"History of Connecting UX Academia and Industry"

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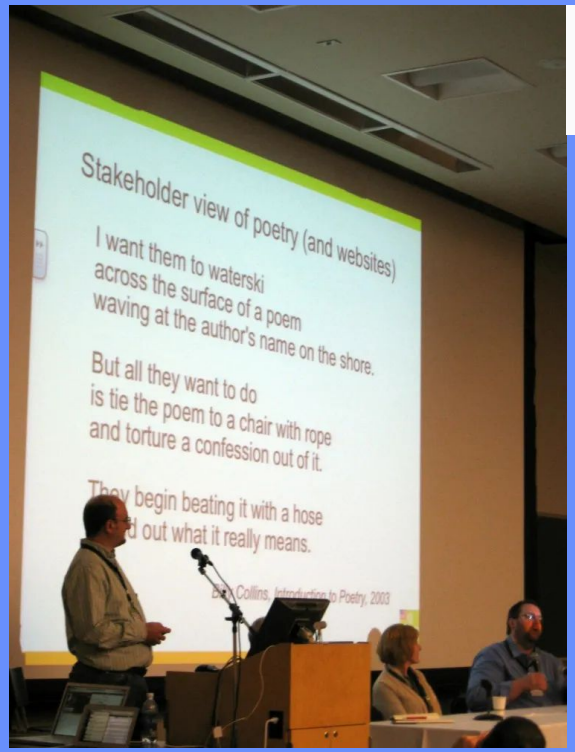
Research Analyst, Stratascale, OhioX UX Roundtable Leader

April 1, 2023 • 3:30 P.M.

U-M Marsal Family School of Education, Whitney Room 1315



World Information Architecture Day, 2012
University of Michigan

Internet User Experience Conference, 2007
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Practitioner
(Designer, User Researcher, ...)

It feels like I am making it up as I go along. How do I gain knowledge, confidence and credibility?

I want my research to have an impact on the world. How do I get people to apply it?

Researcher (Faculty)

Student

This is fun! Working in industry will be just like class, right?

This is hard to teach! How do I keep up? How well am I preparing students for jobs in industry?

Teacher (Faculty)

Practitioner
(Designer, User Researcher, ...)

Student

INDUSTRY

ACADEMIA

Researcher (Faculty)

Teacher (Faculty)

Questions? Comments?

- What are your “gap” experiences?

Everybody uses technology. People have user experiences.
User-centered design skills can be learned. Defining, designing and delivering good experiences is part art and part science.
Managing customer and employee experiences is big business. It depends on business models, culture, and more.
There are many paths to being a UX professional. You can learn on the job, study on your own, or get a degree.

	Industry	Gap	Academia
Impressions people get when interacting with technology	Applying scientific principles of design and behavior		Discovering, understanding, and explaining how people interact with technology
Activities we do to define, design, and deliver good experiences	Applying methods, processes, skills in various contexts, often at scale		Inventing, evaluating, and especially teaching methods, processes, skills
Capabilities of organizations, such as management of customer and employee experiences	Coping with organization politics, facilitating change, “digital transformation” UX team hiring, budgets, etc.		Management studies (business) Case studies
Communities, disciplines and fields of study	User experience Interaction design Information architecture User research Instructional design		Human-computer interaction Design (Visual, Comm., Industrial) Information science Anthropology Education

UX from 4 perspectives

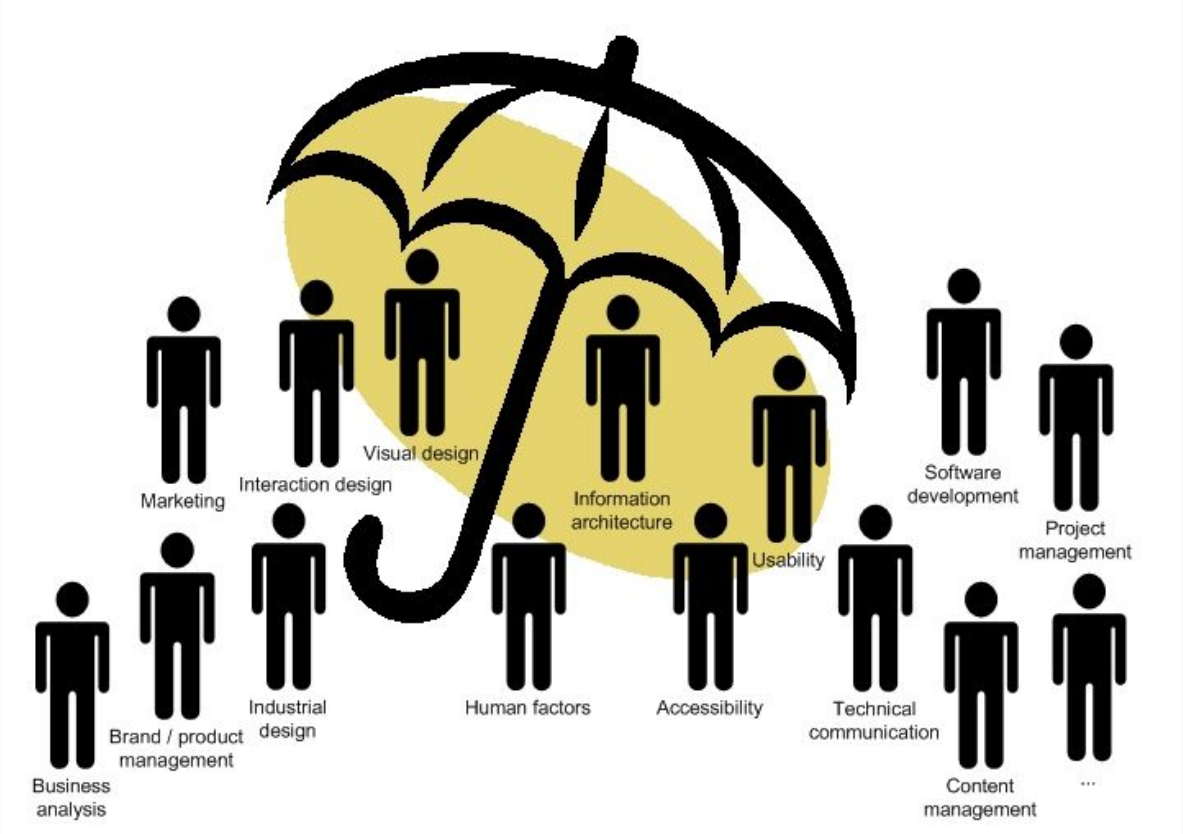
Questions? Comments?

- Impressions
- Activities
- Capabilities
- Communities

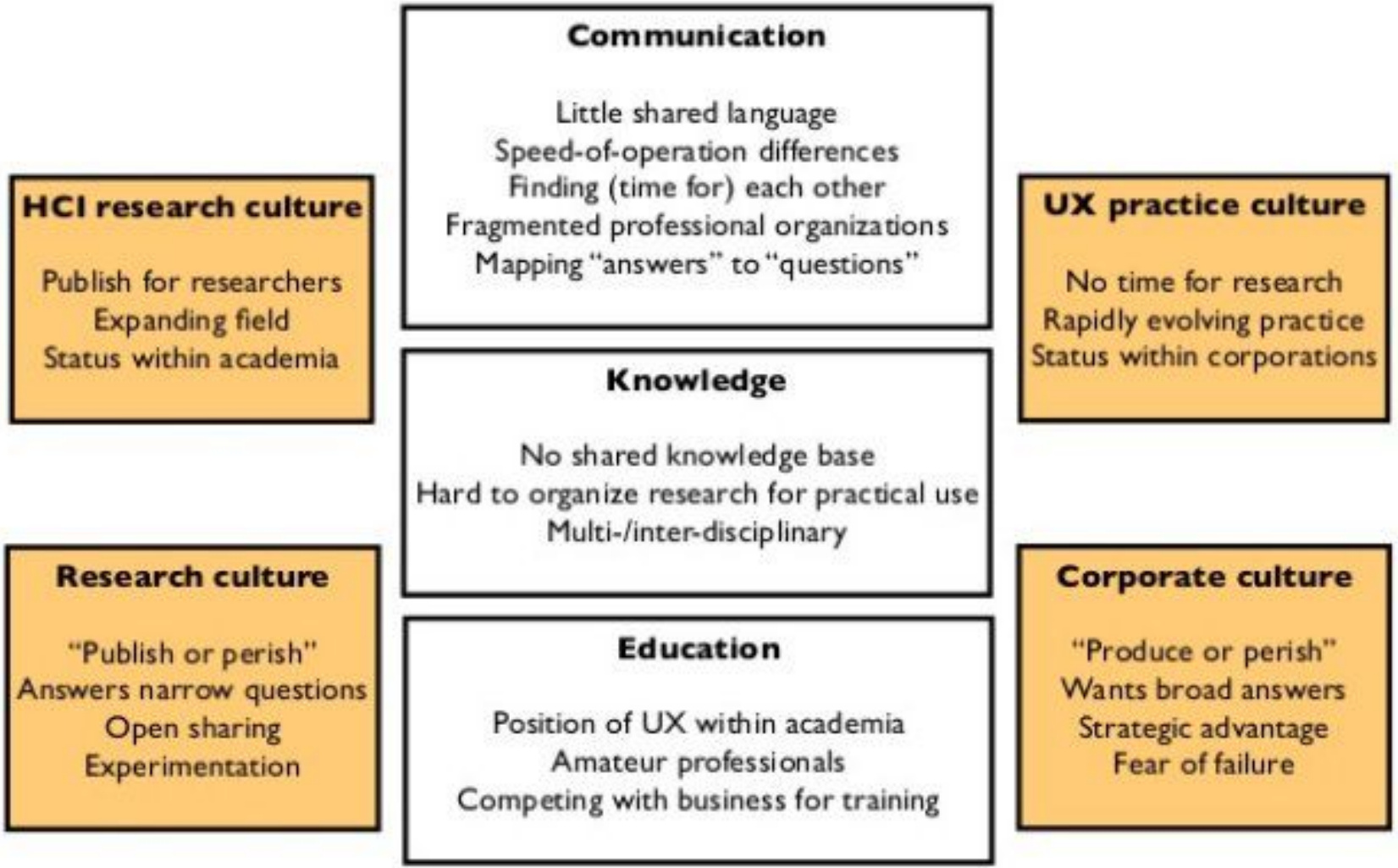
Personal timeline

- 2005: UXnet Development Consortium
- 2010: First "#UXRPI" tweet
  - CHI conference workshop on "Researcher-Practitioner Interaction"
  - IA Summit & IUE "napkin drawing" sessions
  - Don Norman writes about The Research-Practice Gap
  - World Usability Day Dayton keynote
- 2013: UXPA conference "idea market"
- 2014: AIGA Connecting Dots conference presentation
- 2015: Nottingham Symposium & Susan Dray Lifetime Practice Award
- 2016-17: Michigan State University research project
- 2018: Decipher conference
- 2020+: 24 Hours of UX, SIGCHI Partnerships, OhioX
- 2023: UX@UM!

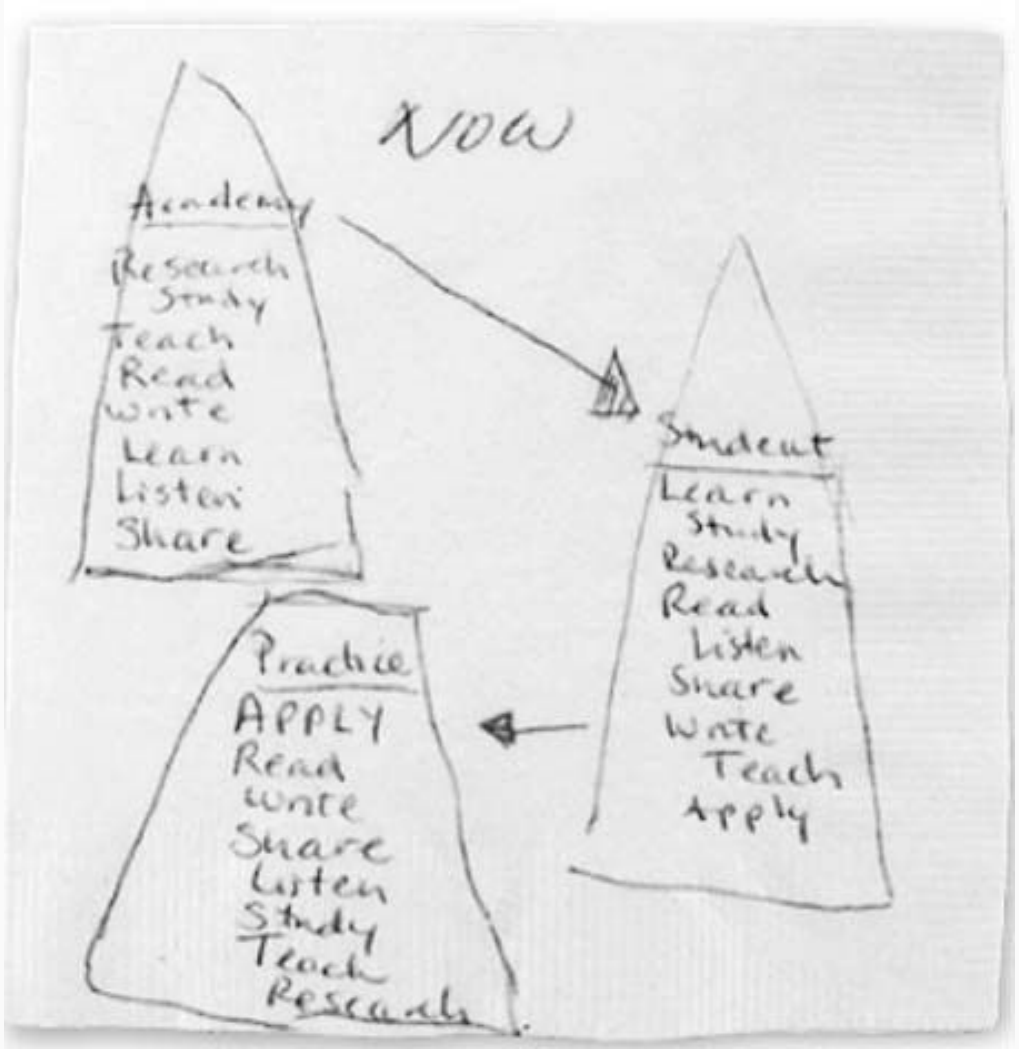
We have to collaborate “on the job” as UX professionals: why is it so hard to “collaborate as professionals” outside of our jobs?



2005


Communication
Little shared language
Speed-of-operation differences
Finding (time for) each other
Fragmented professional organizations
Mapping "answers" to "questions"
HCI research culture
Publish for researchers
Expanding field
Status within academia
UX practice culture
No time for research
Rapidly evolving practice
Status within corporations
Knowledge
No shared knowledge base
Hard to organize research for practical use
Multi-/inter-disciplinary
Research culture
"Publish or perish"
Answers narrow questions
Open sharing
Experimentation
Education
Position of UX within academia
Amateur professionals
Competing with business for training
Corporate culture
"Produce or perish"
Wants broad answers
Strategic advantage
Fear of failure

2010


NOW
Academy
Research
Study
Teach
Read
Write
Learn
Listen
Share
Student
Learn
Study
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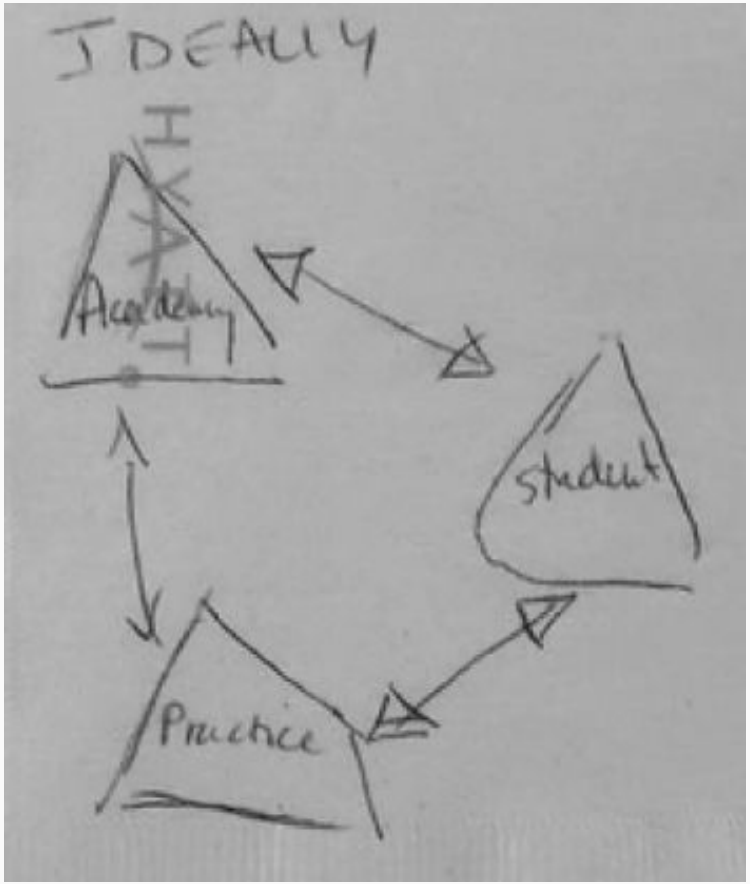
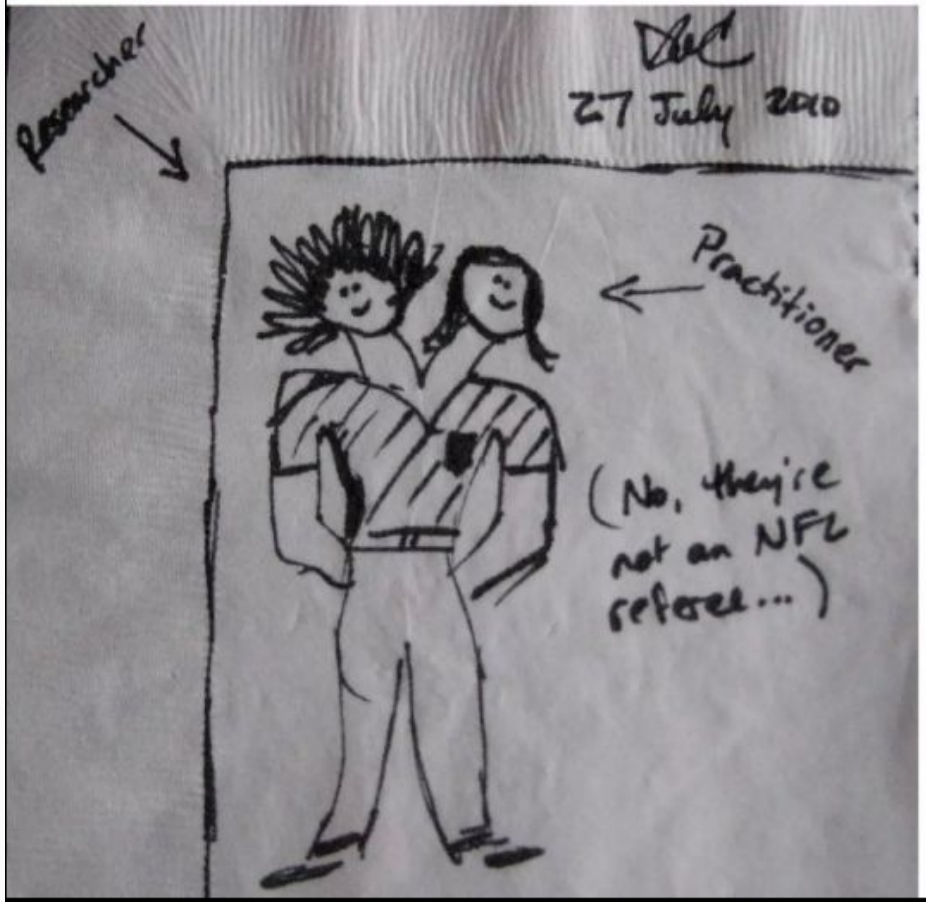
Listen
Study
Teach
Research

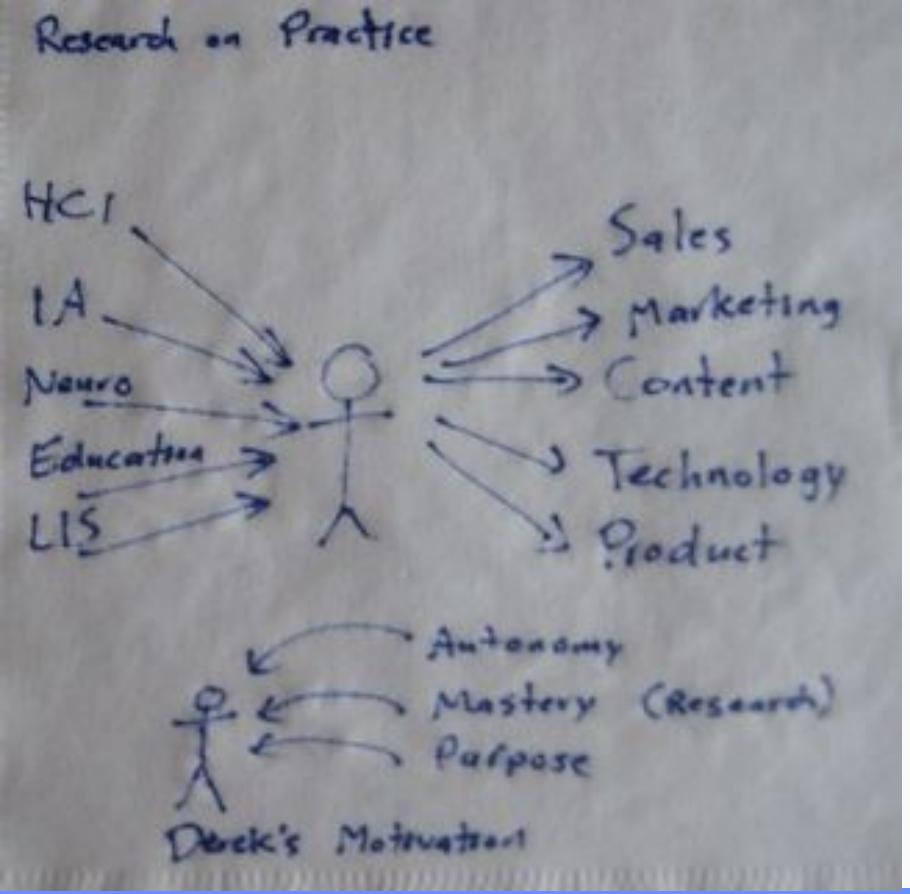

IDEALLY
Academy
Student
Practice

Danielle Cooley (a practitioner)

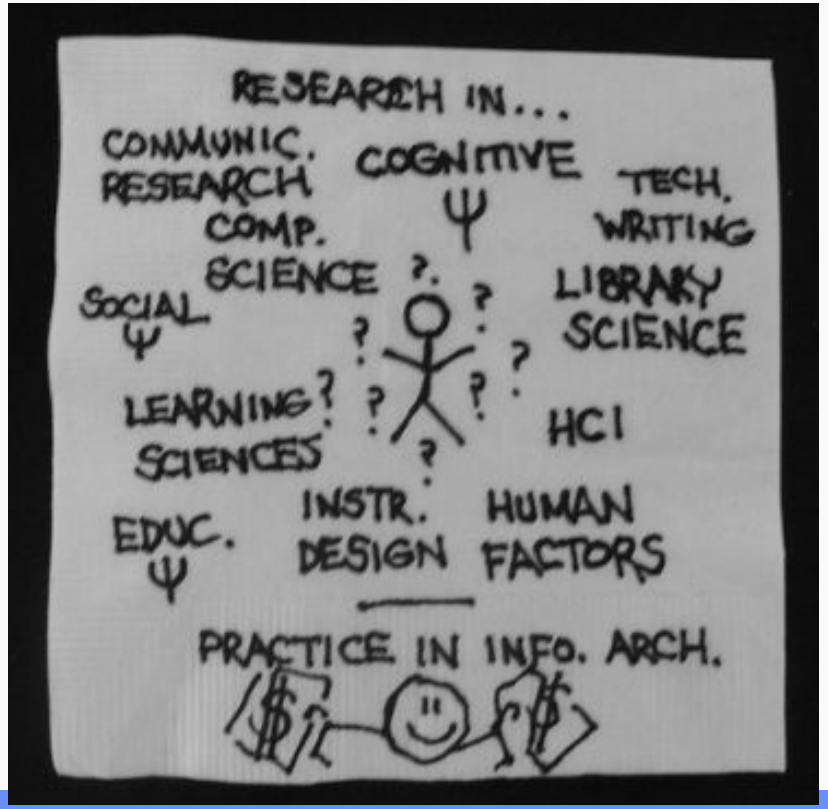


To contrast with this, Mark Ackerman (U of M SI) drew:

"one head, two bodies" (researcher body, teacher body)

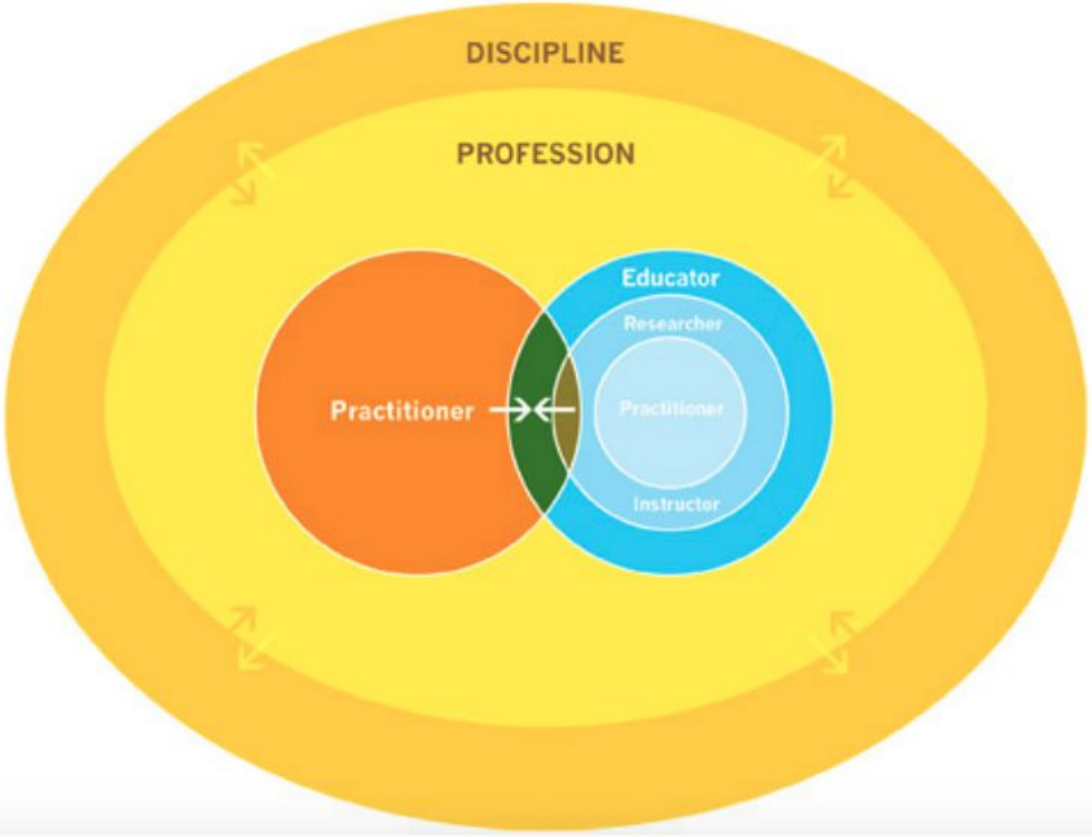


2010



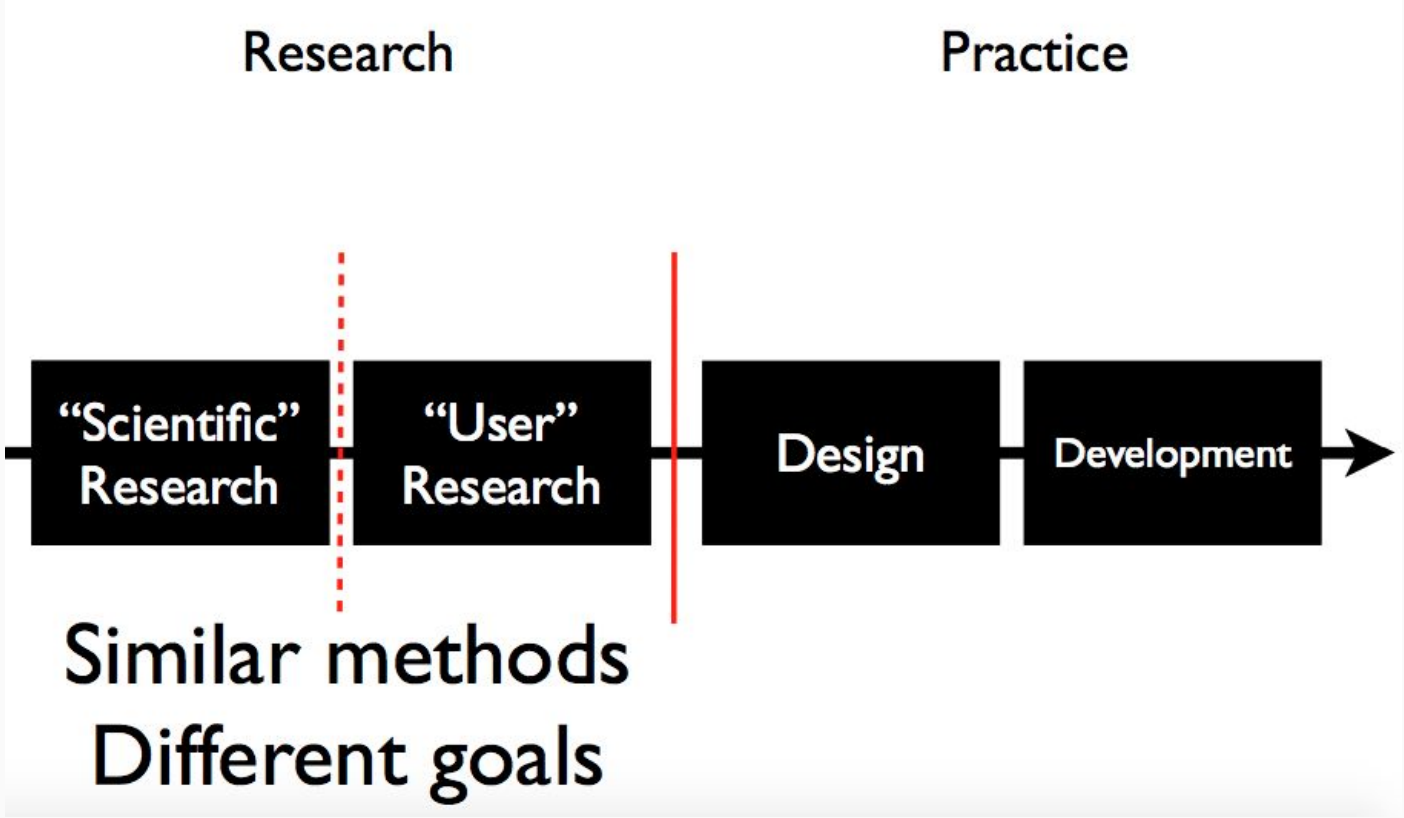
Many practices, Many disciplines

Design's (over-simplified) View of a Profession



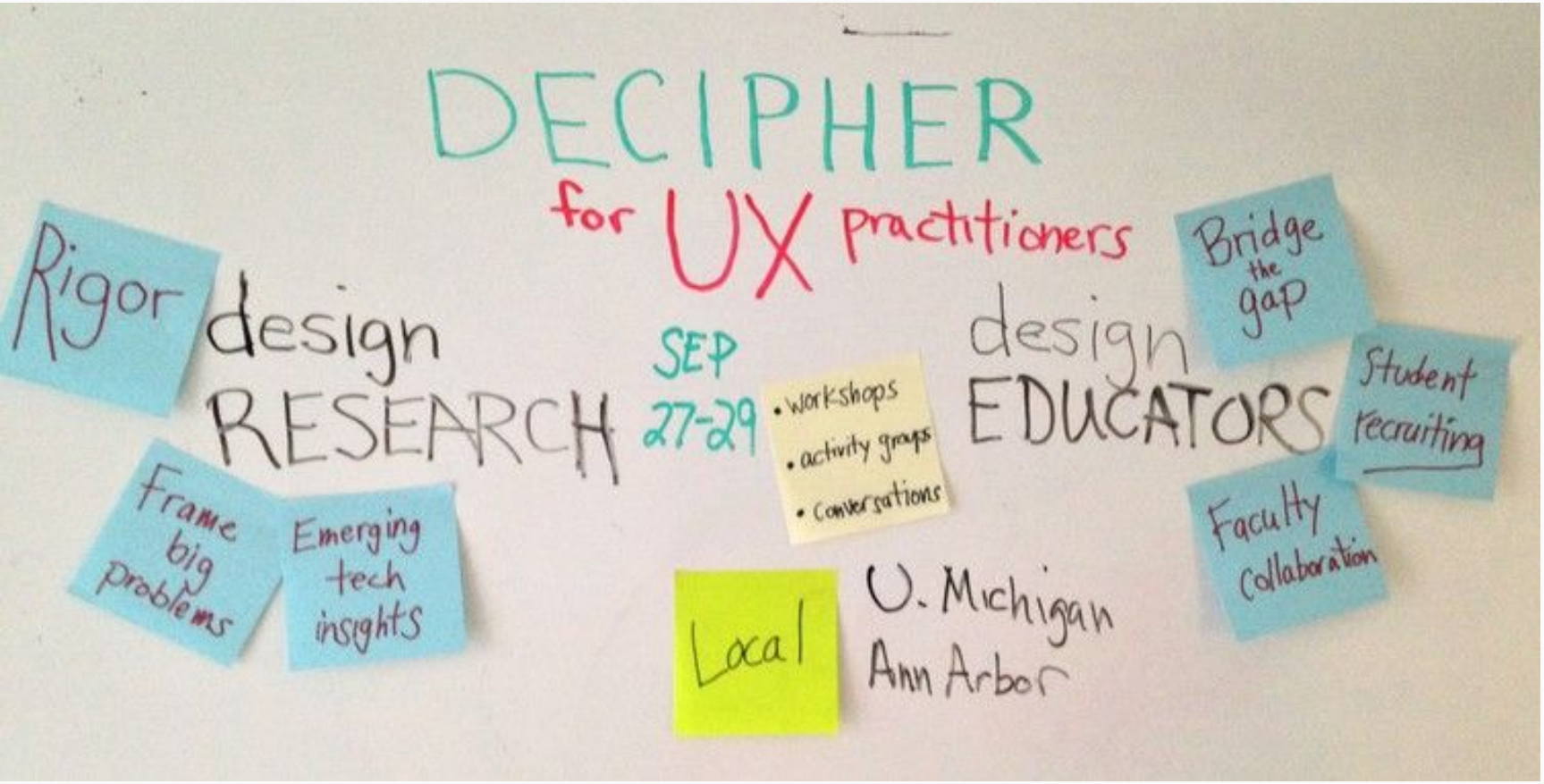
2014

WTF “research”



2014

2018



Hang out with faculty and learn about *rigorous* design methods

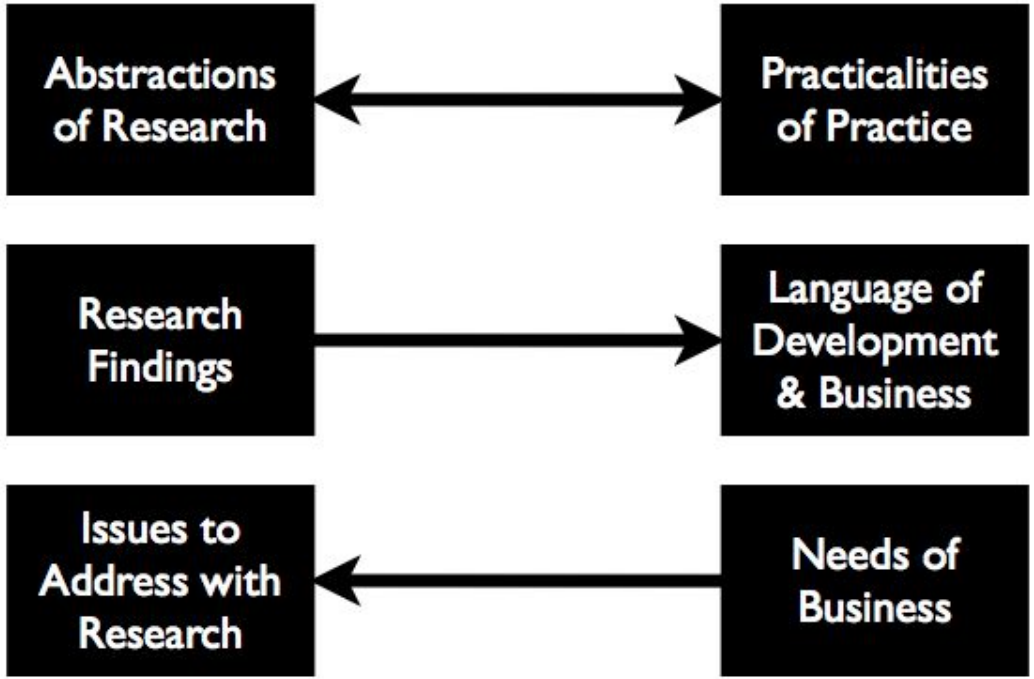
Questions? Comments?

- Communication, Knowledge, Education challenges
- Practitioner vs. Researcher
- Multi-, Trans-Disciplinary
- “Design”, “Research”, “Design Research”

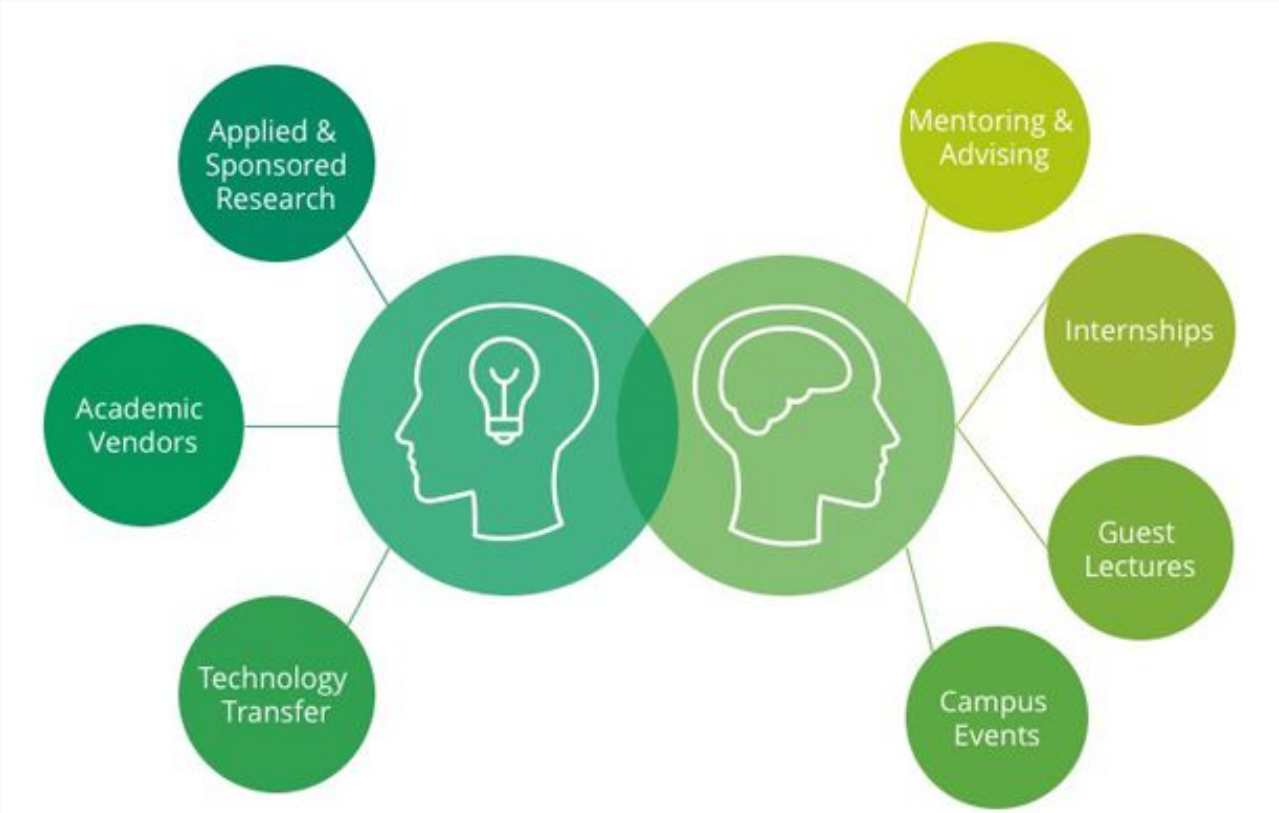
Don Norman's Translators (e.g., medical)

"Stop pretending that researchers and practitioners speak the same language"

2010

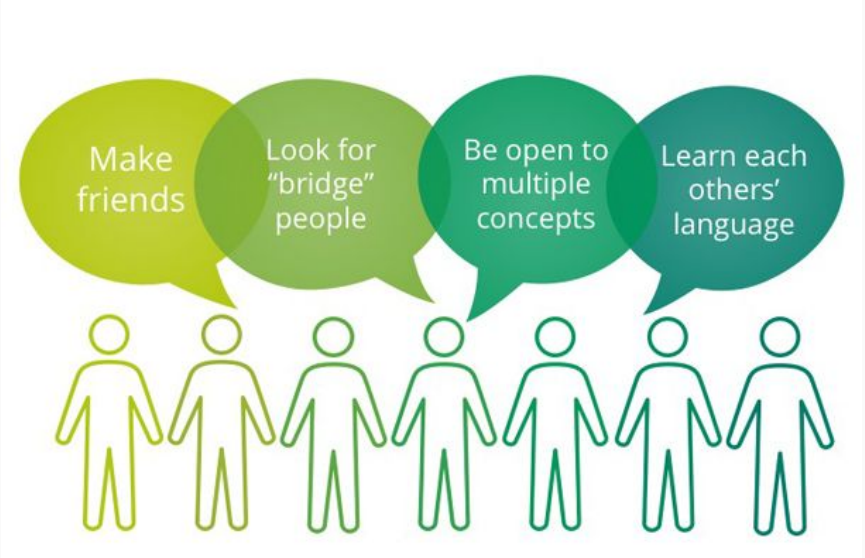


What Academics & Practitioners can do



2017

- Practitioner: Reach out to academics and academic units
- Community organizer: Invite an academic researcher to give a talk
- Academic: Find practitioners at mid/senior levels
- Both: Get personal satisfaction from the project, commitment to the long term



Questions? Comments?

- Professional translators (vs. everyone’s job)
- What academics can do
- What practitioners can do

UX@UM: "connecting academia with industry"

UX@UM is a two-day conference for **graduate students**, run by graduate students, connecting innovators with industry experts

RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

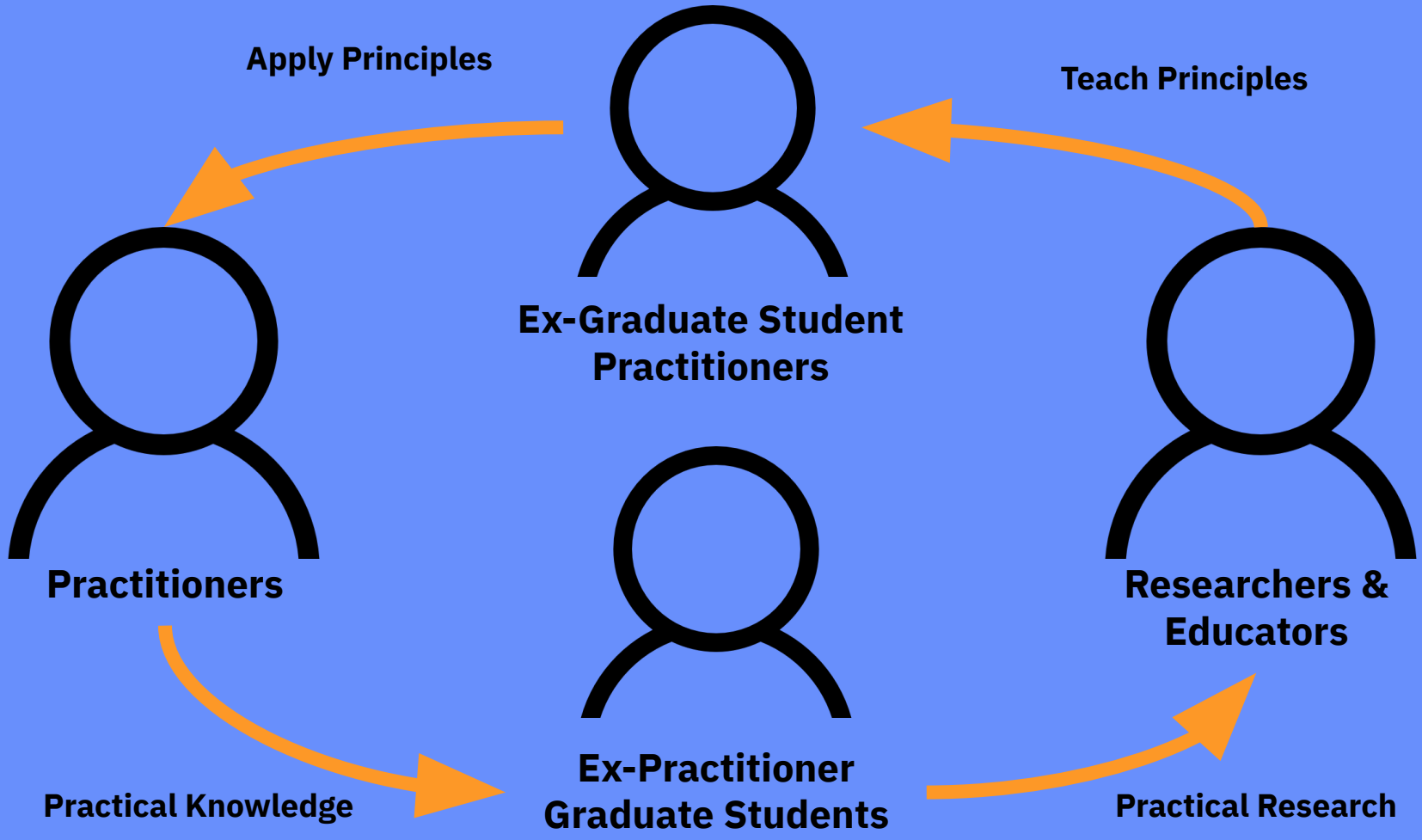
MARSAL EDUCATION

MICHIGAN ENGINEERING

STAMPS

UMSI

Engaged Learning Office


Apply Principles
Teach Principles
Ex-Graduate Student Practitioners
Practitioners
Researchers & Educators
Ex-Practitioner Graduate Students
Practical Knowledge
Practical Research

Final Questions? Comments?

- Do you want to help connect academia & industry?
- Why or why not?

Appendix

UX as Field of Study

"What do I need to learn in school in order to get a UX job?"

A field of study focused on how people behave in technology-enabled contexts and how to creatively address human needs

Human-Computer Interaction	Carnegie Mellon > Computer Science > HCI Institute *Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, Fine Arts, Technology, Software Engineering* Akron > Computer Science > HCI class
Library & Info Science	Kent State > Information (iSchool) > User Experience Design
Graphic & Visual Communication Design	Tri-C > Visual Communication & Design > Concentration in Web and Interactive Media Ohio State > Design > (Industrial Design | Visual Communication Design) Miami > Creative Arts > MFA in Experience Design
Cognitive Psychology	Ohio U > Psychology > Specialization in Cognitive Psychology Ohio State > Center for Cognitive and Brain Sciences *Psychology, Computer Engineering, Industrial Engineering, ...*
Business Management	Case Western > Weatherhead > PhD in Management (Design & Innovation)
Rhetoric & Writing	Michigan State > Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures > Experience Architecture
Other	Ohio State > New Media & Communication Technology > HCI track