In 2017, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) announced a new initiative to improve understanding of career pathways for current PhD students and alumni. The University of South Carolina (UofSC) is participating in this innovative CGS initiative as an affiliate institution. The Chronicle of Higher Education featured the CGS initiative in fall 2017 in an article entitled, “Documenting What PhDs Do for a Living”. In summer 2018, a letter also in The Chronicle, “Universities Are Up to Challenge of Gathering Data About PhDs,” included information on the CGS initiative.

The CGS project, entitled “Understanding PhD Career Pathways for Program Improvement,” is supported by grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Science Foundation. The project seeks to determine what types of careers PhDs pursue and examine their career trajectories up to fifteen years post-PhD as well as their experiences as PhD students in their second and fifth years of study. The data collected will be used to help determine what skills are needed to be successful in a variety of career pathways and inform efforts to offer opportunities to build these skills during doctoral programs. This information will then be shared with institutions, including UofSC, to implement program improvement for current and future PhD students. The first survey of alumni was conducted in fall 2017, and CGS will begin publishing the initial findings in fall 2018. The first survey of current PhD students was conducted in spring 2018, and CGS expects to begin publishing the initial findings in spring 2019.

In February 2019, survey links will be sent to UofSC doctoral students who enrolled in doctoral programs in 2014-2015 (in their fifth year of doctoral study) and in 2017-2018 (in their second year of doctoral study) from 28 selected degree programs in the humanities and STEM fields. Campus stakeholders, representing the 28 selected degree programs and other offices, at UofSC will be provided with updates throughout the project. The Graduate School will share the purpose of the survey, provide ongoing updates on the status of activities, include overall results, and invite use of the results for program improvement on our various social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), as well as our website.

The Graduate School thanks the many stakeholders across campus, including both college and department-level leadership and representation from a variety of university offices, who contribute their time to the CGS project.

The Graduate School looks forward to helping shape the future of doctoral education and providing support for a variety of meaningful career options for its PhD students.

Contact Dr. Heather Brandt, Associate Dean in the Graduate School at (803) 777-4243 or CGSpathways@sc.edu with any questions or for more information about the CGS PhD Career Pathways project.