UC SANTA BARBARA

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Getting Creative

The partners in any interdisciplinary collaboration hold a solid understanding of each research field involved — or at least, they should. Getting to that point often takes longer than expected.

UC Santa Barbara's Graduate Division hopes to lessen the learning curve with a new series of workshops meant also to spark fruitful collaborations among doctoral students across myriad departments.

Mary Robson of UK-based Durham University will visit UC Santa Barbara to lead multiple workshops, and give a talk, the week of January 28. A creative facilitator for the internally acclaimed interdisciplinary research projects Hearing the Voice and The Life of Breath, Robson also will hold individual meetings and consultations during her time on campus.

"We are excited to bring Mary Robson to campus, as she is known for creative facilitation of projects that span the humanities, science and medicine," said Carol Genetti, the Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean of UC Santa Barbara's Graduate Division. "By attending Mary's talks and workshops and consulting with Mary during her visit, we hope many UCSB researchers will learn new ways of facilitating the development of interdisciplinary projects. We also hope to benefit from her insights in planning the future of UCSB Crossroads."

The upcoming events in fact are associated with UCSB Crossroads, a program of the Graduate Division that provides a year-long, multifaceted interdisciplinary

experience for doctoral students. The initiative brings together faculty and graduate students from different departments to collaborate on interdisciplinary research, which is then translated [?] into the undergraduate classroom.

“In early Crossroads projects, faculty and graduate students were taken aback by how much time it took to develop an understanding of each other’s disciplines. This, in turn, impacted how quickly the group could work towards productive interdisciplinary collaboration,” Genetti said. “Thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation, we were able to hire Joshua Kuntzman, an expert in interdisciplinary teaching, to develop and implement a series of workshops for project participants. These help groups facilitate the process of negotiating disciplinary differences and developing a shared vision.”

Robson will begin her visit to campus by giving the talk “Hearing the Voice and the Role of Creative Facilitator,” Tuesday, Jan. 29, at 4 p.m. in the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITRAL), Room 1576 inside UC Santa Barbara Library (first floor, ocean side). The talk is aimed at faculty, graduate students, undergraduates and anyone interested in learning more about creative facilitation.

On Thursday, Jan. 31, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Mosher Alumni House, Robson will lead a workshop on “The Future of Interdisciplinary Education at UCSB,” for faculty, researchers and staff interested in interdisciplinary collaboration and education.

A second workshop with Robson, also Jan. 31, from 4–6 p.m. in the Center for Spatial Studies, 3512 Phelps Hall, will be targeted specifically to graduate students and faculty interested in interdisciplinary research, teaching and collaboration. Each participant in “Beyond Disciplines: Mapping the Knowledge” will be invited to create a blueprint of their knowledge of their own discipline and related disciplines, and what direction they envision for their scholarship, including interdisciplinary research. The resulting plans, diagrams and mind-maps will then be discussed in small breakout groups.

“I am thrilled to welcome Mary Robson to our campus,” said Sowon Park, a professor of English and key organizer of the series for UC Santa Barbara. “She has pioneered a new kind of science-humanities collaboration at Hearing the Voice, lessons from which we can learn to think about how best to facilitate interdisciplinary research and teaching at UCSB.”

These events are sponsored by the UCSB Crossroads program of the Graduate Division and the College of Letters and Science Division of Humanities and Fine Arts. For further information, or to schedule a meeting with Mary Robson during her visit, please contact Mary Hegarty, associate dean of Graduate Division (hegarty@graddiv.ucsb.edu) or Sowon Park (sowonpark@ucsb.edu).

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.