

TRaCE 2.0

Track, Report, Connect, Exchange

<http://iplaitrace.com/>

How do we mobilize the talent, learning, and energy of graduate students in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts for the benefit of the students themselves and for the public good? How do we reorient the university toward a more dynamic relationship with the multiple sectors of work and action outside the academy? How can a newly conceived university contribute to the advancement of Canadian society?

Making a better humanities PhD

The Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas (IPLAI) is dedicated to developing new ideas and new programs that address these questions. In 2013, we gathered academic leaders from Canada and the USA to think about the humanities PhD. Together we wrote [the White Paper on the Future of the Humanities PhD](#), which recounted how few PhDs get academic jobs, made an argument for the value of the work—inside and outside the academy—done by humanities PhDs, and recommended reforms so that the PhD would lead and would be seen to lead to a multiplicity of worthwhile and fulfilling career paths.

Among other ways of getting the word out, we were pleased to present on the White Paper at the Conference Board of Canada's Skills and Post-Secondary Education Summit and at the Annual Conference of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies funded an IPLAI "Future of the PhD" plenary workshop at its annual meeting.

The positive uptake of the work encouraged us to create the [Future Humanities Project](#), a national conversation about the PhD coupled with a conference at McGill, May 2015. Twenty-six universities prepared reports, videos, and vision statements in advance of the McGill conference. One outcome of the meeting was a national determination to work for the betterment of PhD students and graduates, especially by keeping track of what PhDs do with their degrees and by giving the humanities a more prominent and dynamic social role.

The McGill conference led directly to the [TRaCE Project](#). A collaboration of 24 universities, TRaCE tracked over 2,700 humanities PhD graduates from 60+ departments, reporting on what they have achieved, connecting them with each other and with graduate students and faculty members, and fostering exchanges of knowledge and knowhow inside and outside the academy. Most of the approximately \$370,000 funding for TRaCE went to graduate student researchers across Canada: they learned how to use their research skills in new ways, and their work is helping to change the university system itself. The TRaCE website features new data on PhD outcomes, stories of students and graduates, and a networking capacity. On account of TRaCE, a community that did not know it existed is becoming visible to itself.

Building a bigger humanities

Starting in September 2017, we will begin a five-year project that will extend our work to social scientists (both PhDs and doctoral students), Fine Arts MFAs and PhDs, and DMus grads, as well as to humanities PhDs and doctoral students. TRaCE 2.0 will be a national data-collecting, narrative knowledge-gathering, and community-building endeavor—the first of its kind in the world. TRaCE 2.0 aims to create an infrastructure for a new national community in the arts, humanities, and social

sciences dedicated to mobilizing humanistic knowledge for the public good. The bigger humanities we envision will include poets, actors, artists, musicians, sociologists, political scientists, and anthropologists along with historians, philosophers, and literary scholars. It will have the capacity to enhance the lives of people of all kinds, contribute in new, powerful ways to policy and government, and help create a more productive, just, thoughtful, and beautiful society.

The Human Sciences Doctorate in Canada (HSDC) Project

The four-year HSDC Project (2017-2021) is designed to become the research side of TRaCE 2.0. HSDC has three principal objectives:

- to develop an account of the value of the PhD in the humanities and social sciences, the DMus, and the PhD and MFA in fine arts—value for the individual degree-holder, the institution of the university, and Canadian society;
- to produce evidence-based recommendations that will contribute to the reform of humanities, social sciences, and fine arts (also called art and design) PhD (and MFA and DMus) programs across Canada;
- to map out a way forward toward a big-tent constellation of disciplines we are calling (after the French model) “the human sciences”—a group of disciplines oriented toward the study of the human world (as opposed to the study of the natural world)—and also to develop ways of crossing boundaries among these disciplines, both in graduate programs and in university research.

HSDC will make use of the statistical data and narrative knowledge about PhD outcomes already gathered by the TRaCE project and to be collected by TRaCE 2.0. The fourth year of the project will see a major international conference on the new human sciences. The principal project deliverables will include three white papers, respectively on the value of the PhD to individuals, universities, and society, a series of essays to be posted online and/or to appear in journals such as *Policy Options*, *University Affairs*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Higher Education Review*, a book by various hands about the new human sciences, and a performance/exhibition designed to incite public exchange about the value of the human sciences at the top of their form.

Note that funding for HSDC is pending the outcome of our Insight grant application to SSHRC.

Press coverage

Our work on the PhD has been featured in policy publications and in the national press. Here is some of that coverage: ["The Future of the Humanities PhD,"](#) ["Humanities scholars try new ways of talking about the PhD,"](#) ["Where are our PhD grads?"](#) ["Academics plant seeds of revolution in the Ivory Tower,"](#) ["More PhDs finding jobs as tenure-track professors."](#)

How TRaCE 2.0 will benefit your university

- Universities will be able to undertake well-informed graduate program reform in light of a clearer picture of the career pathways of PhDs;
- since not everything that counts can be counted, students, faculty, and departments are justifiably distrustful about data-only tracking exercises. TRaCE 2.0 combines statistical data

with robust narrative accounts of the challenges, opportunities, and value of doctoral education;

- PhD students and faculty members will develop a broader, evidence-based understanding of how the PhD leads to multiple career pathways rather than to only one;
- the methodology we have developed for tracking grads on the web makes it easy to do longitudinal studies of PhD outcomes;
- TRaCE 2.0 is designed to undo the still widely-held idea that not getting a tenure-track job after graduation amounts to failure. The many kinds of success reported by the project will help redress the alienation experienced by the many grads who did not get TT jobs. That PhD students and the doctoral programs themselves need to connect with the grads, especially for what the grads have learned about the multiple career pathways that lead from the PhD, will help restore community between the grads and the universities where the grads earned their PhDs;
- if Canadians in all walks of life are to understand and appreciate the value of humanities, social sciences, and fine arts research and teaching at the top of their form, they need to know much more about what PhDs do inside and outside the university;
- the long-term goal of the TRaCE project is to create an infrastructure for an international human sciences teaching and research community that will include the universities and multiple non-academic sectors of work and action.

TRaCE will track the ABDs

The project will undertake to gather career data and narrative knowledge on a large representative sample of former PhD students who did not complete their programs. This group represents approximately half of all those who enter PhD programs in Canada. There has been to date no concerted effort to learn about why they entered PhD programs in the first place, why they left before completion, or what their work in the programs has contributed to their professional and personal lives. Clearly the university system has a lot to gain from a better understanding of the challenges and benefits of doctoral programs for ABDs as well as for PhD graduates.

We will support the work at your university

We have worked hard over the past year to develop the methodology and the means to make TRaCE work—everything from how to do an ethics review, to the best ways to find the career paths of PhD grads on the web, to how to ensure the soundness and interoperability of the data, to how to create an effective interview template, to how to do a good interview, and much more. We've developed webinar training sessions for the student researchers and their faculty advisors, policy about the rights and responsibilities of all the participants, clear guidelines about privacy and confidentiality, and a day-to-day support system for the students who are doing so much of the work. The TRaCE quantitative analyst will organize the data about your PhD outcomes and return those data to you. The project writer/editor will help your grads tell their stories. The stories of your grads will be featured on the TRaCE website.

We need your support

The three projects leading up to TRaCE 2.0 have been funded mostly by SSHRC. We will continue to seek funding from SSHRC (for the HSDC Project) as well as from partner organizations, foundations, and individual donors, but we will need a commitment from participating universities in order to create the larger, transformative TRaCE 2.0 project.

We ask each university to contribute a minimum \$16,000 per year, 2017-2022. Four thousand of that amount will go to cover key head office work; the rest will be spent on the participating universities' own campuses, most of the funds going to the support and training of the graduate students on your campus who take part in the project.

The funds from participating universities will allow us to recruit both a recent PhD as Project and Website Manager and the graduate student researchers who will undertake the Stage 1 data collection. The Stage 1 student researchers will come from universities across the country. They will be trained and supported by the TRaCE director, the project manager, and the TRaCE liaison officer.

Other central costs will be covered by partnership, donor, and foundation funds. These include student researcher training and support, data organization and analysis, writing and editing of the narrative archive, English-French translation, and website development, as well as the recruitment of a prominent artist and a public intellectual—two individuals able to articulate movingly the goals of the project and able to draw in a larger public. Note that four of these seven tasks will be undertaken by PhD students—that of project liaison officer (working with the student researchers), data analyst, writer/editor, and translator.

TRaCE 2.0 head office costs (per annum, 2017-2022)

Costs covered by participating universities

- Project and website manager—\$60,000
- Stage 1 researchers--\$20,000

Costs covered by partners, donors, and foundations

- Project liaison officer—\$15,000
- Copywriter/editor — \$15,000
- Quantitative data analyst — \$15,000
- Translator—\$15,000
- Artist-in-Residence—\$15,000
- Public Scholar—\$15,000
- Website development—\$10,000

