



**SIT** SCHOOL FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
TRAINING  

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**GRADUATE INSTITUTE**

# COMMENCEMENT



**SATURDAY, AUGUST 21  
2021**



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER • Aicha Naomi Cooper**

*World Bank international development expert and  
World Learning Trustee*

Aicha Cooper is a development professional who has dedicated her life to supporting initiatives and organizations that aim to improve the lives of marginalized people around the world. A Liberian American, she brings an interesting perspective to the development space by drawing from her experience of living through the Liberian civil war. A frequent speaker and champion for the rights of women and children, Ms. Cooper believes in the power of the human connection through storytelling as a means of finding common ground to build a more peaceful world. She shares her personal refugee story of resilience with many audiences to raise awareness of the global refugee crises while highlighting the impact of civil conflict on women and children. She views challenges as opportunities to work in close partnership with others to find solutions to some of our world's development challenges.

Ms. Cooper holds a BA in International Studies from the University of Minnesota Duluth and an MA in Sustainable Development, International Policy, and Management from SIT Graduate Institute. She has helped a wide range of organizations deliver impact-driven programs and yield measurable results. She currently works at the World Bank, the largest international development institution, which is dedicated to ending extreme poverty and building shared prosperity.



**FACULTY SPEAKER • Dr. Leslie Turpin**

*Associate Professor and Chair, MA in TESOL,  
SIT Graduate Institute*

Dr. Leslie Turpin began working with SIT's MA in teaching programs in 1989, after teacher training in refugee camps in Thailand. She received her PhD in integral studies at the California Institute for Integral Studies in 2004 and her MA in TESOL from SIT in 1985. Dr. Turpin's research on intergenerational passing of cultural memory within a Laotian-American community led her to an exploration of the relationship between heritage culture/language vitality and the support of artists in a community. Her other interests include refugee adjustment, cultural identity and memory, cultural and linguistic revitalization, reflective practice, classroom inquiry, teaching practice, and teaching supervision. She has served as the tour manager for a Laotian-American folk opera troupe, Sau Sing Pin; she has also worked as the managing director of Sandglass Theater, an internationally acclaimed puppet theater, where she produced two international festivals. She is currently chair of the Board of Trustees at the Vermont Folklife Center.



**STUDENT SPEAKER • Danielle Purvis**

*Graduating Student, Climate Change and Global Sustainability Class of 2021*

Dani Purvis received an MPH from Emory University in 2016 and BA from Georgia State University in 2010. As a social scientist by training, advocating for vulnerable populations has unified her diverse professional experiences. Prior to joining the Climate Change and Global Sustainability program at SIT, she coordinated intimate partner violence and alcohol abuse research studies, conducted HIV research and counseling for black men who have sex with men in Atlanta and in informal settlements in Nairobi, and developed national US healthcare quality measures for elderly, veteran, and disabled populations. SIT has provided her with opportunities to work at the human-environment interface and to advocate for the most vulnerable populations of our time—ecosystems. During her practicum with the Gund Institute for Environment, she was a field crew team member collecting forest and stream data and wrote a forestry research article for nonscientific audiences. For her capstone, she conducted research with Dr. Narriman Jiddawi to evaluate the long-term impact of human activities on seagrasses in Zanzibar, Tanzania. In her spare time, she enjoys all outdoor activities, playing board games with family and friends, reading books of any genre, and snuggling her cat Kitty Warrior Princess.



**PRESIDENT • Dr. Sophia Howlett**

*School for International Training*

Dr. Sophia Howlett holds a PhD in European Renaissance Philosophy and Literature from York University, UK, and an MA and BA in English from Cambridge University. She has taught, researched, and written in philosophy, literature, and comparative and international higher education policy, and has extensive international experience. She was an Open Society Institute Fellow, a visiting scholar at Harvard University, and a consultant, trainer, and evaluator with Open Society Foundations, Amideast, the Institute of International Education, and others. She has worked at the ministerial level with a variety of countries to support higher education including Georgia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, and Kosovo.

At Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, Dr. Howlett founded a program focusing on international higher education development for emerging democracies. She increased access to graduate education for Romanians; oversaw creation of the first LGBTQ network for Eastern Europe; and developed faculty support programming recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

# COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

## **Processional**

## **Welcome**

Dr. Michael Zoll

*Dean of Student Health, Safety, and Well-being, School for International Training*

## **President's Address**

Dr. Sophia Howlett

*President, School for International Training*

## **Faculty Address**

Dr. Leslie Turpin

*Associate Professor and Program Chair, SIT Graduate Institute*

## **Student Address**

Danielle Purvis

*Graduating Student and Degree Recipient, Class of 2021*

## **Keynote Address**

Aicha Naomi Cooper

*World Bank and World Learning*

## **Conferral of Degrees and Presentation of Diplomas**

Dr. Sophia Howlett

## **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Sophia Howlett

## **Recessional**

**Master of Arts in  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Christy N Bray

Amanda Burman

Francesca Cresta

Blake Edward Dixon

Katherine Rose Lloyd

Danielle Marie Purvis

**Master of Arts in  
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

Hana Driss

Nadia Leigh Wiggins

**Master of Arts in  
INTERCULTURAL SERVICE, LEADERSHIP, AND MANAGEMENT**

Adj Marshall

Eric B. Sussman

Richard Jean Widmer

**Master of Arts in  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

Luiz Augusto Silva Batista

Shady Elfaham

Aaron Abraham Mendez

Anna Minnie Profatilova

Shannon Lindsley Tobin

**Master of Arts in  
PEACE AND JUSTICE LEADERSHIP**

Nathaniel Corbin Johns

Rachael Kentenyingi

Yelena Kogay

*(continued)*

**Master of Arts in  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Nyasha Frank Chibanda  
Randal Stefan McKoy  
Charles Agboreta Mfortow  
Terence Ooi Guan Tseng  
Christine Tchaptchet Pafe  
Derek Joseph Schwartz  
Kennidy Irene Stood

**Master of Arts in  
TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (TESOL)**

Matthew Barge  
Emily Josephine Cyrier  
Ciara Nicole Ertle  
Avery Claire Lussier  
Brooke K. Norvish  
Ana Killa Palomino  
Amy Corinne Parks  
Mathew Harrison Peters  
Kate Marie Steckmest  
Anita Gwatlloe Tjan  
Elisabeth Noelle Wichser-Krajcik

**Graduate Certificate in  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

Dana Merwaiss  
Jennie J. Robinette

*This list includes the names of those who were awarded degrees from SIT Graduate Institute in December 2020 and May 2021, as well as the candidates who are reasonably expected to complete all degree requirements for the August 21, 2021, conferral date as of this printing.*

*The office of the Registrar maintains the official graduation list and will issue diplomas and/or certificates upon completion of all requirements in accordance with the policies of SIT Graduate Institute.*

## ACADEMIC REGALIA

The origins of academic dress date back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when universities were forming. The long gowns that were worn may have been necessary for warmth in unheated buildings.

SIT has created its own tradition—and a visual image—to represent the international and intercultural aspects of the institution’s participants and mission. As an alternative to the customary black robes, graduates may choose to wear one of 120 robes specially crafted in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Thirty of the robes were stitched by hand by Lahu Hill tribe women as part of a project coordinated by WEAVE (Women’s Education for Advancement and Empowerment), a nongovernmental organization working in Thailand with Hill Tribe communities and refugees from Burma. Those involved with these extraordinary efforts included Ampown, who became the leader of the women’s handicraft group at the age of 16, and SIT alumna Veronika Martin.

The Ecumenical Women’s Centre in Cape Coast, Ghana, produced 30 robes that display the adinkra designs symbolizing humility, strength, wisdom, learning, excellence, bravery, fearlessness, democracy, and unity in diversity. The centre had its beginnings as a meeting place for elderly women of the community, and currently operates the Rising Sun Batik Vocational School—a lending library and full service restaurant. Julialynne Walker, a former SIT Study Abroad academic director, was instrumental in obtaining these robes.

The remaining 60 robes were crafted by Nahuit, a women’s cooperative in El Salvador that purchased the materials from a weaving cooperative in Guatemala. The 14 members of the sewing and embroidery cooperative produce handcrafted clothing and household items, representing both Guatemalan and Salvadoran cultures, for local and international customers. The purchase of these robes was facilitated by SIT alumna Cathie Chilson, who worked with Pueblo to People, a Houston-based alternative trade organization.

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## HISTORY

SIT Graduate Institute (founded as School for International Training) was established in 1964 to train future generations of leaders by giving them an effective understanding of the differences between cultures. SIT is part of the nonprofit organization World Learning, Inc. Originally conceived as a language training center for the first volunteers in the Peace Corps, SIT has grown into a multi-disciplinary academic institution offering a doctorate, master’s degrees, certificates, and professional development programs through SIT Graduate Institute. Additionally, SIT sends undergraduate students from more than 200 colleges and universities on semester and summer study abroad programs on all seven continents through SIT Study Abroad. All SIT programs give students the opportunity to broaden their views as they acquire the skills and perspective to help create a just world driven by engaged citizens and thriving communities. Like all of World Learning’s training and exchange programs, SIT is grounded in a fundamental belief that experiential learning prepares students to imagine the world not as it is, but as it could be.

**WORLD LEARNING INC • BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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Elizabeth Clay Roy

Aicha Naomi  
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