GradFIT 2016

The University of Nevada, Reno's Graduate School expanded various components of the GradFIT program in the spring of 2016 based on the success of the program in 2015. GradFIT was created to increase the enrollment of students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in graduate programs, at the University of Nevada, Reno or elsewhere. The program continued its core mission to introduce participating students to the opportunities, challenges, and expectations of graduate school as well as by demystifying the graduate school application process. The program expanded from a four-day to a five-day program to include more content on graduate assistantships and fellowships, the importance of physical health, resources available to graduate students at the University, the importance of communicating with faculty and a motivational speaker. The program grouped the participants into four categories based on the graduate program they were interested in:

- Group 1: Biological Sciences, Genetics, and Computer Science & Engineering
- Group 2: Public Health, Medicine & Social Work
- Group 3: English, Education, Sociology & Economics
- Group 4: Psychology, Neuroscience & Social Psychology

GradFIT continued its previous collaboration with Nevada State College and California State University, Sacramento, and in 2016 also included a collaboration with San Jose State University. Students submitted an online application to the GradFIT program and were then selected to participate in the program based on fulfillment of eligibility requirements and the availability of space in the program. To be eligible to participate in the program, students must: (1) be a sophomore or above; (2) come from a historically underrepresented background or be first-generation college student, and (3) have a 3.0 or higher cumulative grade point average. Once the selection process was complete, a total of 28 students were chosen to participate in the program.

Institution	Number of Students
CSU, Sacramento	9
Nevada State College	11
San Jose State University	1
University of Nevada, Reno	7
Total	28

These 28 students ranged from sophomore standing to completing their bachelor's degree and self-identified as a first-generation college student or from a historically underrepresented background. The program was at no cost to the students with UNR providing funding for all activities as well as room and board. The partner institution provided travel costs as a part of the collaboration with GradFIT. The students participated in a series of activities and informational sessions with the purpose of preparing them for future graduate studies. The activities and informational sessions included:

- The importance of, and the opportunities afforded by graduate education
- Motivational keynote lecture
- Graduate program application workshop
- How to fund graduate education
- Writing a personal statement
- Importance of health and fitness while pursuing a graduate education
- Graduate Student Association's resources available to graduate students
- Mini-lectures by discipline given by University of Nevada, Reno faculty and graduate students
- Tours of facilities and laboratories by University of Nevada, Reno faculty
- University of Nevada, Reno campus tour
- Workshop on preparing for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

- Tour, information session, and faculty networking at the Desert Research Institute
- Trip and information session at Lake Tahoe
- Panel discussion with graduate students
- Open forum with university faculty members and graduate students

GradFIT proved to be a success in its third year based on data collected and feedback received from the third cohort. The data analyzed was collected pre-GradFIT with the responses from the participants' initial applications and compared with their responses on the evaluations completed post-GradFIT, which was not done in previous years. The data showed significant gains in knowledge in regards to admissions requirements, financial aid, GRE, and student life as it applies to graduate school (*Figure 3*).
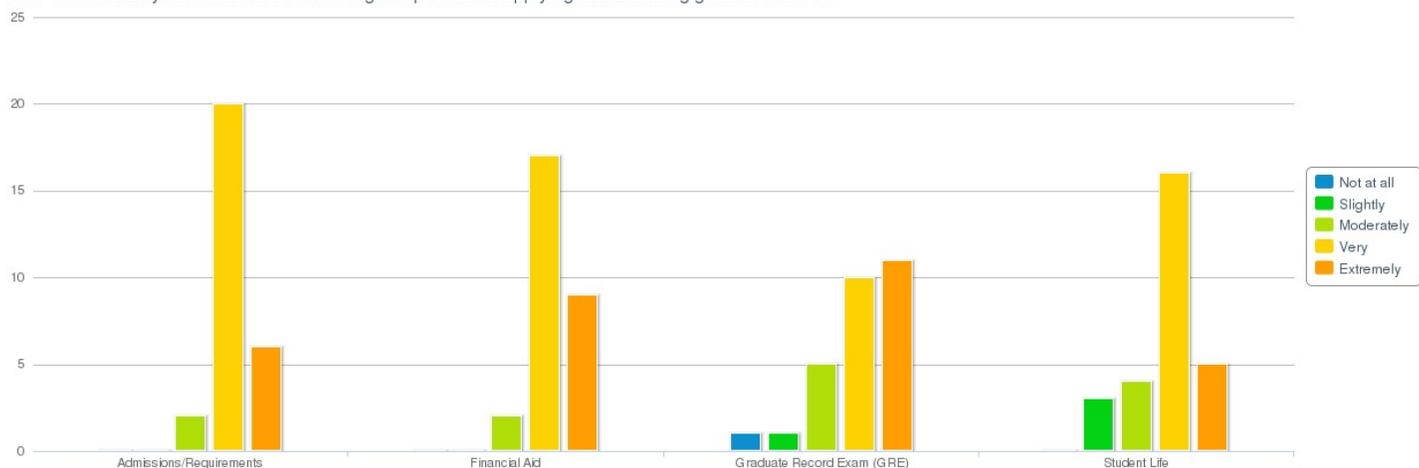
Figure 3.
Pre-GradFIT: application responses
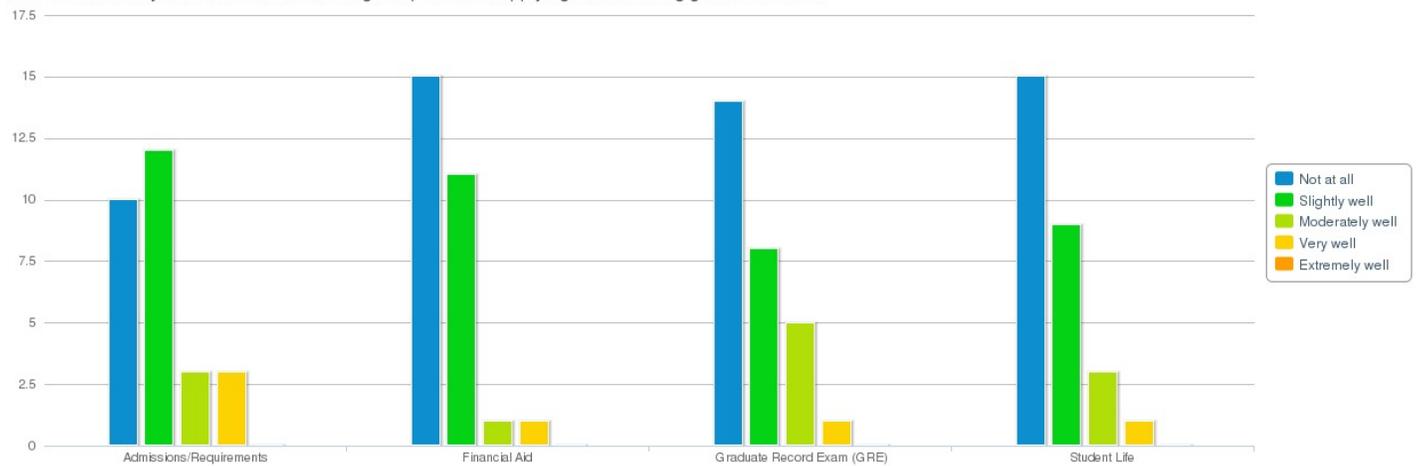
Post-GradFIT: evaluation responses

The data below shows a change in perspective of participants considering the University of Nevada, Reno for their graduate education (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4.
Pre-GradFIT: application responses

How strongly have you considered attending the following schools for graduate school?
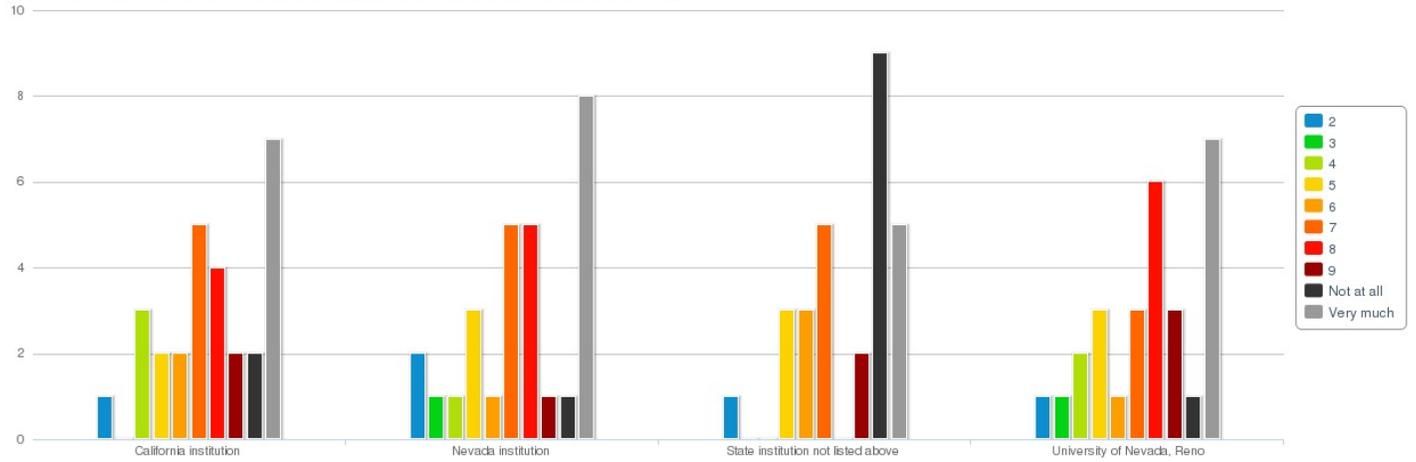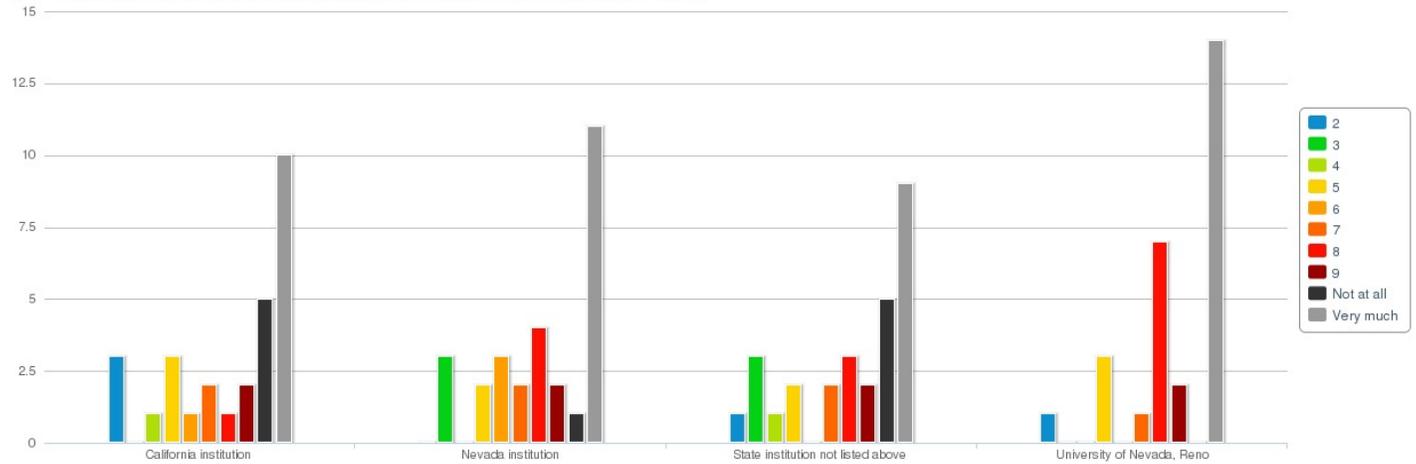

Post-GradFIT: evaluation responses

How strongly have you considered attending the following schools for graduate school?

The participants' responses also gave positive feedback to the information given by the workshops and participating in the activities GradFIT included as shown in figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5.

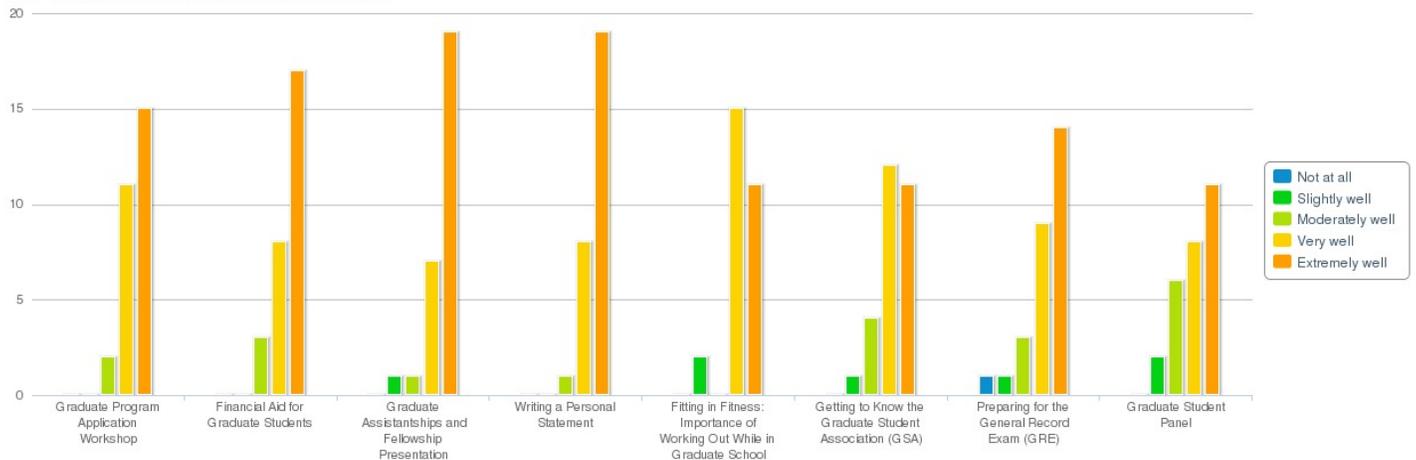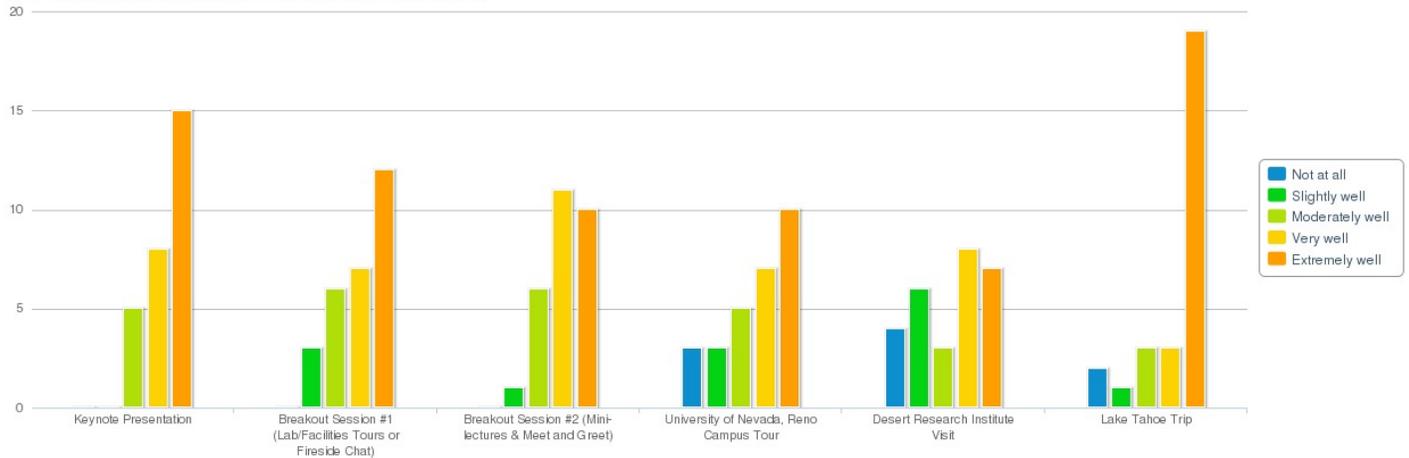How informative were the following workshops?

Figure 6.

How valuable was it to participate in the following activities?

Overall, the data collected from this cohort was positive with many saying GradFIT was inspiring, motivational, informational, welcoming, supportive, and participants were very thankful to be a part of the program.

GradFIT will continue to expand on an annual basis, with the aim of serving more first-generation college students and students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in their pursuit of graduate education at the University of Nevada, Reno and elsewhere. Beginning January 2017, we will reach out to new partner institutions in Oregon, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona to identify potential students to participate in the program.

Faculty and student contributors to the GradFIT 2016 program

Participant/Title	Role in GradFIT	College/Department
David Zeh/Vice Provost Graduate Education, Dean, Graduate School	Program funding, design and implementation	The Graduate School
Matthew Aguirre/Graduate Research Assistant	Program design and implementation	Office of the President
Angela Taylor/President and Chief Executive Officer	Motivational speaker	Guardian Quest Inc.
Kara Cleveland/Director of Graduate School Operations	Presenter	The Graduate School
Geoffrey Green/Financial Aid Advisor	Presenter	Financial Aid Office
Talline Martins/Director of Postdoctoral Affairs	Program design and presenter	The Graduate School
Mary T. Calhoon/Assistant Director	Presenter	Nevada Career Studio
Sheena Harvey/Sports and Events Coordinator	Presenter	Campus Recreation and Wellness
Veronica Zepeda/Director of Graduate Student Services	Program design and presenter	The Graduate School
David AuCoin/Associate Professor	Presenter	Microbiology and Immunology
Christopher Jeffrey/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Chemistry
Angela Hornsby/Graduate Research Assistant	Presenter	EECB
Jade Keehn/Graduate Research	Presenter	Biology

Participant/Title	Role in GradFIT	College/Department
Assistant		
Kristen Clements-Nolle/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Community Health Sciences
Alisha Fong/Simulation Technology Specialist	Presenter	Social Work
Valerie Fridland/Professor and Director of Graduate Studies	Presenter	English
Kathrine Fusco/Assistant Professor	Presenter	English
Bridget Walsh/Associate Professor	Presenter	Human Development and Family Studies
Monika Mala/Assistant Director	Presenter	GEAR UP
Joseph Lykes/Student Development Coordinator	Presenter	The Center, Every Student, Every Story
Gideon Caplovitz/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Psychology
Markus Kemmelmeier/Professor and Director of Graduate Programs	Presenter	Social Psychology
Anthony Papa/Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Training	Presenter	Psychology
Lars Strother/Assistant Director	Presenter	Psychology
Robert del Carlo/Graduate Research Assistant	Presenter	CMPP
Brad Ferguson/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Nutrition
Eelke Folmer/Associate Professor	Presenter	Computer Science and Engineering
Thomas Parchman/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Natural Resources and Environmental Science
Julie Lucero/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Community Health Sciences
Larissa White/Program Graduate	Presenter	Public Health
Maureen Rubin/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Social Work
Jill Manit/Field Education Coordinator	Presenter	Social Work
Dimitra Papodovasilaki/Graduate Research Assistant	Presenter	Economics
Kimberly Rollins/Professor	Presenter	Economics
Emily Hobson/Assistant Professor	Presenter	History
Eleni Oikonomidoy/Associate Professor and LLC Program Coordinator	Presenter	Multicultural Education
Marisa Crowder/Graduate Research Assistant	Presenter	Social Psychology
Fang Jiang/Assistant Professor	Presenter	Psychology
Ramona Haumanfar/Associate Professor and Director of Behavioral Analysis Program	Presenter	Psychology
Melanie Duckworth/Associate Professor and Director of Psychological Services	Presenter	Psychology
Kevin Carman/Provost and Executive Vice President	Presenter	University of Nevada Reno

Efforts to improve recruitment and retention of students from historically underrepresented groups (HUGs) in doctoral STEM programs.
In 2016, the Graduate School submitted an NSF IGE (Innovations in Graduate Education) proposal titled "GradFIT: Hard and Soft Skills for Hard Science" in order to expand upon the successes of the GradFIT recruitment program. The proposal integrated recruitment efforts, faculty training, and a personalized education program consisting of student support and personal, professional, and technical skill-based modules to supplement discipline-based course work. If successful, the program could provide a cost-effective, scalable and powerful approach for achieving racial and ethnic balance in the STEM workforce. The proposed project was a collaborative effort led by principal investigators David Zeh and Talline Martins (Graduate School), Eelke Folmer (Computer Science and Engineering), Matthew Forister (Biology) and Bridgett Walsh (Human Development and Family Studies), and drew on the expertise of over 10 faculty members from multiple colleges. While not funded, the proposal ranked in the "competitive" category and received two "very good" and two "good" reviews. Reviewers cited numerous strengths, including leveraging of a successful recruitment program (GradFIT), interdisciplinarity of the proposal team, scalability/adaptability of the program, integration of hard and soft skill training, and creative modules such as R-based statistical analysis and smartphone app development. A revised proposal that addresses reviewers concerns will be submitted in 2017. Improvements include 1) development of a recruitment/retention positive feedback system in which matriculated HUG graduate students design and utilize social networking tools to recruit new HUG students into the GradFIT program; (2) student-led content development and delivery on a virtual, scalable platform for recruiting HUGs, and (3) piloting this virtual recruitment platform to assess its effectiveness in increasing student interest and family and community support for graduate education among American Indian students.

Graduate Student Association

The UNR Graduate Student Association (GSA) exists to promote the welfare and interests of the graduate students at UNR. The GSA strives to provide an inclusive and diverse environment on campus for all graduate students to be successful. In 2016, the GSA supported students through a variety of grants and loans (financial crisis grants, computer loans, child care scholarships) as well as other awards, services, and programming. The largest event that served to bring together the greater UNR and Reno community was the 1st Annual Unity in Diversity event.

Unity in Diversity
The first annual Unity in Diversity was held on April 6, 2016 in the Joe Crowley Student Union ballrooms. Speakers were selected from a pool of applicants and presented on various stereotypes they have experienced and how to overcome them. In addition to the speakers the event had a variety of cultural food, performances by student groups and a cultural fashion show. There were over 400 attendees at the event that was scheduled to coincide with the Northern Nevada Diversity Summit held at UNR the same day. The 2017 event will grow upon the success of the first Unity in Diversity and will be held on March 29, 2017.

GSA Clubs and Organizations
The GSA also supports many graduate clubs and organizations on campus. Many of these clubs are centered around the theme of a certain field or department, however in 2016 the GSA also sponsored many cultural organizations and their events such as the Turkish Cultural Club, Iranian Students Association, and the Indian Student Organization. In 2016 the GSA also approved the formation of and provided funding to a new group on campus to support women in science, the Distinguished Women in Science Club.

In the Fall of 2016 the GSA formed the Graduate DRC Club to advocate and support the Disability Resource Center for graduate students. This group then helped organize and provided sponsorship to a lecture by Rebecca Hart, a paralympian that competed at the Rio olympics, who spoke on campus October 13 (http://events.unr.edu/event/rebecca_hart_lecture#.WGWrUbYrJBw).