Examining Transdisciplinarity in iSchools Dissertations (2010-2011)

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Abstract

Two defining characteristics of the iSchools are that they are interdisciplinary and aim to address societal problems (Dillon & Rice-Lively, 2006; Thomas, von Dran, & Sawyer, 2006). This study examines what "interdisciplinary" means in the iSchools context and the extent to which "societal problems" are being addressed through iSchools dissertation research. With this emphasis on broader societal impacts, the vision for the iSchools closely aligns with the concept of transdisciplinarity (Thompson Klein, 2008). Drawing from the literature about the continuum of cross-disciplinary approaches (unidisciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary), this study adapts and extends a transdisciplinary dissertation assessment tool created by Mitrany and Stokols (2005). This poster presents preliminary results from an assessment of 175 dissertations completed in 2010 and 2011 by students in the 21 iSchools as of 2009 (according to Wiggins and Sawyer, 2011). The purpose is to establish a snapshot of the level of transdisciplinarity among the iSchools.

Keywords: transdisciplinarity, interdisciplinary, broader impacts, iSchool, dissertation

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