.m.	Lunch	Magnolia Lounge
1:30–2:30 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Innovations in Graduate Education: Streamlining Access and Expanding Opportunities	Stout
	Graduate Students at PUIs; Mastering the Art of Visibility	Larimer
2:30–3 p.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge
3–4:15 p.m.	3MT[®] Competition Preliminary Rounds Session 1 Session 2 Session 3	Stout Champa Larimer
4:30–6:30 p.m.	Poster Session & Refreshments	The Vault

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Time	Session	Room
8 a.m.–1:30 p.m.	Conference Registration	17 th by Magnolia
8–9:30 a.m.	WAGS ProQuest Awards Breakfast	17 th by Magnolia
8 a.m.–4 p.m.	Exhibits	Magnolia Lounge
9:30–10:30 a.m.	3MT[®] Competition Final Round	17 th by Magnolia
10:30–10:45 a.m.	Break	17 th by Magnolia
10:45 a.m.–Noon	PLENARY II: Preparing Graduate Students for Their Futures: Key Challenges Graduate Programs Will Face in 2025	17 th by Magnolia
Noon–1:30 p.m.	Lunch & Announcement of 3MT [®] Winners	17 th by Magnolia

Tuesday, March 18, 2025 (continued...)

1:30–5 p.m.	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
1:30–2:15 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Ascending Together: Building a Summer Bridge Program	Stout
	Why Can't We All Just Get Along? Find Out How to Spot, Address and Resolve Conflict in Advisor/Advisee Relationships	Champa
	Graduate Life and Diversity at SDSU	Larimer
2:15–3 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Scaling New Heights: A Team Approach to Supporting Complex Graduate Student Cases	Stout
	Chronic vs. Systemic "Impostor Syndrome." How to Tell the Difference and Improve Your Confidence.	Champa
	Graduate Student Evaluations of Academic Standing Communication	Larimer
3–3:30 p.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge
3:30–4:45 p.m.	PLENARY III: Thriving (Not Surviving) in Graduate School: Creating Opportunities and Embracing Challenges for a Productive and Meaningful Journey	17 th by Magnolia
5:30–8:30 p.m.	Wynkoop Social: Brews, Views, and Graduate School News	Wynkoop Brewing Company

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Time	Session	Room
7:15–8:45 a.m.	Breakfast	Magnolia Lounge
8 a.m.–Noon	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
8 a.m.–Noon	Exhibits	Magnolia Lounge
8:30–9:15 a.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Evolving Mentorship at ASU: The Development of a Multi-tiered Model for Inclusive Mentoring	Stout
	Challenges and Solutions in Moving Stacked Degrees from Policy to Practice	Champa
	Graduate Student Mental Health – Providing Support and Guidance Through Intentional Programming	Larimer
9:15–10 a.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Supporting Graduate Student Success: A Comprehensive Approach at UC Riverside	Stout
	Building an Accessible Graduate Experience: Addressing Neurodiversity and Mental Health in Graduate Programs	Larimer
	Working Toward Inclusive and Fair Admissions Policies for 3-year Bachelor's Degrees	Champa
10–10:30 a.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge
10:30–10:45 a.m.	WAGS Business Report	17 th by Magnolia
10:45 a.m.–Noon	PLENARY IV: Looking Back on the Lost Years: A Reflection on Graduate Education from 2050	17 th by Magnolia
Noon	Closing Session & Adjourn	17 th by Magnolia



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Elevating Graduate Student **SUCCESS:** *Summiting Peaks of* **EXCELLENCE**

Sunday, March 16, 2025

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7:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
8 a.m.–4 p.m.	Exhibits	Magnolia Lounge
9–9:20 a.m.	Welcome to the 67th Annual WAGS Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeri-Anne Lyons, President, Western Association of Graduate Schools; Associate Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate School, University of Northern Colorado 	17 th by Magnolia
9:20–10:30 a.m.	PLENARY I: What is and What Can Be: Graduate Education for the Late 21st Century <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suzanne Ortega, President, Council of Graduate Schools 	17 th by Magnolia
10:30–11 a.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge
11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Exploring Regional Challenges in Graduate Education: A Roundtable Discussion Join us for an interactive roundtable discussion focused on the unique challenges facing graduate education across different states. Attendees will break into smaller groups by region to identify key issues specific to their areas and explore how regional differences impact graduate education.	Magnolia Lounge
12:15–1:30 p.m.	Lunch	Magnolia Lounge

Time	Session Information	Room
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1:30–2:30 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Innovations in Graduate Education: Streamlining Access and Expanding Opportunities

Stout

- Janet Duke, Associate Director, Graduate Program Support, Arizona State University
- Amanda Morales-Calderon, Associate Director, Curriculum and Format, Arizona State University

Arizona State University (ASU) has redefined entry points for graduate education by leveraging innovative processes and technologies aligning with its inclusivity and success mission. This presentation will showcase three transformative initiatives to simplify graduate admissions while expanding opportunities for students and academic units.

1. ASU Personalized Graduate Admissions: This initiative automates graduate admission offers for eligible ASU undergraduate students in their graduating semester. Students receive personalized emails with program options mapped to their undergraduate degree, enabling them to transition into graduate studies seamlessly. Academic units can define criteria and select graduate programs for inclusion, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and program needs.
2. Stackable Credentials: This initiative enhances students' ability to build personalized educational programs. ASU's processes facilitate stacking graduate credentials, enabling students to tailor their academic journeys and meet evolving career demands.
3. Streamlined Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) Admission: This initiative allows units to review and admit qualified undergraduate AMP participants in their final semester to approved graduate programs. Students can request their preferred start term and mode of instruction without the need to complete an application, creating a streamlined and flexible transition into the master's program.

By integrating automation, program mapping, and flexible options, ASU fosters greater access to advanced education while addressing workforce needs. Attendees will gain insights into the design, implementation, and outcomes of these initiatives and strategies for adopting similar innovations at their institutions.

Graduate Students at PUIs; Mastering the Art of Visibility

Larimer

- Weston Shipman, President of Graduate Student Association, Central Washington University
- Annabel Morris, Vice President of Graduate Student Association, Central Washington University
- Zack Arneson, Treasurer of Graduate Student Association, Central Washington University
- Emily Kirpach, Graduate Council Liaison for Graduate Student Association, Central Washington University
- Lydia Smaczarz, Secretary of Graduate Student Association, Central Washington University

This panel brings together a diverse group of graduate students to share their experiences at a primarily undergraduate institution (PUI). As regional comprehensive institutions increasingly focus on elevating the undergraduate experience, graduate students at PUIs often navigate an academic and professional environment that significantly differs from their undergraduate peers. Panelists will discuss the challenges and opportunities they have encountered, including balancing workloads with teaching and research responsibilities, forging relationships with faculty and students, and navigating limited support and resources.

Panelists will also reflect on how their experiences at PUIs have shaped their academic and professional development. While graduate students at PUIs may have fewer opportunities for traditional research collaborations or specialized training, many find themselves working in close-knit communities where they develop strong leadership skills, gain valuable teaching experience, and form meaningful connections with faculty, staff, and students. The panel will highlight the ways these environments can foster interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation, and elevate both graduate and undergraduate student success.

By reflecting on these experiences, this panel aims to shed light on the challenges and rewards of pursuing graduate education at a PUI—helping Graduate Deans, staff and supportive administration to improve the graduate experience at their respective institutions, emphasizing the value of mentorship, institutional support, and opportunities for professional development. This discussion will contribute to a broader understanding of how PUIs can better serve graduate students and empower them to excel within and beyond academic realities.

2:30–3 p.m.

Break

Magnolia Lounge

AGENDA

Time	Session Information	Room
3-4:15 p.m.	3MT® Competition Preliminary Rounds Session 1 Session 2 Session 3	Stout Champa Larimer

4:30-6:30 p.m.	Poster Session & Refreshments	The Vault
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Tuesday, March 18, 2025

8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	Conference Registration	17 th by Magnolia
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10:30-10:45 a.m.	Break	17 th by Magnolia

10:45 a.m.-Noon	PLENARY II: Preparing Graduate Students for Their Futures: Key Challenges Graduate Programs Will Face in 2025	17 th by Magnolia
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• Maren Wood, CEO & Director, Center for Graduate Career Success

Higher Education is in flux as we await to see what policies the new administration will enact. However, what we do know is that many of the current challenges facing graduate programs will continue.

In this plenary session, Dr. Maren Wood will highlight trends that graduate programs should be watching closely in the next four years, including:

- Higher education to workforce: The new administration will continue to scrutinize graduate education and insist upon evidence that these degrees help alumni build careers.
- A challenging job market for international students: Over 70% want to remain in the United States to work after graduation (at least for a few years), but only 23% secure employment through OPT.
- Adapting to student needs post-COVID: Graduate students expect that their institution will provide them with career support tailored to their unique needs and that align with their learning preferences.

To ensure the long-term viability of graduate programs, institutions must prepare graduate students for their futures and address these key challenges in 2025.

Noon-1:30 p.m.	Lunch & Announcement of 3MT® Competition Winners	17 th by Magnolia
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1:30-5 p.m.	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
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Save-the-Date

GEWL Academy
March 28-29, 2026
The Coeur d'Alene

Time

Session Information

Room

1:30–2:15 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Ascending Together: Building a Summer Bridge Program

Stout

- Ashleigh Anderson, Director of Graduate Success, Oregon State University
- Elise Hohensee, Special Initiatives Coordinator, Oregon State University

The transition to graduate school can be daunting for new graduate students. Summer bridge programs offer a crucial opportunity to support incoming graduate students in navigating academic expectations, building community, and honing critical skills. This presentation highlights the development and delivery of the Graduate Summer Step program, designed to ease the transition into graduate studies at Oregon State University.

We will explore the key components of creating a summer bridge program tailored to diverse graduate student needs, from establishing program goals to creating community. Drawing on our experiences, we will discuss strategies for effective execution, including balancing academic and professional development with community-building activities. Iterative improvements based on participant feedback and outcomes will also be detailed, emphasizing the importance of adaptability. Finally, we will address approaches to assess and communicate the program's impact to stakeholders.

By sharing lessons learned, challenges encountered, and successful practices, this session aims to empower graduate school administrators to create or refine summer bridge programs at their institutions. Attendees will leave with actionable insights into supporting graduate student success through thoughtful program design and delivery.

Why Can't We All Just Get Along? Find Out how to Spot, Address and Resolve Conflict in Advisor/Advisee Relationships

Champa

- Leslie Blood, Director for Graduate Community and Program Development, Colorado University-Boulder

Everyone is aware of the potential for tense and challenging relationships between advisors and advisees. Whether the issues are big or small, stressful relationships impair performance, and most academics already are struggling to find enough time in the day to fulfill all their obligations. Instead of spending hours trying to "fix" complicated relationships, why don't we just figure out how to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications in the first place? Today we will learn how to spot communication breakdowns before they become problematic, properly address performance needs and expectations (time, environment, language, accountability, and clarity) and resolve common frustrations while avoiding similar pitfalls in the future. This talk will not only give you insight to the most prevalent graduate student complaints, but you will also learn conflict resolution tactics and be able apply innovative strategies at your institution. Let's jump in...

Graduate Life and Diversity at SDSU

Larimer

- Henry Schweichler, Associate Director - Office for Graduate Life and Diversity, San Diego State University

In this presentation, I will share the history, mission, vision, and resources for the Office of Graduate Life and Diversity (GLaD) at San Diego State University (SDSU), one of the institution's first graduate support services established in Fall 2021. We are dedicated to enriching the graduate experience through a diverse array of personal, professional, academic, mental health, and social resources. We strive to enhance retention and bridge equity gaps for historically underrepresented and underserved students by fostering an environment of inclusion, equity, and intellectual growth.

This presentation will review our mixed-methods approach to evaluating outcomes and share insights into how GLaD fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion. Key initiatives include the Graduate Student Writing (GSW) Center, which provides virtual and in person one-on-one consultations with writing experts, interactive workshops, retreats, and weekend dissertation bootcamps. GLaD also offers professional development workshops that prepare students for the competitive job market by bridging the gap between academia and industry. Recognizing the stresses of graduate education, GLaD provides mental health support through "Mental Health with Mario" workshops, "Talk It Out" sessions, and dedicated relaxation spaces. Additionally, community-building initiatives cultivate a sense of belonging, fostering a supportive environment where students from varied backgrounds feel valued and thrive.

Attendees will learn about (learning outcomes):

- Participants will leave with actionable insights into:
 - The origins and funding of GLaD and its strategic role in advancing graduate success
- Key services and supports designed to meet graduate students' needs.
- Outcomes data highlighting the effectiveness of GLaD's programs in supporting diverse graduate populations.

Time	Session Information	Room
2:15–3 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Scaling New Heights: A Team Approach to Supporting Complex Graduate Student Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Hanson, Director of Graduate Enrollment Services, Oregon State University • Ashleigh Anderson, Director of Graduate Success, Oregon State University <p>What happens when a graduate student's academic journey hits a roadblock that typical support systems cannot resolve? In this session, the presenters will share why and how a team was formed within Oregon State University's Graduate School to address complex cases including: when students' academic progress is impeded; where graduate level policy/procedure expertise is required; where multiple units are involved; and/or where policy exceptions might be appropriate. They will share how their work intersects with other university units and care teams in support of graduate students, and they will discuss the strategies and technologies they employ to identify, manage, and track these exceptional cases. Participants will engage in discussion about how their own universities navigate complex student cases where Graduate School expertise is needed.</p>	Stout
	Chronic vs. Systemic "Impostor Syndrome." How to Tell the Difference and Improve Your Confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leslie Blood, Director for Graduate Community and Program Development, Colorado University-Boulder <p>This is "not your mother's" Impostor Syndrome talk. In fact, there is no formal diagnosis for Impostor Syndrome which means...it's something else entirely. However, if you need to fill an auditorium, just advertise an impostor talk or workshop and you are guaranteed to have a full house. This means, many academics connect with Impostor Syndrome even when they have a strong history of success and respected expertise. Today we are going to talk about the difference between paralyzing doubt and systemic Impostor Syndrome. In short, you may not be the problem, it might just be your environment. Find out what you can do to improve your relationship with research and change the "sink or swim" culture of academia at your institution. Ready? Let's begin.</p>	Champa
	Graduate Student Evaluations of Academic Standing Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Vickers, Dean of Graduate Studies, California State University, San Bernardino • April Lane, Graduate Student Resource Specialist, California State University, San Bernardino <p>The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of graduate student academic standing communication in line with Waltenbury et al.'s (2018) research on psychologically attuned university communications. Waltenbury et al.'s work was particularly concerned with the effect of academic standing letters on post-secondary student retention and self-concept. Taking Waltenbury et al.'s and Brady's (2024) recommendations into account, we revised our academic standing letter that graduate students on academic notice receive. In this study we seek to understand graduate student perceptions of the revised letter. Data collection involved three focus groups comprised of a total of 12 graduate students. Focus group questions were adapted from Brady's (2024) focus group protocol including questions that ask graduate students to describe the letter; explain their emotional reactions to the letter; point out aspects of the letter that are helpful, confusing, effective, and ineffective; and to state how they would change the letter.</p> <p>Findings detail graduate student perceptions of the academic standing letter that include textual, structural, and tonal aspects. The focus group participants also indicated that the letter lacked audience design, including their input that it should be more personal rather than generic as well as mitigating the emotional response to struggling academically as a graduate student. Implications include recommendations for revisions to graduate student academic standing letters that encourage retention and belonging even in the face of academic challenges. Further study should include more focus group participants and the inclusion of survey data that can reach a larger graduate student population.</p>	Larimer
3–3:30 p.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge

Time	Session Information	Room
3:30–4:45 p.m.	PLENARY III: Thriving (not surviving) in Graduate School: Creating Opportunities and Embracing Challenges for a Productive and Meaningful Journey • Karen P. DePauw, Vice President Emerita and Dean Emerita, Virginia Tech The graduate education experience has often been described as a journey of survival. Although the time spent as a graduate student is most likely challenging and a time of potential significant changes in one's life, the experience of earning a post baccalaureate degree(s) should include a focus on opportunities for thriving, health/wellness and success. Graduate school deans can play an important role in building an inclusive and affirming community and providing opportunities for graduate students to achieve a productive and meaningful journey. Among the possibilities are the development of programs, courses/workshops, and communities for professional preparation, communication, pedagogy, health/wellness, ethics, global perspectives, inclusion/diversity, interdisciplinary education, and more.	17 th by Magnolia
5:30–8:30 p.m.	Wynkoop Social: Brews, Views, and Graduate School News	Wynkoop Brewing Company
Wednesday, March 19, 2025		
7:15–8:45 a.m.	Breakfast	Magnolia Lounge
8 a.m.–Noon	Conference Registration	Magnolia Lounge
8 a.m.–Noon	Exhibits	Magnolia Lounge

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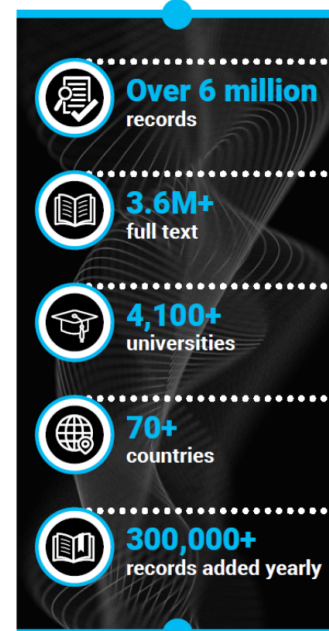
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Time	Session Information	Room
8:30–9:15 a.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS Evolving Mentorship at ASU: The Development of a Multi-tiered Model for Inclusive Mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amanda Athey, Director of Professional Development and Engagement, Arizona State University <p>This presentation explores the evolution of mentoring programs within the Graduate College at ASU, beginning with the establishment of the Outstanding Faculty Mentor Awards (OFMA) and culminating in the formation of the Graduate Faculty Mentor Academy (GFMA). With the institutional mission of inclusivity and academic excellence at its core, ASU has worked diligently to provide meaningful mentorship opportunities tailored to the diverse needs of its graduate and postdoctoral populations.</p> <p>The timeline of mentoring initiatives in the Graduate College at ASU traces critical shifts, starting with the inception of the OFMA program. In 2020, with the formation of the GFMA, we entered a new era of mentorship, driven by a desire to better understand the mentoring landscape for students and resulting in a Mentoring Needs Assessment. More recently, these efforts have culminated in the development of the multi-tiered Mentoring Matters model.</p> <p>The presentation will outline key milestones in this journey, including the shift away from a formal model in 2020 in favor of a more flexible, responsive framework. The Mentoring Matters model is integral in identifying mentorship principles, developing best practices that are rooted in ASU's unique context, organizing panels exploring topics like integrating CIMER curriculum with the goal of remaining responsive to dynamic changes in program formats and expectations for mentees.</p> <p>Key highlights will include a deeper dive into the integration of initiatives like the Community Advocates Peer Mentor Program, local case studies and future workshops into the Mentoring Matters model.</p>	Stout
	Challenges and Solutions in Moving Stacked Degrees from Policy to Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeremy Davis, Director of Academic Affairs and Policy, University of Washington Jesse Knappenberger, Director of Graduate Enrollment Management Services, University of Washington <p>Over the past three years, the University of Washington established the policy and procedures to establish “stacked” Masters and Practice Doctorate degrees, in which students can complete two or more graduate certificates in combination with a capstone to earn a graduate degree. We expect this model to improve access, especially for working adults. There has been considerable enthusiasm for this opportunity among our academic programs, and we now have multiple program proposals near completion and our first active program for which students have begun their coursework in Autumn 2024.</p> <p>While it is too early to share student success outcomes, in this presentation we will share the challenges and opportunities that arose through the process of getting these programs organized and implemented. Areas of discussion will include working with registrars, setting expectations with programs, establishing coordination across certificate-offering programs, financial aid and visa sponsorship, navigating application processes, and establishing and enforcing academic expectations.</p> <p>We hope this presentation will serve as an opportunity for Graduate Schools considering stacked degrees to learn what to prepare for, and for representatives from Graduate Schools who have launched their programs to share their own challenges and solutions.</p>	Champa
	Graduate Student Mental Health Providing Support and Guidance Through Intentional Programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bill Mahoney, Associate Dean, Graduate Student Affairs, University of Washington <p>Graduate students have reported an escalating prevalence of mental health concerns. These concerns encompass a wide range of issues, including the achievement of program milestones, career development, and community support. Ultimately, graduate students are experiencing heightened levels of stress tied to their educational experience. As mentors and administrators, our primary responsibility is to provide listening ears, support, and access to relevant resources. In this session, we will address this issue and demonstrate practical strategies for incorporating messages of support into our workshops and counseling sessions. Furthermore, we will emphasize the importance of extending support to both trainees and their mentors. By addressing this topic, we can effectively dismantle barriers within individual programs and schools, fostering a supportive and encouraging environment for our trainees as they navigate the challenges of graduate school. This supportive environment will empower our trainees to become prepared and successful professionals.</p>	Larimer

Time	Session Information	Room
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9:15–10 a.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Supporting Graduate Student Success: A Comprehensive Approach at UC Riverside

Stout

• Dawn Loyola, Director, GradSuccess, University of California, Riverside

Graduate students today navigate an increasingly complex and ever-changing academic environment. How can universities best support their success academically, personally, and professionally? In this session, you will learn how UC Riverside fosters graduate student and postdoctoral scholar success through GradSuccess, a unique and comprehensive suite of community-building and professional development opportunities.

Within the Graduate Division, five distinct programs are housed under the GradSuccess umbrella: the Graduate Writing Center, the Graduate Student Resource Center, GradQuant, the Teaching Assistant Development Program, and the Graduate Student Mentorship Program. These programs provide multiple avenues for student engagement, including professional development workshops, certificate programs, social and community-building events, creative and wellness activities, and peer consultations with experts.

The presenter will explore how UCR supports graduate students through collaboration with academic departments and other campus partners. The session will also address overcoming barriers at both the campus and program levels, creating effective programming on a small budget, how to create effective collaborations across campus, and sharing best practices and lessons learned. Participants will have the opportunity to brainstorm ways to implement similar initiatives at their own institutions and exchange experiences from their campuses.

Building an Accessible Graduate Experience:

Larimer

Addressing Neurodiversity and Mental Health in Graduate Programs

• Sara Anne Tompkins, Associate Dean of Student Services, Colorado State University
• Justin Dove, Director of Student Disability Services, Colorado State University

This presentation aims to enhance the accessibility of graduate education by focusing specifically on the needs of neurodivergent students. With the increasing recognition of neurodiversity as a valuable aspect of the academic community, it is crucial to address the unique challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals—those with conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurodevelopmental differences.

Understanding and supporting neurodivergent students is essential for creating an inclusive academic environment where all students can thrive. Research indicates that neurodivergent graduate students often encounter barriers that hinder their academic success, including misunderstanding and lack of appropriate accommodations. This presentation seeks to illuminate these issues, providing insights and strategies to foster a more inclusive graduate experience.

The significance of this topic for conference attendees lies in the growing body of evidence showing that neurodivergent students often face unique challenges in graduate programs. Many institutions have traditionally focused on undergraduate experiences, leaving a gap in understanding the specific needs of neurodivergent graduate students. This oversight can lead to negative academic outcomes and diminished well-being for this population. By addressing these needs, we can work towards a more equitable educational environment.

The session will be interactive, combining discussion, experiential learning, and individual reflection to engage participants fully.

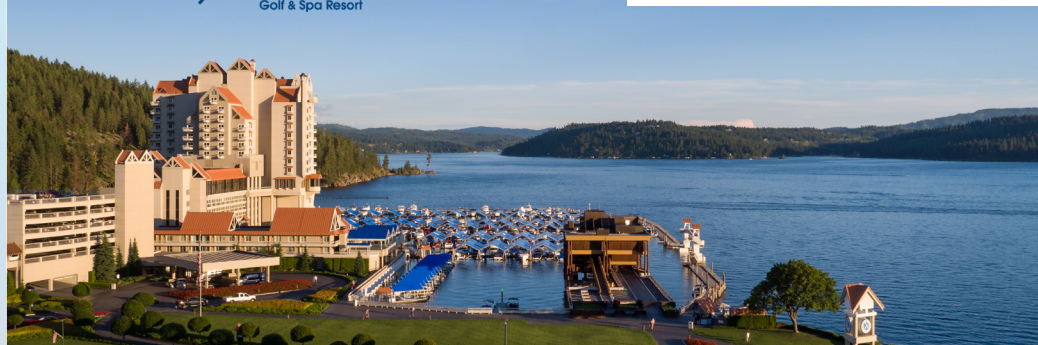
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68th Annual WAGS Conference

March 29–April 1, 2026

*Finding the Heart in
Graduate Education*

Coeur d'Alene Resort
Coeur d'Alene, ID

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AGENDA

Time	Session Information	Room
9:15–10 a.m.	Working Toward Inclusive and Fair Admissions Policies for 3-year Bachelor's Degrees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kima Cargill, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, University of Washington</i> • <i>Jesse Knappenberger, Director of Graduate Enrollment Management Services, University of Washington</i> • <i>Jeremy Davis, Director of Academic Affairs and Policy, University of Washington</i> <p>As universities innovate globally, offering new types of bachelor's degrees with varying durations, along with graduate degrees that require different types of previous education, admissions policymakers need to ready their schools for ongoing change and increasing complexity. In this challenging landscape, it is important to be cognizant of bias, including historical and colonial legacies present in existing policies.</p> <p>Graduate admissions policies, including those of the University of Washington, frequently accept all 3- and 4-year "Bologna" bachelor's degrees (degrees aligned with the Bologna Project, a 1999 effort to standardize higher education across a European Higher Education Area), while requiring additional work for applicants with other international degrees. While this policy streamlines the evaluation of some international credentials, it perpetuates historical inequities by maintaining additional burdens on non-European applicants. These burdens include delayed admissions decisions, navigating complex country-by-country and degree-by-degree policies, paying extra fees, and sometimes completing a second bachelor's degree or master's degree to become eligible to apply for graduate study in the US. We are told anecdotally that these burdens often cause students to self-select out of applying or to feel significant stigma about their country of origin and educational credentials.</p> <p>We encourage a reassessment of what constitutes adequate preparation for graduate study and advocate for more inclusive and welcoming admissions policies that use robust, non-racialized methods to assess academic preparedness. We will invite attendees to reflect on their current admissions practices and consider how they can be rethought to create a more inclusive academic environment. We aim to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of valuing diverse educational backgrounds and advancing global equity in higher education, while at the same time maintaining rigor and ensuring that international students can succeed.</p>	Champa
10–10:30 a.m.	Break	Magnolia Lounge
10:30–10:45 a.m.	WAGS Business Report WAGS Treasurer and board members will share information about WAGS to keep you, as WAGS members informed.	17 th by Magnolia
10:45 a.m.–Noon	PLENARY IV: Looking Back on the Lost Years: A Reflection on Graduate Education from 2050 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Melissa Cefkin, Consultant and Lecturer, Santa Clara University</i> • <i>Tara Schwegler, Consultant and Lecturer, University of Texas at San Antonio</i> <p>While the long-term decline in academic positions poses professional, social, and institutional challenges, in this talk we ask you to consider how to use the changing conditions of academic employment to enhance the graduate education experience and promote new models of work and fulfillment for students, no matter their post-education job trajectory. Drawing on our experiences working outside the academy, we offer a vision of skills development and experiences that foster intellectual readiness as well as new forms of knowledge production and scientific collaboration. And we offer a cautionary tale of how, if not careful, faculty and educators may miss these opportunities.</p>	17 th by Magnolia
Noon	Closing Session & Adjourn	

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