

CGS Annual Meeting – Building Graduate Education’s Narrative

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Section

What is a Doctorate? A global conversation

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Good morning.

I would like to start thanking Mr. Charles Caramello, chairman of this section, for giving me the opportunity to present a summary and the highlights of the CGS Tenth Annual Strategic Leaders Global Summit on Graduate Education, held three weeks ago in Brazil, hosted by University of São Paulo, in the main campus located in the city of São Paulo.

University of São Paulo is one of the international members of CGS, and is proud of being part of such an important organization, dedicated to the improvement and advancement of graduate education in the world. University of São Paulo is public university, fully supported by the State of Sao Paulo government, by means of app 5% of the state taxes, as determined by law. University of São Paulo is a large and multidisciplinary university, always in the top of the rankings in Latin America. The university has app 100 thousand undergraduate and graduate students, not counting the e-students, and 6.5 thousand professors, all of them holding a PhD degree and 87% working full-time. Education and research are comprehensive and cover almost most fields of knowledge, in STEM and humanities. University of São Paulo has 268 graduate programs (masters and doctorates) and delivers an average of 2.5 thousand PhD degrees and another 3.5 thousand Masters degrees per year. I was the Provost of Graduate Studies at University of São Paulo until last March, and started the organization of the summit in Sao Paulo and hosted it. This explains why I am here today.

The summit at University of São Paulo had 24 participants, presidents, deans and provosts of universities in twelve countries (Australia – 4 universities, Brazil – USP, Canada – 4 universities, Chile, China, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, UK – 1 university each and USA – 4 universities). We had also the pleasure to have Suzanne Ortega, president of CGS, and Katherine Hazelrigg, communications manager of CGS, among the participants. I wish to publicly thank their support and assistance in the organization of the summit. I also thank Julia Kent, from CGS, who helped remotely, via Skype. I need also thank Mr. David Payne, from ETS, for supporting the meeting. Unfortunately, he could not make it, as his flight to Sao Paulo was canceled in the last moment.

The theme of the summit was “What is a Doctorate” and focused definitions of PhD and professional doctorates and trends in admissions, mentoring and doctoral dissertations and theses. This theme was selected because there is an agreement that

the nature of doctoral education is changing and needs special attention and discussion. The summit comprised six panels: 1. Current and evolving definitions of the doctorate; 2. Doctoral admissions and recruitment: assessing readiness to pursue doctoral study; 3. Doctoral mentoring and supervision; 4. Career preparation and innovations in doctoral curricula and training; 5. Doctoral Dissertations and Capstones; 6. How do doctoral assessment and career tracking influence definition of doctoral education?

After one and a half days of very thoughtful discussions, it became clear that the doctorate remains a hot topic and that different countries have different experiences and face different challenges in managing this type of graduate education. These were the main outcomes of the summit in Sao Paulo:

Panel 1. Definitions of the doctorate

1. There is a need to develop a glossary of common definitions for terms such as capabilities, competencies and learning outcomes for doctoral education. There is also a need to develop a list of different kinds of degrees across the world to define and distinguish the competencies and capabilities associated with them;
2. Learning outcomes, competencies and capabilities for professional doctorates vis a vis PhDs need to be defined and distinguished;
3. The contributions made by doctoral graduates across the full range of careers need to be better understood. All careers outcomes should be given equal weighting and status, and terms such as “alternative careers” should be avoided.
4. Understanding the PhD value proposition by government and employers needs to be enhanced, by means of talking persuasively about the skills, attributes and capabilities developed through doctoral research.
5. The employers of the graduates should be challenged and invited to contribute to programs and events directed at enhancing their skill development. The relationship between the university and employers should not be as simply as “university is the producer of graduates consumed by these end-users”, but more an interface in which co-production of highly skilled graduates can occur.

Panel 2. Doctoral admissions and recruitment

1. Evidence-based holistic admissions should be used in admissions processes to promote broader inclusion and diversity and maximize probability of student educational and career success;
2. Students should be advised when their career interests are more suited to master’s training to enter master’s programs instead of doctoral programs.

Panel 3: Doctoral mentoring and supervision

1. It is important to ensure that supervision is adequately recognized in supervisor’s workload and performance assessment;
2. Young faculty should be trained for mentoring and doctoral student professional development approaches;

3. A document of best practices and principles for successful mentors/supervisors is required, and should include rubrics for valuating and rewarding good supervision. This document should include policies and procedures that embed contributions of high quality graduate mentoring in regular faculty rewards processes.

Panel 4. Career preparation and innovations in doctoral curricula and training

1. Local/national/international partnerships between higher education and government, business and industry need to be properly identified. These partnerships must provide short and long-term internship opportunities, applied research topics for dissertations and mentors for doctoral students.
2. The transferable skills that arise from the process of doing a PhD must be mapped, measured and developed by students during their candidature. Potential employers and students should discuss ways in which these capabilities can enhance a business.
3. The doctoral curricula, projects and additional training opportunities and workshops must include professional development for diverse careers;
4. The culture of faculty mentoring of doctoral students by training doctoral students to be future faculty should be strengthened. Doctoral students should be educated to be effective mentors and teachers as well as researchers, by means of within-university mechanisms and external resources for this training.;

Panel 5. Dissertations and Capstones

1. Discussions on the purpose, structure and position of the dissertation in the context of the full range of desired doctoral attributes and outcomes should be encouraged.
2. A statement about purpose and form of the oral examination and best practices around the publication model of dissertations should be developed.

Panel 6. Definition of doctoral education influenced by doctoral assessment and career tracking

1. The career pathways of doctoral alumni should be monitored and used for continual improvement of doctoral curricula, in order to be responsive to and anticipate needs in the employment marketplace.
2. Recommendations for implementation and utilization of alumni surveys should be developed.
3. A protocol for an international benchmarking tool needs do to be developed.

In conclusion, the doctoral education is never-ending story, as the world evolves, markets change and the need for different types of high level education and different types of doctorate is increasing. Thank you for the attention.

Participants of the summit:

Australia

- University of Queensland (Alastair McEwan)
- University of Melbourne (Dick Strugnell)
- University of Western Australia (Kate Wright)
- RMIT University (Denise Cuthbert)

Brazil

- University of Sao Paulo (Vahan Agopyan, Carlos Carlotti, Bernadette Franco)

Canada

- Laval University (Marie Audette)
- Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique (Philippe-Edwin Belanger)
- York University (Barbara Crow)
- University of British Columbia (Susan Porter)

Chile

- Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile (Jani Brouwer)

China

- Shanghai Jiaotong University (Yaguang Wang)

Egypt

- American University in Cairo (Adham Ramadan)

Germany

- Technische Universitat Munchen (Hans-Joachim Bungartz)

Hong-Kong

- University of Hong-Kong (Mee Len Chye)

Singapore

- National University of Singapore (Brenda Yeoh)

South Africa

- University of Johannesburg (Shireen Motala)

United Kingdom

- University of Manchester (Luke Georghiou)

United States

- Cornell University (Barbara Knuth)
- Purdue University (Mark Smith)
- Texas A&M (Karen Butler-Purry)
- Saint Mary's College of California (Christopher Sindt)

CGS – Suzanne Ortega and Katherine Hazelrigg