

Educating marketable graduate students

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As the U.S. job market remains tight, more students are considering graduate school and those in graduate school may continue their studies longer. Largely because of the economy, graduate students are being educated to develop skills that will prepare them for broader options in non-traditional employment, not just academia, says Brian S. Mitchell, associate provost for graduate studies and research at Tulane University.

“We're discussing ways to educate this very talented pool of individuals for positions with non-governmental organizations, private industry, government and non-profits,” says Mitchell, who hosted a meeting of the Association of Graduate Schools in the Association of American Universities in New Orleans Sept. 30â€“Oct. 2.

Declining support for graduate students is a key issue as budgets are being slashed, particularly at public institutions, Mitchell says. “With federal funding stagnant or decreasing, how do you support graduate students? We are exploring private sources, foundations and endowments ? and those resources are scarce. How do we keep programs robust in the face of dwindling resources?”

The Tulane [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#) opened this year to support students in master's and doctoral degree programs. The office handles logistics such as dealing with housing and health insurance issues, providing orientation for teaching assistants and allotting their stipends, and administering travel grants.

While Tulane University has 6,403 full-time undergraduate students currently enrolled, there are 4,305 full-time students in graduate and professional programs. The graduate students fill an important role in teaching and mentoring undergraduates, as well as contribute to diversity on campus, Mitchell says.

Six interdisciplinary graduate degree programs have been introduced at Tulane so far this decade, including the most recent in Political Development. This new doctoral program based in the [Political Science Department](#) will begin matriculating

students in the fall of 2014.

“We're structuring graduate education to create a marketable student, who is trained across disciplines,” Mitchell says. “It's an increasing trend in graduate education, and Tulane is ahead of the curve.”