



Western Canadian Deans of Graduate Studies

2025 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, January 23rd

1:00 – 1:15 Opening Remarks Spirit AB
Dr. Shawn Fraser, Athabasca University

1:15 – 2:00 Introductions

2:00: 3:00 Re-envisioning Interdisciplinary Graduate Program Development through Generative AI Spirit AB
Ali Shiri, Vice Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Alberta

Generative AI and large language models present new and unprecedented opportunities and challenges for academic research and scholarship. With the growing number of foundation models and large language models, academic research is beginning to experience a paradigm shift. Simply put, large language models and multimodal generative AI applications can be utilized to generate and brainstorm research topics; formulate hypotheses, conduct literature review and synthesis, analyze and visualize qualitative and quantitative data, develop methodological and theoretical frameworks, recommend sources and citations, and summarize text and write abstracts. The growing interest in developing interdisciplinary graduate programs to address complex global and societal challenges calls for the strategic and AI-enhanced use of data and evidence to inform program development.

Spirit AB

In this presentation, I will provide an overview of the potential applications and value of generative AI and large language models in conducting research to support the development of interdisciplinary graduate programs. I will provide an introduction to the ways in which large language models such as ChatGPT, Perplexity.AI, and Google Gemini could be used to re-imagine the different steps in rationalizing and developing new interdisciplinary graduate programs. Specifically, I will provide



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examples of interdisciplinary graduate programs that could be developed, taking into account the different aspects of these programs, including the identification of potential disciplines to participate, strategies for targeting different categories of learners, key learning outcomes, and diverse program structures. An overview of the different generative AI and large language models will be provided to demonstrate how a diverse array of data sources (e.g. institutional strategic plans, data sources, provincial and national research and development priorities, industry market data) could be identified and synthesized to rationalize and support interdisciplinary graduate program development.

3:00 – 3:15

Break

3:15 – 4:15

Strategic Action Planning for Responsible and Partnership-focused Graduate Education,
Tracy Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, GPS, University of Alberta,
Ali Shiri, Vice Dean
Bobbi Schiestel, Faculty General Manager
Andrea Riewe, Strategic Initiatives Officer

In this presentation, we will provide an overview of the strategic action planning exercise that the University of Alberta Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) is undertaking. The key objective of this initiative is to position GPS in the context of significant institutional changes and the introduction of a new college model. These changes have provided an opportunity for GPS to take an innovative, collaborative, student/scholar-centered, and strategic approach to graduate education leadership at the university. A key aspect of this initiative is to take into account the current global graduate education opportunities and challenges to inform our strategic action planning and to address and lead change. We will provide examples of graduate and postdoctoral journey mapping as well as partnership development opportunities to initiate and encourage change at various program, department, faculty, and institutional levels. As GPS develops this strategic action plan, our emphasis is on re-imagining our priorities and our academic leadership roles to build and implement responsible graduate education.

5:30

Reception and Gala Dinner

Terrace
Ballroom



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Friday, January 24th

8:00 – 9:00

Breakfast Sponsored by



Terrace
Ballroom

9:00 – 10:00

Innovative ideas in the face of legacy best practices Kendra Stiwich, Director, Graduate Studies & Student Research, Vancouver Island University

Spirit AB

VIU's Office of Graduate Studies, as a centralized service unit is relatively new (began in 2022). As such it feels like we have inherited and been offered many legacies of advice or models of best practice. Environmental scans and peer support have been invaluable to our success. However, in addition to these practices, VIU has also been able to build on 'best' practice to create more 'innovative' practice based to institutional size and composition, current fiscal realities, as well as being nested within the Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity Office. Three such practices include (1) our governance structure based on regular institutional wide communication and comradery via our Graduate Studies Advisory Council and Graduate Studies Coordinating committee, (2) a research lab model for our Office of Graduate Studies (OGS), and (3) a student community model for building graduate culture done with specific strategic intentions.

As a panel, we would be able to share what the three practices look like and how we took strategic plan initiatives and made them operational including specific studies our 'research lab' OGS has taken on via graduate student researchers in partnership with our Faculty of Education.

10:00 – 10:30

Break

10:30 – 12:00

Keynote Address: Organizational Legacies and Transgenerational Responsibility

Spirit AB

Dr. Diego M. Coraiola, Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Peter B. Gustavson School of Business University of Victoria. He also holds appointments at EAESP/FGV in Brazil and IAE Business School in Argentina. Diego's research focuses on collective action and social change. He applies cultural and historical approaches to analyze how managers and entrepreneurs use symbolic



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resources to create, perpetuate and transform organizations, markets and institutions. His current research projects focus on memory work and the strategic uses of the past, sociohistorical injustices, and Indigenous organizing. His work has been published in the *Academy of Management Annals*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*, *Organization Studies*, *Management Studies*, and *Academy of Management Perspectives*. He is an Associate Editor at the *Academy of Management Learning and Education*.

Organizations are enduring structures. They have the capacity to last longer than their founders and channel the efforts of different groups of people to a specific set of goals and values. As such, they carry with them a history of the actions and decisions taken by prior generations of members inscribed in documents, routines, and stories, and how they have impacted the stakeholder communities involved with the organization. Those organizational legacies can be seen as positive and reflect the good the organization has done and the benefits it has provided for its stakeholders, but they can also embody a past of harm, destruction, and exploitation. They are transmitted from generation to generation of members, who hold the rights over the assets but also the responsibility over the actions taken by past generations of members. Managers have long focused on rights and resources but have been less prepared to deal with an organization's past of harm and destruction. In a context in which organizations are increasingly being called to explain and repair the damage caused by past actions and decisions and reflect upon ways of preventing further harm, managers must develop temporal reflexivity and engage with their organization's legacies of irresponsibility to advance reconciliation. Our transitional justice-inspired framework provides general guidance for managers authentically interested in rebuilding relationships and redressing the wrongs they have inflicted on stakeholder communities.

12:00

instage.io presentation

 AI assistant for Co-op & Career Programs



Terrace
Ballroom/
Spirit AB

12:15– 1:30

Lunch and catch-up time



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1:30 - 2:30	Deans' Business Meeting & Roundtable	Spirit AB
1:30 – 2:30	Administrators' Meeting & Roundtable	Spirit CD
2:30 - 2:45	Break	
2:45 – 3:30	Forgotten Heroes of Our Research Success, Postdoctoral Scholars: Professional Development, Community Forming, and Our Efforts for Their Future Job Aspects Cagri Ayranci, Associate Dean and Director of Postdoctoral Affairs, University of Alberta	Spirit AB
3:30 – 4:45	Best Practices Workshop, Kelley Main, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Manitoba	Spirit AB
5:00 – 6:00	Reception and Discussion	Terrace Ballroom