Humanities for What?
A Canadian Perspective

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Overview of Canadian scene

- 95 universities in Canada
- 83 universities offer graduate programs
  - variable size, scope and delivery
- 3 categories
  - G-15: research intensive with bio-medical
  - Comprehensive: research intensive
  - Smaller: primarily undergraduate
Public university model

• nearly all universities are public institutions

• education is a provincial jurisdiction (10 models)

• gov’t operating grants = 66% of funding (2006)

• investment gap vs increasing enrolments

• tuition: 2011-12: nat’l avg all grad levels = $5600/yr

• endowments
Program choice and degree sequencing

• research Masters are stand alone degrees

• rarely direct PhD entry + fast track MA to PhD is uncommon in HUMA disciplines

• HUMA disciplines: common for students to do MA + PhD at different institutions
Counting the Humanities (2008)

- HUMA* degrees conferred
  - 3510 MAs + 549 PhDs
  - *HUMA, Visual + performing arts, communications

- HUMA grads as % of grads all disciplines
  - 9.6% of total Masters
  - 10% of total PhDs

- avg PhD = 6-8 yrs for the +/-50% who complete
Enrolment trends

• Registered in program (2008: FT only)
  • 5500 PhD enrolled; 8000 Masters

• 1992-2008
  • 40% growth in HUMA grad student population

• Visibility on campus
  • 2008: HUMA grads = 11%; ugrad = 35%
  • 1992: HUMA grads = 16%  ugrad = 37% (1998)
Challenges to making the case for HUMA: off campus

• Perception that HUMA is esoteric + self-indulgent

• Low public ROI

• labor market supply + demand

• Bad publicity from journalistic attacks

• Straying from core ‘teaching’ mission (code for ugrad)
Challenges to making the case for HUMA: on campus

- humanities grads less visible on campus
- STEM attracts more revenue + greater prestige
- era of budget constraints + resource allocation
- unfavorable assessment metrics
Challenges within HUMA community

• Allergy to, phobia of, contempt for ‘indicators’ as manifestation of University, Inc.

• Slow or resistant to aligning graduate studies and training with non-academic spheres of engagement or employment

• Slow to fashion compelling narrative by cf STEM

• Tendency to be defensive
Understanding and Re-framing Public Discourse

• ‘Innovation’ mantra (R+D; S+T strategies; gov’t Ministries of innovation)

• But how do we understand true entrepreneurial innovation as a process or conceptual frame?

• People-centered innovation (patient-centered medicine; consumer-centered business)

• Where is the space for social innovation? creativity?
Beyond knowledge + expertise: Value and Worth

- privilege (intrinsic + social) value over (monetized) worth (S. Lerer)

- foreground skills acquisition + training (developing ‘Talent’ SSHRC)

- new value proposition of HUMA graduate education
STEM sells

• S&T leaders as compelling HUMA advocates: Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, Google (skills training)

• Genome Canada: link science of genomics to society, ethics, environment, economy, law, media

• NanoQC: role of SSH in knowledge translation

• embrace transdisciplinarity
Partnerships, collaborations + community engagement

- *Cirque du soleil* + Hexagram (Concordia University)
  http://hexagram.concordia.ca/

- *Ubisoft*: games developer + Université de Montréal
  http://www.ubi.com/ENCA/News/Info.aspx?nId=3430

- *Center for Oral History + Digital Storytelling*, Concordia University
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