Attendees shared perspectives on challenges associated with building graduate communities as well as tips and strategies that support these efforts.

**Challenges**
- Graduate community building can be a challenge for programs that straddle both the Arts and Science sides of the faculty
- It may be difficult for students to develop sense of community when many are on campus infrequently. Perhaps there are different community needs for students in different types of programs (e.g., professional versus research programs)
- Community building events needs a champion. Student-run initiatives are very well done at the start and end of year. In the middle, this falls off and that's when a champion and support is needed
- Silos and isolation may exist unless there are opportunities for natural exchange of research, informal meeting/lounging space, etc.
- Some international students may be a bit leery and this sometimes makes it difficult for them to integrate; we need more information and awareness about this possibility
- It is important to ensure that opportunities for community engagement exist. We need to ensure students are not feeling alienated due to lack of opportunities for community interaction and support

**Tips and Strategies**
- One program has established a seminar for students in both the Arts and Science sides of the faculty, indicating this helps to bring everyone together to discuss their research
- Some programs hold social events throughout the year
- Many programs reported having lounge space in their area that enables graduate students to congregate and socialize. Programs also noted that students connect with each other in their offices and lab space as well
- Students and programs are becoming more apt at using social media. Students in some programs exchange cellphone numbers and send text messages to one another to support connections. Students in other programs have used Facebook or welcoming pages on the program’s website as way of welcoming incoming students
- Students often take the initiative for arranging welcoming events
- Some programs host pizza lunches, aka “venting sessions”, as a way of building connections and relieving stress
- Upper year graduate students arranges a holiday party and first year graduate students arranges graduation party for second years
- Some programs host brown bag lunches during for students/faculty talk about their research
- One program talked having a map of Canada/World in the “main” office on which pictures of students are tacked to identify where they are from. This has proven to be a great ice breaker
• Some programs host events that bring people together such as: BBQ (staff assisted), raising funds for the local food bank, etc.
• One graduate assistant described a “Wall of Fame” she has created in her office. When students graduate, they are invited to offer something special for program faculty and staff to remember them by. Alumni and current students alike often remark on this and it has proven to be a great way of building the students’ connection with the program
• Some programs set up a secure website with pictures of incoming students. This is a great way to help students connect with each other as it is always helpful in putting a face to a name

Suggested Initiatives for further Graduate Community Building
• The School of Graduate Studies could host “drop-in” sessions in Gordon Hall for students to mingle with other students from outside of their discipline area
• Programs and the School of Graduate Studies could invite current graduate students to volunteer in guiding and orienting incoming students around campus
• Important to recognize that community building is more effective if it takes place at the grassroots – done by students for students. Students can be successful in this with facilitative support and the provision of opportunities by their programs
• Efforts to build graduate community is important because the graduate student experience that is formed in part through connections, friendships formed and collaborations all contributes towards a sense of belonging
• Some community building events/activities should seek to support students with partners and children
• Effort is also needed to assist students in connecting with the Kingston community