

Study: Prepare grad students for work beyond academia

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Universities need to work more closely with business, nonprofit and government sectors to better prepare graduate students for careers beyond academia, according to the report for a national project that a UC Davis dean helped guide.

Jeffery Gibeling, dean of [Graduate Studies](#), was part of the 14-member commission that produced the report “Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers,” recently released by the Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service.

The report challenges universities — and especially their graduate faculties — to help students explore career opportunities outside of [academia](#) and then prepare them for success in those arenas.

“We talk about graduate education as a ‘pipeline’ to the professoriate,” Gibeling said, “but having students head into [business](#) or government should not be viewed as a ‘leak’ in the pipe.”

“There are many different opportunities available,” he added, “and when students take them, they are able to work in areas of their interest and share a wealth of knowledge,” Gibeling said.

By 2020, 2.6 million new or replacement jobs will require a graduate or professional degree, according to the report. But the nation won’t be able to tap graduate students unless universities, business and other sectors better collaborate.

The Pathways report calls on university officials to:

- track career outcomes and job placements of their graduates;
- make stronger career counseling services available;
- connect graduate students with graduate alumni;
- broaden the focus of graduate education to include development of more professional skills; and
- build more opportunities for graduate school faculty members and students to engage with industry, government and other sectors.

The study found that employers wanted more emphasis in graduate school training on business savvy and teamwork, communication and problem-solving. Employers also suggested that more graduate students need to be taught to innovate, apply their subject knowledge to other areas, and think like entrepreneurs.

At UC Davis, a joint administration and Academic Senate task force is envisioning the future of graduate education at UC Davis, and Gibeling is preparing a proposal to expand professional development opportunities for graduate students.

One opportunity already in place is the yearlong UC Davis Business Development Certificate Program, which teams MBA students with engineering and science graduate and postdoctoral students to develop the commercial potential of cutting-edge research.

UC Davis has almost 4,200 graduate students in 90 programs in addition to its undergraduate and professional students.

The Pathways study surveyed individuals who took the GRE General Test (ETS's admissions test for graduate and business school) between

2002 and 2011. Graduate school deans were surveyed as well, and interviews were conducted with executives and senior hiring managers in business and government.

More information: www.pathwaysreport.org/

Provided by UC Davis

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