

Building 21 and the Santa Fe Institute

As President of the Santa Fe Institute, I am keenly interested in organizations that seek to support not only rigorous thinking but exploratory imaginations. In this time of revolution in artificial intelligence, the role of truly synthetic thinkers — those able to ask deep questions — becomes more important than ever. The narrow concerns of disciplinary scholarship are, to a certain degree, fading. Providing an environment such as Building 21 does, where curiosity is fostered and long-range inquiries are supported, seems the future of the university in the face of huge technological uncertainty.

Building 21 and the Santa Fe Institute share a common spirit and a common purpose. Both recognize that the most pressing challenges of our time are no longer those that sit readily within established departments, nor do these problems have an established vocabulary. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to support communities willing to engage in open-minded conversation across disciplinary boundaries.

Building 21 offers a compelling and important example of how such challenges can be studied and addressed. In my own engagements with Building 21 and its students, I have been deeply impressed by the spirit of enquiry and the willingness to work hard in areas that are not yet established. They are in their methods and content cognizant of the enormous complexity of the world.

I feel certain that Building 21 in its approach, creativity, and depth of exploration represents an essential model of what education should be today.

The Santa Fe Institute is committed to the mission, values, and work of Building 21.

David Krakauer
President & William H. Miller Professor of Complex Systems
The Santa Fe Institute