

Welcome and Introduction

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I am pleased to welcome you to the Eighth Annual Strategic Leaders Global Summit on Graduate Education. It is an honor to host my first summit as CGS President in collaboration with Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). Before I begin, I would like to thank Noreen Golfman for her leadership in developing the idea for the summit with CGS, and to her staff, particularly Ms. Annette Williams, who coordinated details on the MUN side. I also want to express my deep thanks to ProQuest for their continued sponsorship of the Global Summit since its inception. ProQuest is represented today by Senior Vice President and General Manager, Rafael Sidi. We sincerely thank you for making it possible to make the summit a tradition in the global higher education community.

History of the Global Summit

Today the Council of Graduate Schools continues its eight-year history of the Global Summit. It is perhaps fitting that I rejoin you this year, back in Canada where the summit began in 2007. I was present at that first meeting in Banff when we established principles for future collaborations, and identified the need for future summits on specific issues in graduate education internationally. It was an exciting prospect then, and I am gratified to see the promise of that first meeting fulfilled through this annual gathering. These summits have been hosted all over the world, bringing global context to the most pressing issues in graduate education.

The 2008 summit in Florence, Italy explored research ethics and scholarly integrity. In 2009 (San Francisco, California), the summit focused on ways to build and sustain graduate international collaborations. 2010 brought the summit to Brisbane, Australia, with a discussion of assessing quality in (post)graduate education and research training. The summit met in Hong Kong in 2011 to tackle the issue of tracking and building career pathways for graduate students. The 2012 summit in Bavaria, Germany focused on promoting global career pathways, considered in the context of “brain circulation.” Finally, last year’s summit, hosted in Budapest, Hungary, considered graduate education and the promise of technology.

Interdisciplinarity: A Pressing Issue for Graduate Education

This year’s convening assembles an outstanding group of graduate education leaders who will represent a range of national graduate education systems. Presentations will be made by speakers from 14 countries. This diversity allows us to access to a broad range of national and regional perspectives, allowing us to situate the idea of interdisciplinarity in a global context. Our theme this year, “Interdisciplinary Learning in Graduate Education and Research,” has emerged in past summits as a pressing and complex issue. As interdisciplinary research projects generate increased interest (and resources), our universities have been charged with preparing a next generation of research professionals that is both more global and more deeply collaborative than has often been true in the past. To challenge the frontiers of knowledge, our young scholars and scientists must be able to couple deep disciplinary understanding with the ability to engage in

work that crosses national and traditional disciplinary boundaries.

We presented you with a definition that views interdisciplinarity as “a means of solving problems and answering questions that cannot be satisfactorily addressed using single methods or approaches” (Klein, 1990, p. 196). A means of solving problems and answering questions: this definition leaves open the possibilities of interdisciplinarity as an inquiry stance, a toolkit, an attitude. There exist many different terms related to this concept—multi-, trans-, or cross-disciplinarity, to name a few. For our purposes at this summit, we chose the term that points towards a concept that is more than simply collaboration among those with differing disciplinary backgrounds. Mining the spaces between disciplines for innovative approaches—this is the promise of interdisciplinarity.

Understanding this value to scholarship and to the global community, we must support and cultivate interdisciplinary learning in our graduate students. But how can we best accomplish this goal, considering the attendant challenges? What, specifically, do we mean when we set “interdisciplinary learning” as a goal and how do we educate for it? Is there unique content associated with interdisciplinary learning? Is the approach to solving research problems different? Is the way that research questions emerge or the nature of the questions, themselves, different in discipline-based versus interdisciplinary contexts? How will we assess the learning in and the “value-add” of interdisciplinary graduate education? What role do external partnerships, physical spaces, and faculty incentives have in promoting interdisciplinary learning? At what point does an interdisciplinary degree program emerge as a logical next step to courses and certificates? What is the global value of an interdisciplinary degree? I do not have all of the answers, but I look forward to exploring these questions with you both during our scheduled panels and in more informal spaces.

2014 Agenda

We begin this afternoon as we have begun all global summits, with an overview of this year’s topic in graduate education and research as it is understood in various nations and regions. We have invited members of our steering committee to make formal presentations in this panel, but representatives from other countries are invited to share information and insights in the discussion following this panel. This first session will frame our discussion throughout the remainder of our time together. Formal panels are scheduled as follows:

- Tomorrow, our second panel will examine the processes by which we can create institutional cultures that value interdisciplinary learning and research.
- During panel three we will shift our focus to the building of interdisciplinary degree programs, and
- Panel four will address innovations in interdisciplinary learning, including non-degree program options and activities.
- On Tuesday, panel five will consider structures for interdisciplinary research and collaboration within STEM and the humanities as well as across broad fields; and
- Panel six will address ways that graduate institutions can potentially leverage a commitment to interdisciplinarity when engaging with external organizations and entities.

In our final wrap-up session on Tuesday, we will collectively think about possible points

of consensus that may guide our thinking on the role of graduate institutions in supporting interdisciplinary structures to enhance graduate programs and research. Our task will be to identify principles that will help our colleagues build upon our work here in their own local contexts. After reviewing all of the papers you generously submitted for discussion, I anticipate we will find consensus points in the following areas relating to interdisciplinarity:

- Communicating the value of interdisciplinarity to graduate education
- Constructing learning outcomes
- Gaining faculty support
- Providing opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and practice

On these and other points we hope to provide specific guidance for other worldwide graduate leaders dealing with this pressing issue.

Conclusion

In closing I would like to thank the Steering Committee for helping to shape and refine the agenda for this year's meeting, as well as each of you, whose preparation for this meeting will ensure that this evening's events and our full day of events tomorrow will no doubt make this year's summit a success.