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Panel: Educating Future IS Researchers

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Panel: Educating future IS Researchers

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I. OVERVIEW

As the information systems discipline grows, so do the number of programs offering graduate research degrees. These include honors (or fourth year) with research components, masters by research, and doctoral degree programs. Within these programs, we expect students to gain a deep understanding of developments and thinking about information systems and information management from both academia and practice. At the same time, we require them to obtain research skills and practice rigorous research. Thus students are faced with a quantum leap in expectations and required skills.

In research, the onus on students is high: they need to find a referent discipline, select a research method and paradigm, defend the research relevance, and fulfil the requirements of adding to a body of knowledge. Frequently students are starting these programs with limited or no prior research training and with under-developed critical thinking skills. How do we maximize theses or dissertation completion rates? How can we structure programs to ensure that research is not forgotten on the library shelves, but rather forms the basis of a research career, that grows into a useful contribution to the body of knowledge? In posing these questions, we are suggesting that Ph.D. education is more than merely writing a thesis; it includes the initiation of scholars into the community of IS researchers.

II. THE PANELISTS

Using a mixture of wit, wisdom, and anecdotes from teaching experiences, the panelists will address the following issues, in order of presentation:

Beverley Hope

Dr Beverley Hope will Chair the panel and moderate the discussion. Currently a Lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington, Dr Hope is actively involved in theses supervision as well as research supervision and teaching in a one-year, full-time honors program designed to initiate students into the research culture. She has lead workshops and presented papers on teaching IS research skills to novice researchers. Beverley will introduce the panel and provide a background to the nature and context of IS graduate research.

Trevor Wood-Harper

Prof. Trevor Wood-Harper will present a base model for a doctoral school. A professor at both University of Salford and University of South Australia, Prof. Wood-Harper is an experienced action researcher and supervisor of more than 20 successful PhDs in the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Australia. Trevor will outline the doctoral school model proposed for Salford, and discuss issues arising from supervising doctoral students at a distance.

Kevin Grant

Dr Kevin Grant will outline an approach to teaching Information Management concepts and skills to honors students. Dr Grant is Head of the School of Business Information Management and Technology at Bell College of Technology. He has been involved in the development and delivery of a flexible and meaningful approach to teaching at the honors level. The approach, Information Challenges, meets the competing demands of teaching topical subject matter which captures the students' imagination and at the same time develops a strong theoretical background and competency in research skills

III. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The panelists offer practical, pedagogical, and balanced perspectives based on extensive teaching experiences around the world. Their intent is to actively involve audience members, using their comments, experiences, and biases to generate a meaningful exchange. To some, the adoption of taught graduate research programs, particularly PhD, remains controversial. It is hoped that these opinions will emerge, and that participants and panelists will be engaged and challenged.