



Graduate Student Response Following Work in an Interdisciplinary Organization

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Research Questions: Assessing Benefits

- What benefit, if any, does a multi-disciplinary environment provide graduate student research assistants?
- After their involvement in the organization has ended, do students perceive that their careers and research trajectories have changed for the better?
- What skills have they gained, and what opportunities have opened or closed for them?

The Role of Graduate Students in a Boundary Organization

The **Decision Center for a Desert City** works to bring research to those whose concern is for moving toward a sustainable Greater Phoenix by making connections across the interface separating scientists and decision makers.

Graduate Students Have One of Two Roles

1. **Graduate research assistants**, as part of their work in DCDC meet weekly to learn about one another's fields and to engage in interdisciplinary projects that may benefit DCDC and the larger community to receive cross-disciplinary exposure and support.
2. **Contracted graduate researchers** work extensively on a DCDC funded research project with other investigators.



DCDC provides student researchers the opportunity to present their research to the community.

Former Student Responses Gauge the Impact of Involvement in an Interdisciplinary Setting

The study is designed to measure outcomes of the respondents' experience as a DCDC graduate student researcher. Survey results will help DCDC directors and personnel to realize how their programs affect student participants, which will then open up future avenues for program evaluations and evolution. Additionally, because the study team is comprised of current student researchers, the results will also reveal how the program may affect their future careers.



Student researchers attend monthly briefings where they listen to and are able to interact with a panel of water/climate experts.

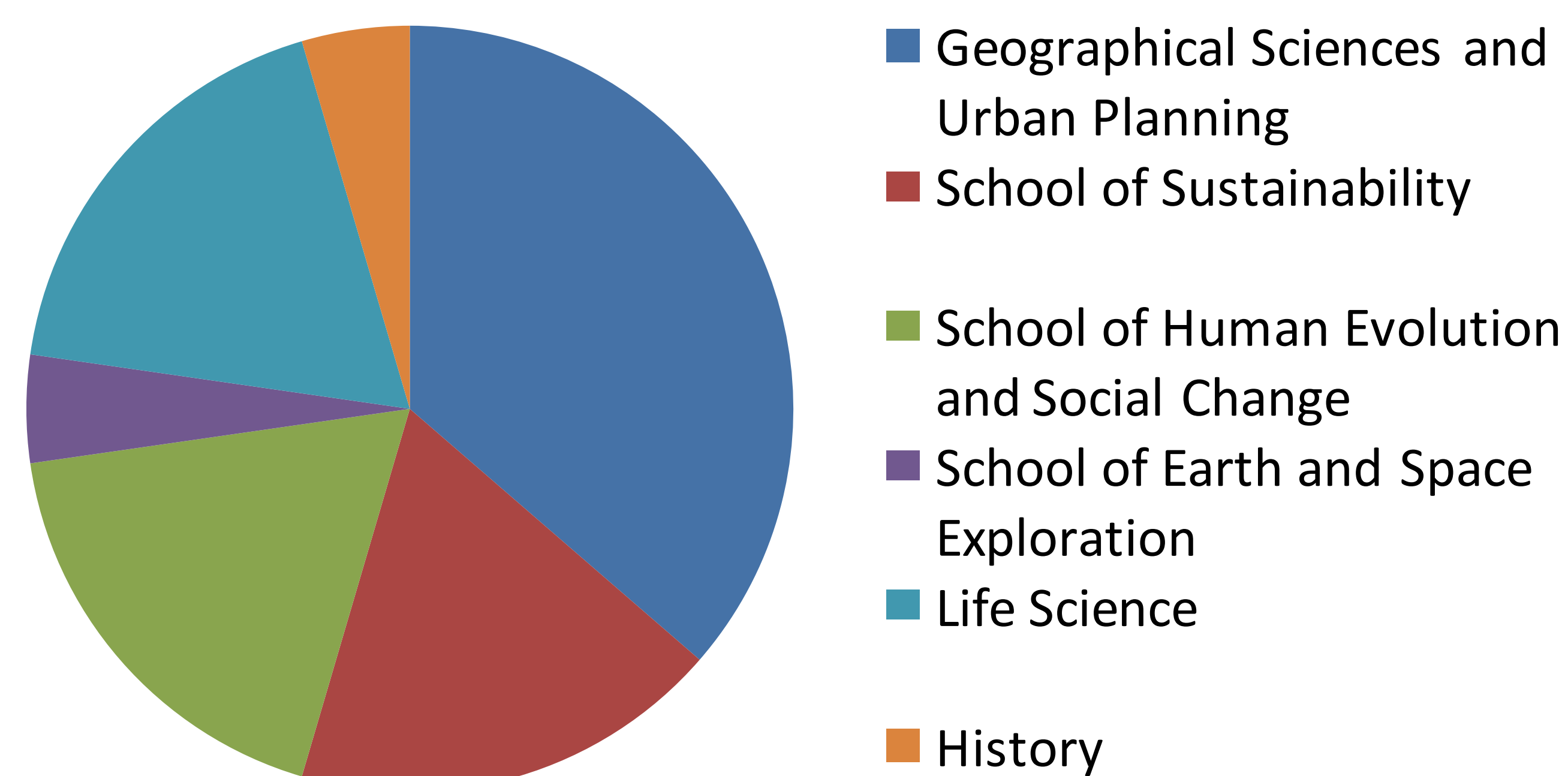
Interdisciplinary Exposure is Fostered through Interactions between Student Researchers

DCDC student researchers come from diverse backgrounds and engage in a variety of research studies

As a capstone, students display their research in annual poster sessions to share their work with other students and the community. Examples of student research include:

- Does truth flow like water?: The role of social networks in the flow of scientific understandings in a water management controversy.
- Participatory GIS for Boundary Research? The Case of the Phoenix Area Water Education Community
- How evapotranspiration varies across urban neighborhoods - application of LUMPS model

Graduate Student Researchers are Diverse in their Fields of Study



Lasting Outcomes of Experience

The current research will survey past participants of a multi-disciplinary group to gather their **perspectives** on the program, their perception of **opportunities** that opened or closed as a result, and any perceived **impact** on their ultimate career skills and successes. Sample survey questions include:

- For each project in which you were involved, were there investigators in 1, 2, 3, or more disciplines?
- Did you attend monthly Water/Climate Briefings or monthly DCDC presentations?
- To what degree have these skills benefited you since your experience in DCDC?
- Which of these skills do you now wish you had been exposed to while at DCDC?

Surveys will be Administered and Analyzed

By March 2011, surveys will be completed online. Responses will be reported anonymously and compiled. Analysis will serve to summarize how respondents perceive the lasting effects of their experience at DCDC. Questions garnering measurable answers will be reported by percentages and those eliciting narrative answers will be discussed and compared. Ultimately, the results to the survey and analysis will appear in a report that is to be submitted to DCDC by May 2011.



Student researchers have access to the Decision Theater, an interactive, 3D-visualization facility.

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