



# 2024 GLOBAL SUMMIT: TRANSDISCIPLINARY & TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH TO SOLVE GLOBAL GRAND CHALLENGES

*The 2024 Global Summit on Graduate Education, a gathering of graduate leaders from 15 countries with the support of Educational Testing Service [ETS], met to build consensus around the principles of conducting transdisciplinary and transnational research to solve global grand challenges.*

*Transdisciplinary and transnational research will be vital in solving the global grand challenges – climate change, water management, human migration, and other issues – that define our times. These are big problems that require solutions that go beyond disciplines and national boundaries. For this research to succeed, however, it needs to be supported and recognized within a university system that is currently ordered by disciplines and organized in national institutions. For transdisciplinarity to thrive within this system, the scholarly community must support the development of a set of curricular innovations, including multiple supervisor models, multi-authored dissertations and other capstone projects. In addition, determining the efficacy of transdisciplinary and transnational research projects will require new metrics and assessment tools. They will also require new journals or other means to share and publicize the work. Finally, they must be built on amendments to the current tenure system to ensure that these contributions are recognized and can contribute toward scholarly advancement.*

*Concurrently, deploying transdisciplinary and transnationality to solve global grand challenges will require graduate education reforms as well as working with employers, government entities, nonprofits, and other partners. The action agenda provides a set of recommendations for how different stakeholders can act to support transdisciplinary and transnational research. Although these actions are broken down by stakeholder, success on a grand challenges scale will require collaboration between stakeholders to ensure actions do not get siloed.*



# PRINCIPLES

1. Collaborate in establishing agreed upon **definitions of key terms and concepts**.
2. Recognize that transdisciplinarity is a **process, not an outcome**, and will require support from and collaboration with the disciplines.
3. Prioritize **sustainable solutions** that address long-term impacts on society.
4. Facilitate **curricular innovations** that foster deeper multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives.
5. Focus on complexity and **multiple ways of engaging voices** of community, industry, and other partners.
6. **Include diverse voices**, particularly those from the Global South and indigenous communities, when establishing transdisciplinary and/or transnational research collaborations.
7. Support the development of graduate curricula that **align content knowledge and research modality with the jobs of the future** and a life-long learning mindset.
8. Create metrics/measurements/tools to **assess the scholarly and real-world impact** of transdisciplinary and transnational research.
9. Embrace **multiple supervisor models** as a way to support and mentor transdisciplinary learners.
10. Establish new promotion and tenure and other processes that **recognize and reward** the contributions made by transdisciplinary scholars.
11. Promote a **network-of-networks approach** to sharing best practices and promising models for transdisciplinary and transnational research.



*From the 2024 Summit, taken at the Cultural Arts Center at the Universidad de Guadalajara.*

# ACTION AGENDA

## *For Students*

- Seek mentors who will help you meet your research goals. Do not be afraid to take on grand challenges and do not allow disciplinary norms or national boundaries limit your research.
- Have a collaborative mindset when picking a research topic and designing a research plan.
- Develop negotiation, teamwork, and multilingual skills to prepare for collaborative research.
- Advocate for the inclusion of transdisciplinary courses in academic programs.
- Seriously consider the possibility of traveling abroad for your research either as part of a dual degree program or through study abroad or exchange opportunities.
- Be flexible and open with your research methodologies to consider perspectives from other disciplines, communities, and countries.
- Identify, join, and attend organizations that are using transdisciplinary and transnational frameworks to address grand challenges.
- Provide feedback on institutional support for transdisciplinary, transnational initiatives.

## *For Faculty*

- Be student-focused in your approach to graduate education and encourage students to pursue transdisciplinary and transnational research even when it cuts against disciplinary norms.
- Be an example to the next generation of scholars by incorporating transdisciplinary and transnational perspectives and collaborations into your own work.
- Have an access, equity and inclusiveness mindset when supporting graduate students interested in transdisciplinary or transnational research.
- Keep an open mind when exploring new research modalities, including transdisciplinary approaches that may employ multiple mentorship models and new approaches to dissertation and capstone projects.
- Help students build networks and, where possible, provide resources to support transdisciplinary and transnational research, such as travel support or conference fees to attend transdisciplinary association meetings.
- Work with deans and other administrators to promote policies that advance transdisciplinary and transnational research.
- Collaborate with other researchers in your field or discipline to challenge disciplinary norms and recognize research that falls outside of traditional fields or disciplines.
- Partner with administrators and students to identify new research areas and build structures and policies to support areas of research innovation.
- Identify, join, and attend organizations that are using transdisciplinary and transnational frameworks to address grand challenges.

## ***For Deans and Other Senior Administrators***

- Lead efforts to create reward systems that recognize leaders of research that is both transdisciplinary and transnational.
- Collaborate with university faculty and other senior administrators to modify promotion and tenure policies to recognize transdisciplinary research.
- Support transdisciplinary scholars whose research may fall between departments and who may need additional resources from the graduate office or equivalent unit.
- Identify opportunities for transnational research and work with partners within and without the university to build transnational partnerships.
- Lead efforts to create multiple pathways into transnational research for students who may be place-bound or have caregiving responsibilities, including short and virtual transnational research collaborations.
- While grand challenges are often global issues, their impact is felt locally. Work with faculty experts, local community members, and community organizations to identify the local impact of grand challenges and posit possible solutions.
- Identify funding streams to support transdisciplinary and transnational research.
- Promote administrative changes from a position of strength, not desperation or weakness.
- Encourage and promote participation in national and global competitions put out by government agencies and funders to solve grand challenges.

## ***For Funders***

- Work with communities and researchers to identify grand challenges.
- Have flexible funding requirements that allow for transdisciplinary and/or transnational research teams.
- Recognize that grand challenges affect local communities. Ameliorating the human cost of grand challenges is as important as finding solutions.
- Support international researchers and research teams when looking to fund global grand challenges research, especially researchers from the Global South. The best ideas may come from abroad.
- Promote the development of new assessment metrics for transdisciplinary research.
- For Governments and Policymakers
- Advocate for transnational research partnerships and create policies and resources that facilitate and support these collaborations.
- Include transdisciplinary research in national funding programs.
- Collaborate with university partners and researchers when creating programs and policies to address grand challenges.
- Organize forums and platforms to share insights and results from transdisciplinary research.
- Fund or co-fund programs focused on critical problems that welcome transdisciplinary and transnational research approaches, such as the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, which is partnership between three dozen nations bordering the Atlantic Ocean to work together to address common challenges and act as stewards of shared resources and ecosystems.