



Cornell University

Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs: Cornell University



Barbara A. Knuth

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School



Cornell University

Philosophy of Graduate Education at Cornell

- Graduate fields
- Graduate faculty
- Special committees





Cornell Graduate School Metrics

- ~ 100 fields of study – 81 PhD fields (60 included in NRC doctoral program assessment).
- ~ 1,800 graduate faculty.
- > 5,200 students
 - ~ 3,200 PhD students
 - ~ 1,750 professional students
 - ~ 250 research master's students



Graduate Fields

- **Purpose**: graduate education system that encourages students to develop academic rigor and creativity across disciplines.
- **Voluntary groupings** of graduate faculty with academic interests in common and who wish to exercise shared responsibility for an area of inquiry, and for the admission, education, and, as appropriate, financial support of graduate students.
- Graduate field **requirements should be stated in terms of range and thoroughness of knowledge** rather than in the form of a list of prescribed courses.

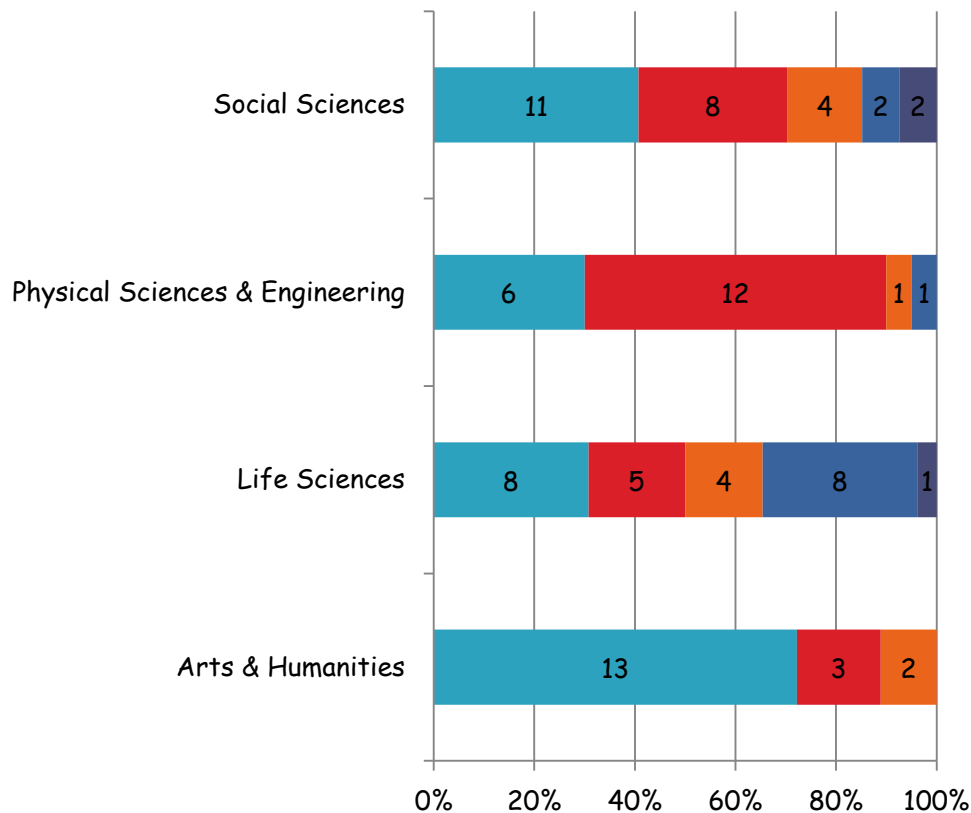


Graduate Fields

- **Fields are independent of traditional college or department divisions**, so they may draw together faculty members from several colleges, departments, and related disciplines in accordance with scholarly interests.
- The **General Committee** (governance body) does not approve subjects/concentrations that lead to an over-specialization or a narrow view of science and scholarship.
- Four disciplinary areas, grouped for organizational and communication purposes: Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering.



Fields Span College & Department Lines



Every field has some graduate faculty who serve in more than one field.

- 100% one college
- 90-99% one college
- 70-89% one college
- 50-69% one college
- 39-49% one college

Percentage of fields that span college lines, by area:

Arts & Humanities – 28%

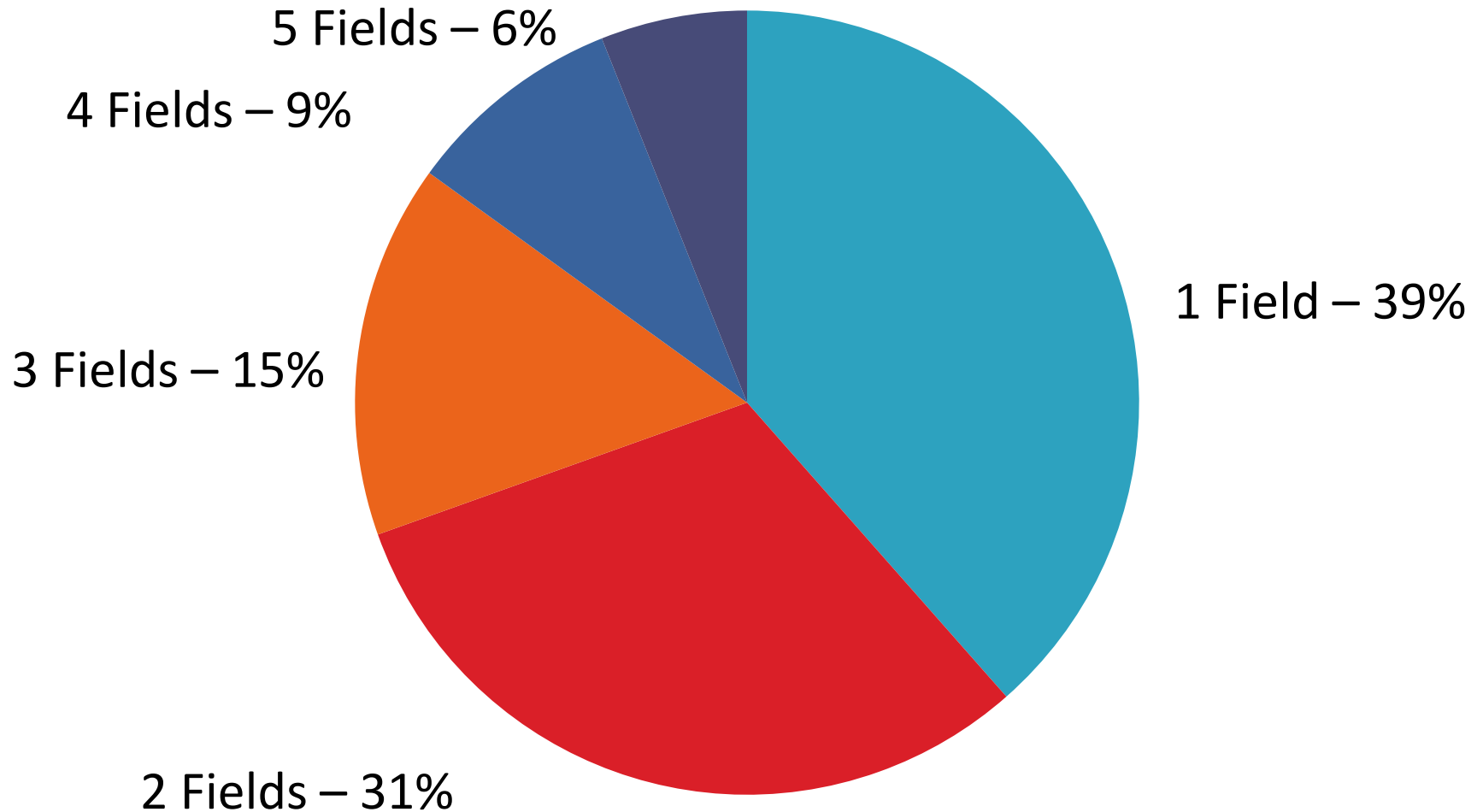
Social Sciences – 59%

Life Sciences – 69%

Physical Sciences & Engineering – 70%

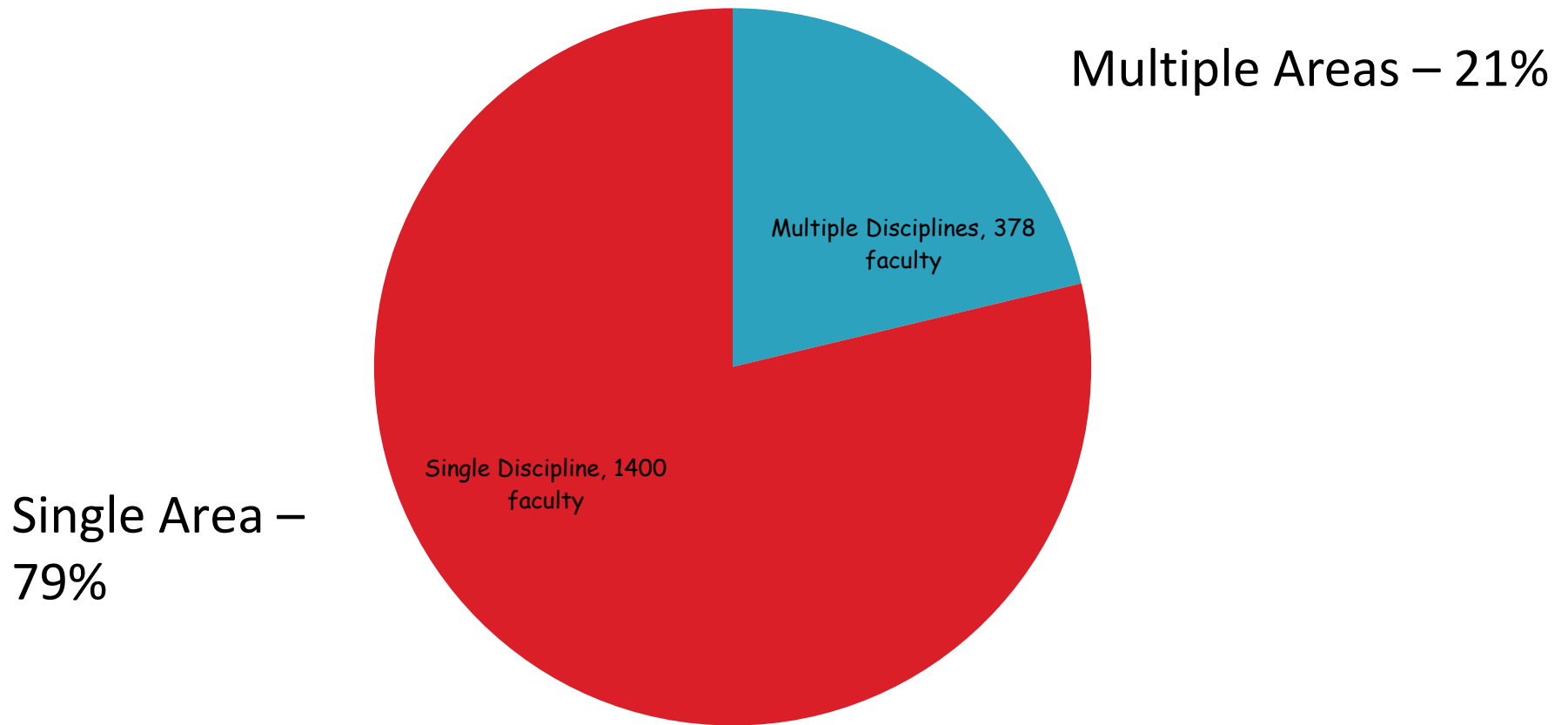


Most Graduate Faculty Serve in Multiple Fields





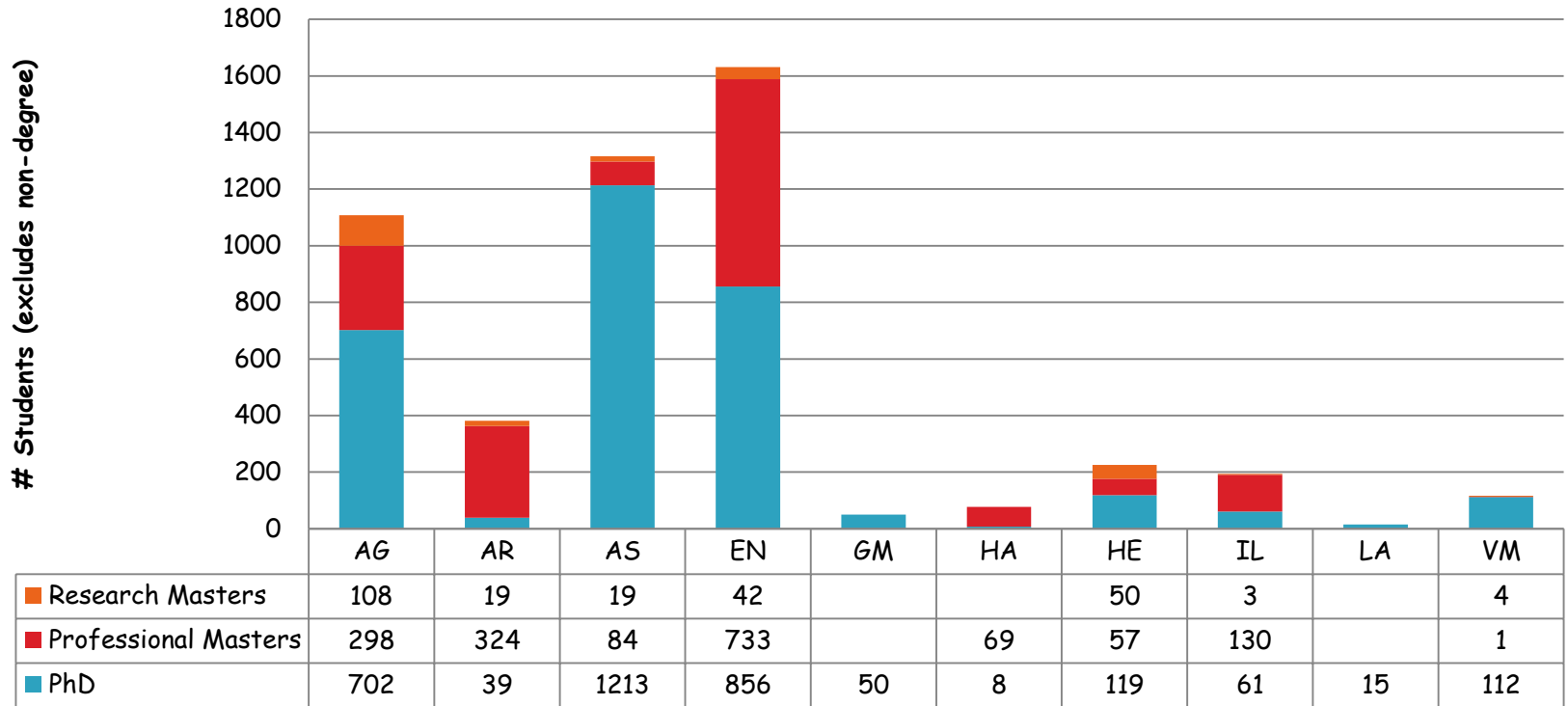
Some Graduate Faculty Span Subject Areas





Students by Degree & Advisor's College

Fall '10 GS Enrollment, by Faculty Advisor's College



AG - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
 AR - College of Architecture, Art, and Planning
 AS - College of Arts and Sciences
 EN - College of Engineering
 GM - Johnson Graduate School of Management
 HA - School of Hotel Administration

HE - College of Human Ecology
 IL - School of Industrial and Labor Relations
 LA - Law School
 VM - College of Veterinary Medicine



Special Committee System

- Members of the special committee are **selected by student**.
- Master's student: 2 committee members (one major, one minor).
- PhD student: 3 committee members (one major, two minors).
- The special committee, under the leadership of the committee chair, has **primary responsibility for developing the student's independence in scholarship**.
- Together with the appropriate units – department, college, center, University – the **chair assumes responsibility for providing facilities necessary for the student to pursue his or her thesis or dissertation research**.



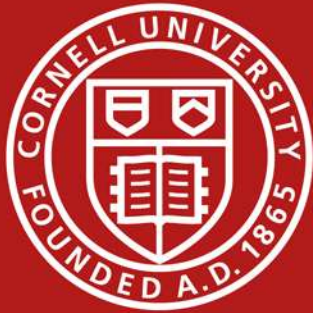
Characteristics of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Field System

- Facilitates student and faculty **mobility across disciplines**.
- Ability to build on strategic priorities of the university with more **institutional flexibility** and speed than traditional academic departments.
- Fosters **intellectual flexibility** and curiosity.
- **Integrates and synthesizes knowledge** and concepts across disciplines, methodologies, and institutional structures.
- Enables scholarly inquiry at the boundaries and intersections of disciplines; creative approach to advancing **discovery-based scholarship** or **problem-focused scholarship**.



Characteristics of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Field System

- **Graduate student funding**: Graduate School fellowships; Department/College teaching assistantships; Faculty pursue extramural student support (training grants, research assistantships through grants, IGERTs, etc.).
- **Administrative and academic support**: Faculty Director of Graduate Studies, Graduate Field Assistant provided through department/college resources.
- **When creating Fields & Subjects**, the graduate faculty considers the adequacy of the proposed program for the purpose of graduate training and the availability of appropriate staff, facilities, and financial resources.



Cornell University