

Overview of the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate

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Chris M. Golde & George Walker, Senior Scholars
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
650/566-5100; <www.carnegiefoundation.org/CID>

The nature of the initiative

American universities have been granting the doctorate for about a century. At the end of the 20th century, we take great pride that the world sends students to the U.S. for doctoral training. Nevertheless, concerns about traditional doctoral education have been widespread and sustained for the last decade. The studies and reports that have gone before ours have prepared the ground. A common theme of many of these reports is that Ph.D.s are often ill-prepared to function effectively in the settings where they find themselves working, whether within the academy or outside it. Further, in many disciplines the intellectual and research character of professional work will continue to experience dramatic change. The time is ripe to propose and experiment with enriched forms of doctoral education.

The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate is a multi-year research program aimed at enriching and invigorating the education of doctoral students. A fundamental premise of the initiative is to focus doctoral education on the preparation of “stewards of the disciplines.” We share the belief that Ph.D.-holders ought to be trained to be rigorous researchers and scholars. But we believe that it is timely for the disciplines to reflect on improvements that would empower those attaining the doctorate to be more effective researchers and teachers. We believe that the framework of stewardship offers a broader conceptualization of doctoral education than the present graduate experience typically includes. The initiative will involve research, experiments in departments, and broad discussion and dissemination of what is learned. Faculty and departmental leadership in the disciplines is a crucial focus of the initiative.

The Carnegie Foundation leadership of the initiative

The initiative is headquartered at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in Menlo Park, California. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is a national and international center for research and policy studies about teaching.

George E. Walker, the Vice President for research and Dean of the University Graduate School at Indiana University, leads this five-year study. Walker joined the Foundation as a senior scholar in January of 2001. He will serve in-residence part-time at the Foundation, while retaining his duties at Indiana University. He is assisted by Chris Golde, senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation and researcher on doctoral education, Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation, as well as other senior scholars at the Foundation.

“Steward of a discipline”

We believe that the purpose of Ph.D. training should be the creation of “stewards of the discipline.” The degree should signal a high level of accomplishment in three facets of the discipline: Generation, Conservation and Transformation. The Ph.D. holder should be capable of **generating** new knowledge and defending knowledge claims against challenges

and criticism; of **conserving** the most important ideas and findings that are a legacy of past and current work; and of **transforming** knowledge that has been generated and conserved into powerful pedagogies of engagement, understanding and application. Moreover, a steward should understand how the discipline fits into the intellectual landscape, have a respectful understanding of the questions and paradigms of other disciplines, and understand how their discipline can speak to important questions.

The formulation of stewardship is discipline-specific. What it means to be a steward of chemistry may in some measure be different than in English or mathematics. Similarly, the process for creating stewards may differ by discipline. We are committed to locating this initiative in the context of each discipline, recognizing that there will be discipline-specific lessons as well as cross-disciplinary insights to be gained.

Major components and timeline

Three components comprise the initiative:

- Defining stewardship in a disciplinary context. Six disciplines are the initial focus of the study: **chemistry, education, English, mathematics, neuroscience, and history**. The first phase of the initiative will be a conceptual analysis of doctoral education. We seek to understand the core processes of research and doctoral education specific to each discipline. How has doctoral training been conceptualized and delivered within the discipline? Discussions within the discipline guided by a team from within the discipline will refine the concept of what stewardship of that discipline entails, and how doctoral programs might be better structured to prepare students. The first project will be to commission essays about the desired core ingredients of an enriched form of doctoral education, and publish them in the fall of 2002.
- Implementing programs in multiple departments. We will select five to six departments in each of the focus disciplines to conduct “design experiments” in doctoral education. Selected departments will commit to designing and implementing doctoral programs that foster stewardship of the discipline. This is a multi-year commitment undertaken as a partnership with the Foundation, departments, universities, scholarly societies and cooperating funding agencies.
- Studying the experiments and facilitating the broad adoption of successful models. Throughout the initiative, we will be distilling the results of discussions and research and sharing them with the doctoral education and disciplinary communities. We will be closely studying the design experiments and sharing the lessons learned in order to implement changes more broadly. One strategy will be to convene three kinds of seminars: campus-based for each program, cross-site for each discipline, and program-wide for assessment and integration. A variety of products will result from the initiative: models of experimental doctoral programs, research and analysis of the experiments and seminars, institutional and policy-level recommendations.

We began publicizing the initiative in the fall of 2001. Selection of departments that will implement design experiments will begin in the summer of 2002. We expect the experiments to be several years in duration with regular assessment and reports on lessons learned.