Graduate Education and the Promises of Technology

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Over the past seven years, the Strategic Leaders Global Summit on Graduate Education has created a vibrant international network of graduate institutions. When in 2007, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) first convened the summit in Banff, Canada, our hope was to assemble an international group of graduate education leaders to discuss questions of critical importance to graduate institutions worldwide. The dynamic exchange of information and perspectives that occurred at this inaugural summit led its participants to conclude that our conversations should continue on an annual basis. Marking the occasion of the Seventh Annual Strategic Leaders Global Summit, I am proud to say that we have made this goal a reality. To date, the summit has been held in seven different countries and has included graduate education leaders from nearly 30 nations.

While the goal of the first summit was to identify and discuss issues of broad relevance to graduate institutions worldwide, subsequent summits have focused on specific, pressing issues in graduate education: scholarly and research integrity (2008); joint and dual degrees and international research collaborations (2009); measuring quality in graduate education (2010); supporting and measuring career outcomes for graduate students (2011); and promoting global career pathways for graduate students and faculty (2012). Since 2012, CGS has been privileged to co-host the summit with a number of international partners, including the Australian Group of Eight (Go8) and the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies in Australia (DDoGS); the University of Hong Kong (HKU); and the Technische Universität Munchen (TUM).

In 2013, we were proud to co-host the summit with Central European University (CEU) and its partner, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on a topic that affects all graduate institutions worldwide: "Graduate Education and the Promises of Technology." Technology-enabled tools for communication, learning, and research are often a source of debate within universities because they challenge our thinking about basic principles and practices in higher education. While online learning has broadened access to graduate programs, and the development of massively open online courses (MOOCs) has opened the possibility of graduate-level MOOCs, these platforms also ask us to reconsider expectations about program quality metrics, learning assessment, and credentialization. Refined technological tools have expanded access to research, but they have also raised questions about who pays for this access and who is entitled to have it. Social media has created new ways for students, faculty, administrators, and the public to communicate with one other, but many wonder whether these modalities have been embraced at the expense of traditional forms of community.

While these issues are not specific to graduate education, it is safe to say that they draw greater scrutiny at the graduate level, where traditional training models have focused on individualized study programs (versus large-scale models of program delivery such as those made possible by online programs) and more intense forms of face-to-face interaction between graduate students and faculty mentors.

The 2013 Strategic Leaders Global Summit was an invitation for graduate leaders from around the world to examine these and other issues, considering both the promises and limits of technology-enabled tools in graduate education. The planning committee for this year's summit agreed that this topic lent itself particularly well to an international forum for two reasons. First, many of the technology tools used in higher education have enabled institutions to bridge international borders, a development that affects countries differently. One example among many is online graduate education, which allows a growing number of universities to offer distance learning to students in other countries. A second reason that the topic is appropriate for an international summit is that graduate institutions have different capacities for using technology in graduate education, and diverse views about its role in learning, research and administrative processes. These differences in perspective, our planning committee believed, would prove a fruitful starting point for international discussion and debate.

Like all previous summits, the 2013 summit began with an opening panel in which members of the steering committee addressed broad questions as they relate to their own countries and regions. The main purpose of Panel 1 was to consider national and cultural contexts that shape the use of technology tools in graduate education and trends that may differ by country. The remaining panels also addressed national and cultural contexts, but focused more deeply on the experiences of institutions. The summit's international steering committee approved five broad topics to organize our discussions:

- Assessing the Life-Cycle of Student Progress: Admission to Career Outcomes,
- Using Technology to Enhance Research and Scholarship,
- Online Graduate Education: Curricular Innovations,
- Risks and Benefits of Online Learning and MOOCs, and
- Engagement with External Organizations and Entities.

As we engaged in discussion of these topics, participants took note of areas where there appeared to be strong agreement about values, practices, or policies. This allowed us, in the final session, to develop consensus points to which all participants could agree. Throughout the summit's history, this statement has proved a valuable starting point for future conversations about the questions raised in this forum. I hope that it will be shared widely with other graduate administrators, faculty, and regional networks of graduate institutions.

In closing, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the individuals and groups that have made the 2013 summit possible. I would first like to thank Liviu Matei, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Central European University, for his exceptional leadership throughout every step of summit planning. It was an honor for CGS to develop the summit concept with Dr. Matei and to collaborate with the highly professional planning staff at CEU. I would also like to give a very special thanks to ProQuest UMI and its CEO, Kurt Sanford, for their continued support of the summit in 2013. ProQuest's material and intellectual contributions to the summit are but one example of the company's remarkable commitments to enhancing graduate education.

Of course, it is the participants in the summit that ultimately determine its success. I would like to thank all of the 2013 summit attendees for sharing their expertise in the excellent papers compiled here.