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# Global education on the principle of equal exchange

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Global education should rest on the principle of the equal exchange of knowledge, is what Laurie Patton, dean of arts & sciences and professor of religion, [Duke University](#), firmly believes. She elaborates, "It cannot be a short-term exchange, but a long-term and sustainable model, where education institutions and countries engage in equal exchange of ideas, research, students, faculty, and so on. Not simply short-term initiatives such as internships or gap years. For example, students should study the same modules with the same teams both in India and in the US to get a truly balanced global perspective on issues."

Patton was visiting India to further strengthen Duke's engagement with institutions here. "The big debate in higher education globally is about skills development and its relationship to liberal arts. No matter where you land in the debate, a transformational rather than a transactional 'checklist' model should be at the heart of all curricula." She feels students should be taught how to connect the dots between education and the larger society that they live in. "How is the knowledge they are gathering going to impact society? Education in the 21st century has to

integrate social issues, and do so through the study of history as well as contemporary society."

She asserts that 21st century education requires three skills — innovation, adaptation and integration. Innovations — in the remix, information-laden culture we now live in — are as much new combinations of information, data, social networks, as in the discovery of new laws of nature. Both forms of discovery, according to her, are important for innovation to occur.

Adaptation is not only the ability to be flexible, but the ability to imagine ways of thinking and working and living that have never existed before. Students today must respond to changing conditions more quickly than ever before.

Integration is not only the ability to put things together, but also to find new ways in which knowledge fits into the world. "We live in a world in which the discreet, siloed forms of knowledge remain some of the most powerful driving forces in our lives." And yet that fact can make integration all the harder. She says, "In the arts & sciences, we help students make those connections and make their knowledge fit, as they build their lives."

Patton, who received her BA from [Harvard University](#) and her PhD from [University of Chicago](#), is the author/editor of eight books on South Asian history, culture and religion. She translated The Bhagavad Gita for the Penguin Classics Series and has written two books of poetry. Her current research for two forthcoming books focuses on religion in the public sphere and on women and Sanskrit in contemporary India.

On the emerging trends in areas of study within the arts & sciences, she says global health, environmental science, neuroscience, human development, and technology and culture, are key emerging fields. [Trinity College](#) of Arts & Sciences comprises 36 departments (social sciences, humanities and sciences), with a focus on liberal arts education for undergraduate students.

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