



# Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools

*An Affiliate of the Council of Graduate Schools*

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

### 83rd Annual MAGS Meeting

March 24-26, 2027

The Graduate by Hilton, Minneapolis, MN

### **Conference Theme: *Frameworks for Success: Redefining Graduate Research Milestones***

*Join Team USETDA at the MAGS 2027 Conference in Minneapolis! There is an ETD-related strand of relevant topics in the MAGS Call for Abstracts, highlighted below. The deadline to submit abstracts is October 15, 2026.*

Graduate education is evolving rapidly, demanding adaptable, transparent, and sustainable pathways for student achievement. At the 2027 annual conference of the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools, ***Frameworks for Success: Redefining Graduate Research Milestones*** will focus on actionable strategies to modernize degree progression, empower the staff who guide these processes, and elevate the reach of graduate scholarship through support from resilient administrative systems. Implementing such thoughtful frameworks has the potential to transform complex academic requirements into clear, achievable triumphs.

We welcome [abstract submissions](#) that demonstrate evidence-informed responses to change: redesigns that improved outcomes, pilots that scaled, policies that increased access, technologies that truly helped, and collaborations that held up under pressure. Share what you tried, what you learned, and what others can adopt.

### **Submission can include:**

- Presentations
- Panels
- Facilitated Discussions

Priority strands and topics: [Please note that abstracts on recruitment, admissions, professional. development, and other areas of graduate education will also be considered.]

**Evidence-Based Decision Making and Policy Design:** Focusing on how administrators use institutional data equity audits, and policy frameworks to make informed, impactful decisions about graduate milestone requirements.

- **Assessing Program Effectiveness:** Collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative feedback from faculty and students to continuously improve graduate milestones
- **Balancing Rigor and Flexibility in Milestone Policies:** Data-informed approaches to setting standards that maintain academic excellence while reducing unnecessary time-to-degree bottlenecks.
- **Equity-Centered Policy Evaluation:** Conducting audits of historical graduate program data to identify and dismantle systemic barriers in milestones like qualifying exams and comprehensive reviews.
- **Policy Enforcement and Exception Management:** Building transparent, fair, and scalable frameworks for handling student appeals, committee disputes, and milestone deadline extensions.

**Publishing, Dissemination, and Repositories:** Focusing on the lifecycle of academic output, open access, institutional visibility, and sharing student scholarship with the broader world.

- **Modernizing the Thesis and Dissertation Process:** Streamlining formatting, submission, embargo policies, digital workflows for institutional repositories.
- **Navigating Academic Publishing:** Equipping support staff to guide students through peer-review, open-access fees, copyright considerations, and predatory journal avoidance.
- **Beyond the Traditional Manuscript:** Integrating digital humanities, multimedia projects, and alternative scholarship into standard repository frameworks.
- **Maximizing Research Impact:** Utilizing institutional repositories and academic networking platforms to boost the visibility of graduate student scholarship.

**Staff Leadership and Professional Empowerment:** Focusing on the operational leaders - the manager, coordinators, and support staff - and how they cultivate leadership skills, manage teams, and prevent burnout in high-volume offices.

- **Managing High-Stakes Workflows:** Decision-making frameworks for graduate coordinators managing heavy caseloads during peak milestone seasons (defenses, graduation, admissions)
- **Empowering Frontline Support Staff:** Developing internal leadership pathways, professional development, and decision-making autonomy for graduate program coordinators.

**Holistic Student Support and Milestone Navigation:** Focusing on the operational, professional, and well-being frameworks required to help graduate students successfully cross the finish line.

- **Redefining the Defense:** Modernizing committee structures, virtual/hybrid defenses, and the holistic support needed during final milestones.
- **Professional Development Integration:** Aligning research milestones with career readiness (preparing students for both academia and industry/alt-ac paths)
- **Mentorship Training for Faculty and Staff:** Establishing frameworks that foster healthy, productive advisor-advisee relationships.
- **Mental Health and Wellness at the Finish Line:** Creating support systems to combat burnout, imposter syndrome, and isolation during the final stages of research.

### **How to Submit:**

Please complete the [submission form](#) with the following information:

Session Title

Session Description (200-250 words): This will be used for the conference website and promotional materials.

Session Leader Contact Information: Name, Title, Affiliation, Email, Phone

Additional Presenter(s) Contact Information: Name, Title, Affiliation, Email, Phone

### **PRIORITY DEADLINE: October 15, 2026**

Abstracts will be reviewed by the planning committee, and notifications of acceptance will be sent in mid-November.

Questions? Contact Sarah Huffman MAGS 2027 Conference Chair, at  
[shuffman@iastate.edu](mailto:shuffman@iastate.edu).