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Future of the Doctorate in the Humanities

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The Big Question

- If we are not training PhD students to be professors in a discipline,* then what is a PhD for? What should it demonstrate? How long should it take? What does it do that a Master's degree doesn't?

  * But 15% *will* be profs…

Context: PD at U-Alberta

- Professional Development Advisory Board struck in 2013 with reps from industry, gov't, non-profit, entrepreneurial sector, and university (profs and students)
- PDAB had 3 working groups:
  - Skills and competencies
  - Employer engagement
  - University culture change
- Result: Professional Development Strategic Plan, endorsed by FGSR Council
  - Individual Development Plan: *mandatory*
  - 8 hours per degree of PD: *mandatory*

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Context: PD at U-Alberta

- $2.1m grant from Government of Alberta
- 4 commitments
  1. Entrepreneurship and Mentorship
  2. Internships
  3. Professional Skills
  4. Curricular Change

- realized through partnerships / collaboration -

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1a: Entrepreneurship

- Concept: PhD students take an idea, or a product, or a process, or an algorithm, or a technology….and turn it into a ~~business~~ *livelihood*

- Key partners:
  - eHUB (on-campus commercialization centre)
  - TEC Edmonton (off-campus research commercialization)
  - Business School :
    - Business development courses and advice
    - Funding and finance
    - Technology management

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1b: Mentorship

- Concept: Match those who've been there with those who want to get there …. at scale
- Key partners:
  - Venture Mentoring Services (UofA alumni organization that has developed tiered group mentoring)
  - Public advisory boards
  - IPAC (Institute of Public Administration of Canada)
  - Alumni

2: Internships

- Concept: Give students the work experience they need to land their first job
  - *not necessarily research internships*
- Placements across sectors: industry, government, non-profits
- Partners:
  - MITACS (federal funding body)
  - TEC Edmonton (research commercialization)
  - Career Centre

3: Professional Skills

- Graduate Teaching and Learning program
- Mygradskills.ca and Skillsoft Online
- Email listserv
- PD Week & regular sessions
- Mandatory IDP
- Mandatory 8-hour requirement

4: Curricular Change: "Future of the PhD in the Humanities"

- Led by Paul Yachnin, Director of the Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas (IPLAI), McGill University

- Broad national representation

- 2013: produced a White Paper known as "Future PhD"

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4: Future PhD

6 areas of concern for humanities programs:

1. Mentorship

2. The PhD Dissertation

3. Professionalization and Time to Completion

4. New Scholarly Technologies

5. Recruitment

6. The Labour Market and Academic Culture

White Paper Recommendations

1. Mentorship

   Universities should create dedicated professional planning and placement services that serve to broaden the legitimate employment expectations of humanities PhDs and that <u>prepare graduates for a multiplicity of career opportunities</u>.

White Paper Recommendations

2. Dissertation

   We recommend a more radical change by <u>replacing the thesis with a coherent ensemble of projects</u>, which can include single-author and collaborative essays, electronic archives or other kinds of digital scholarly resources, editions, translations, works of scholarship in a range of forms and oriented toward multiple audiences, and so on.

White Paper Recommendations

3. Professionalization and Completion

In light of already mentioned arguments about family and debt, the fact that one of the best indicators of success in the academic job market is timely completion of the PhD, and the need to treat the PhD as professional training, <u>we recommend that doctoral programs be four and no more than five years</u>.

White Paper Recommendations

4. New Technologies

We need to set a higher standard of digital literacy for humanities programs in recognition that graduates will be seeking employment in an information age. ... Rather than create an entirely independent (and siloed) program in digital humanities, it is preferable to <u>integrate the digital humanities into humanities graduate programs</u>.

White Paper Recommendations

5. Recruitment

   A PhD designed to lead to both non-academic and academic career paths will have the potential to attract new sorts of candidates ... To this end, we should <u>expand the criteria by which candidates are admitted to PhD programs</u>, considering skills, achievements, and career goals as well as past academic performance.

White Paper Recommendations

6. Labour Market and Academic Culture

   Faculty, students, and administrators must <u>take in the facts about the prospects for academic employment of PhDs</u> and must begin discussions across the academy about how to redress the situation.

What the White Paper downplays

- Disciplinarity
  - If we are not training professors in a discipline, why protect disciplines at all? The future of grad education might be problem-driven, multi-disciplinary and collaborative.
  - What mechanisms would we need to support broad-based, problem-driven interdisciplinary programs? (degree-offering grad schools?)
  - Coming in 2016: Makerspaces on campus

Future PhD = Future academy

- 85% of our humanities PhDs are facing a world of work we can't imagine: *this is (also) exciting.*

- The academy is part of this changing world of work.

- We must approach the humanities PhD problem in two ways
  - Theoretically: what do we want?
  - Pragmatically: how can we get there?

Future academy

- Theory ("core values"): My public research university is collaborative, knowledgeable, broad, problem-solving, outward-facing and bold.

- Praxis: a series of experiments.
  - The PhD has never been one thing;
  - Buy-in will only come from the ground up;
  - We can't know in advance what will work.

Thanks! – comments? questions?

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