Dissertations in Context

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Director, Best Practices and Advancement
Council of Graduate Schools

September 13, 2018
https://www.flickr.com/photos/58869428@N05/ (View from west side descent on Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park)
To:
Advance scholarship for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, Invite marginalized voices in, & Send more confident professionals out, 

Look to the dissertation.

#YesTheDissCanDoAllThat
Ph.D. requirements in 1900

Two years of post-baccalaureate study in one “main subject” and one “subsidiary subject” and
An “elaborate thesis” on a “focused subject … written over the greater part of an academic year.”

Ph.D. requirements in 2018

• 2-3 years of post-baccalaureate study in at least one main subject*
• Comprehensive oral and written exams
• A proto-monograph that makes an “original contribution” to the field written over the greater part of 3-7 years
• An oral defense of the dissertation

*Not including time spent in a master’s program
Ph.D. requirements in 2018

• Demonstrated proficiency in at least one foreign language (sometimes more than one)
• Teaching, TAing, and/or RAing
• Pedagogy courses
• Dissertation prospectus
• Oral defense of the dissertation prospectus
• Professional development courses or workshops
Not to mention...

- Caretaking responsibilities
- Finding yourself (and your family) health insurance
- Holding down another job/ other jobs
- Keeping up with the barrage of news and current events to be considered an informed person
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#YesTheDissCanDoAllThat
We make sense of the world in ways beyond text—teaching and learning shouldn’t be restricted to that narrow band.

Nick Sousanis

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#YesTheDissCanDoAllThat
Holistic Review in Graduate Admissions

McCarthy & Kent (2016)
This model is a bridge between the traditional approach and new approaches for deaf academics.

Ellen Hibbard
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#YesTheDissCanDoAllThat
Graduate Student Professional Development
It’s not a matter of simply rapping. I really happen to have a strategy being enacted.

A. D. Carson
Perhaps, following [Hortense] Spiller’s suggestion that “the work of the intellectual is to make her reader/hearer discomfitted, unoriented and, therefore, self-critical,” we should discomfit and unorient the academy, and make it self-critical [if the academy is the reader/hearer of the message delivered by this project]
“Certain idols of narrative have lost their explanatory power for American culture in general and for African American culture, in particular, if its contemporary music tells us anything, so that the key question for the black creative intellectual now is: How does one grasp her membership in, or relatedness to, a culture that defines itself by the very logics of the historical?”

[92]

Spillers poses this query in her 1994 essay, which is a look back at Harold Cruse’s 1967 work, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From its Origin to its Present,[1] and situates the latter’s import on the moment in which the former is written. Spillers asks, in other words, “What is the work of the black creative intellectual, for all
“Let’s talk about time traveling, rhyme javelin, something mind unraveling.
Get down.”
—André 3000 [OutKast], “Return of the “G”,” Aquemini, 2008

composed the mixtapes from which “Owning My Masters” is composed each began with songs, which are reflective of my particular experiences when the tracks were composed. Those experiences translated into rhymes, poems, or instrumental musics.

of lyrics to the proper instrumental or instrumentals to proper lyrics or the writing of both together are unique to each piece of the larger composition...
Where will a biology PhD take you?

Arrows represent annual fluxes. Circles are total current workforce numbers.

86,000 current US biology PhD students

720 leave the US

9,000 receive PhDs

9,000 postdoc

7 years average time to degree

37% dropout

30% (2,500) don’t postdoc

70% (5,800) postdoc

1,900 to 3,900 foreign-trained PhDs start postdocs

30% do more than one postdoc

15% of PhDs get tenure-track faculty jobs within 6 years post grad.

29,000 current tenured and tenure-track faculty

21,000 current bio PhDs doing non-science jobs

22,500 current industry researchers

25,000 current non-tenure track academic positions

24,000 current non-research, science related jobs

7,000 current gov’t researchers

10% of former postdocs (up from 2% in 2010) consider themselves unemployed.

US PhDs spend an average of 4 years, but others must spend longer to account for number of postdocs.

18% of PhDs get non-tenure track academic jobs within 6 years post grad.

At this rate, <10% of entering PhD students will become tenure-track faculty. Yet, 53% rank research professorships as their most desired career.

Understanding PhD Careers for Program Improvement

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION
Nyquist and Woodford’s (2000, p. 6) continua of conflicting views about doctoral education, from the Re-envisioning the PhD project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. is a research certification.</td>
<td>Ph.D. requires broader professional preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Prepare students as academics</td>
<td>To prepare students for a variety of career options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. programs need to be very selective.</td>
<td>Ph.D. programs should admit all qualified applicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to decrease the number of Ph.D.s.</td>
<td>Need to increase the number of Ph.D.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. students should be privileged.</td>
<td>International students should be encouraged.</td>
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<th>Training</th>
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<tr>
<td>Best preparation is the apprenticeship model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of mentoring are needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding practices work well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding practices need to change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current model attracts the “best and brightest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current model discourages the “best and brightest.”</td>
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McCarthy (2017)
Articulating Learning Outcomes in Doctoral Education
Recommendations for Leaders in Higher Education

Based on the findings from CGS research, we conclude that greater collaboration among graduate schools, disciplinary societies, and faculty will help answer the aforementioned questions. The following recommendations have been developed for a broad range of leaders in higher education, including higher education associations, funders, accrediting bodies, higher education researchers, graduate deans, and graduate school staff.

1. **Engage graduate schools and graduate deans**, who typically oversee outcomes assessment and graduate student skills development on their campuses. Graduate deans are in a strong position to convene faculty leaders and advocate for quality graduate education across the disciplines.

2. **Engage disciplinary societies** to understand whether and how transdisciplinary frameworks and discipline-specific reference points might mutually inform one another.

3. **Engage employers** to understand how frameworks might be used and encourage better public understanding of the value of a PhD.

4. **Conduct a research study to better understand challenges encountered in implementation** with a cohort of institutions that reflects the diversity of U.S. doctoral programs and institutions.

5. **Conduct a deeper inquiry into the dissertation**, the key milestone in the U.S. PhD, focusing on the skills and knowledge that PhD candidates develop through the process of completing the dissertation. Consider how frameworks and learning outcomes might be used
Dissertations can develop:

- Ethical practice
- Knowledge of copyright and accessibility
- Understanding of ADA compliance and public outreach
- Skills in project management and data management planning
- Multimedia skills
- Writing skills
- Teamwork (co-authorship)
- Expertise in (inter)disciplinary methodologies
New dissertation models: Policies

Removing roadblocks

• Policies that preclude diverse formats
  (e.g., margin requirements, single authorship)

• Policies that prevent diverse viewpoints from being represented
  (e.g., English-language requirements)
New dissertation models: Policies

Articulating possibilities

• Explicitly allowing diverse formats, languages, co-authorship

• Explicitly allowing different kinds of experts to serve on committees

(e.g., tribal leaders, musicians, artists)
New dissertation models: Policies

Increasing impact

• Requiring lay abstracts, video abstracts, or other short forms

• Requiring an epilogue or extra chapter explicitly outlining broader impacts

• Requiring ADA compliance
Report by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of the Dissertation
University of Wisconsin-Madison
April 11, 2016

Committee Members:
David Baum, Botany
Kelley Conway, Communication Arts
Susan Coppersmith, Physics
Katrina Forest, Bacteriology
Martin Foyes, English
Daniel Kleinman, Graduate School (Chair)
Kris Olds, Geography
Randy Stoecker, Community and Environmental Sociology
Mario Trujillo, Mechanical Engineering

Background

Scholarly research is in the midst of substantial change as a result of the proliferation of technological innovations, the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration, and changing academic job markets (American Historical Association 2015; Blumenstyk 2015; Graff 2015; Jaschik 2009). Students are increasingly considering the utility of a doctoral education for jobs beyond the academic, and researchers across the disciplines are using “big data” with increased...
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Early Bird registration ends October 14

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STEM Professional Development
http://cgsnet.org/meeting-professional-development-needs-today%E2%80%99s-stem-graduate-students

Doctoral Learning Outcomes
http://cgsnet.org/articulating-learning-outcomes-doctoral-education

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