**Strategic Plan for the Advancement of
Community-Service Learning
and Community-Based Research
at UBC Vancouver**

DRAFT

April 9, 2010

Executive Summary

This draft strategic plan has been developed in response to a call from the President and other leaders within UBC to significantly increase the participation of students and faculty in community-based experiential learning. This challenge to "scale up" is especially focused on two approaches to experiential learning that are growing quickly at UBC, i.e., Community Service Learning (CSL) and Community-Based Research (CBR). The continued advancement of CSL and CBR will contribute to the achievement of the UBC *Place and Promise* vision and associated commitments, especially the commitments to community engagement, student learning, and Aboriginal engagement.

The four specific goals that will be achieved through the implementation of this plan are to:

1. **Enhance Student Learning**: Help to create an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship for both undergraduate and graduate students by providing learning experiences in a variety of off-campus community settings that enable students to apply their , knowledge, skills and talents to real-world issues while learning from the people and issues they encounter. These learning experiences will challenge students to reflect on the complexity of community issues and the range of ways that they, as citizens, might respond.

2. **Contribute to Society**: Make a demonstrable contribution to the advancement of a civil and sustainable society by applying the intellectual and human resources of the university to important community issues, priorities, or needs. Increase the number of students, faculty, staff, and community organizations involved in CSL and CBR. Aim to have 10% of UBC Vancouver students involved in CSL and CBR programs every year by 2013-2014.

3. **Extend and Deepen the University's Engagement with Community**: Engage in mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations characterized by the collaborative development, implementation, and evaluation of students' learning, service, and research experiences.

4. **Embed CSL and CBR in the Academic Fabric of the University**: Advance CSL and CBR by supporting Faculty-driven CSL and CBR initiatives while providing centralized, integrative support.

Examples of specific strategies designed to achieve each of these goals are given in the body of the plan. Methods of assessing progress towards the achievement of these goals are also outlined.

This draft plan is intended to provide an impetus for discussion about key outstanding questions regarding the advancement of CSL and CBR at UBC Vancouver as well as a framework for action that can be adapted to the particular contexts of different faculties, schools, and departments. This draft was prepared by Margo Fryer, Director of the Learning Exchange and UBC-Community Learning Initiative. The plan has been informed by several pilot initiatives undertaken in collaboration with campus and community partners as well as consultations with staff, faculty, administrators, alumni, and students from UBC and representatives from community organizations. These pilot projects and consultations have occurred over the past two years.

Feedback about this draft is most welcome and will be used to further shape the strategies that will be pursued. if you have input to offer on the plan or the key questions for discussion, please go to http://csl.ubc.ca/strategic-plan/

Introduction

This draft strategic plan has been developed in response to a call from the President and other leaders within UBC to significantly increase the participation of students and faculty in community-based experiential learning. This challenge to "scale up" is especially focused on two approaches to community-based experiential learning that are growing quickly at UBC, i.e., Community Service Learning (CSL) and Community-Based Research (CBR). Both CSL and CBR can be seen as vehicles to achieve the university's *Place and Promise* vision and the associated commitments and goals, especially those related to community engagement, student learning, and Aboriginal engagement.

Community Service Learning (CSL) has three key elements: classroom learning; volunteer work that responds to community-identified priorities; and structured reflection activities that challenge students to make connections between what they are studying and their experiences in the community. UBC's efforts to provide this kind of experiential learning opportunity to students and bring the university's resources to community organizations who are working to address critical social issues began with the creation of the Learning Exchange Trek Program in 1999. Students' enthusiastic response to the opportunity to volunteer in the Downtown Eastside resulted in a doubling of the number of student participants every year until 2004 when enrolment in the Trek Program had to be limited.

In 2002, the Learning Exchange began working with faculty members to integrate students' volunteer work into academic course work. In 2006, the UBC-Community Learning Initiative (UBC-CLI) was created, with funding from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and UBC, to develop innovative approaches to course-based (curricular) CSL. With the integration of students' community-based activity into course work and the focus among many faculties on providing students with research experience, students also began doing Community-Based Research (CBR), which is the conduct of research that addresses questions or issues identified by a community organization. (For more information about CSL and CBR and examples of CSL and CBR projects, see http://csl.ubc.ca/about/how-are-csl-and-cbr-different/ and http://csl.ubc.ca/about/previous-cslcbr-projects/

In 2008-2009, 1675 UBC Vancouver students engaged in CSL and/or CBR through the Learning Exchange or the UBC-CLI, with another 60 students participating in international CSL through Go Global. About 60% of these students did CSL or CBR as part of their participation in a course. The 31 courses that incorporated this kind of community-based experiential learning in 2008-2009 covered a variety of disciplines and subjects. In addition to the students who take part in CSL or CBR activities supported by the Learning Exchange or the UBC-CLI, many students take part in courses where the CSL or CBR activities are facilitated by an individual faculty member. In 2007-2008, about 350 students were involved in such courses.

UBC aims to have 10% of its students engaged in CSL/CBR programs every year. The goal is to have about 3,000 UBC Vancouver students each year (or 75% of the total) experiencing CSL or CBR as an integral part of an academic course and the remaining 1,000 students participating in co-curricular CSL through the Learning Exchange Trek Program (e.g., participating in ongoing CSL placements in schools or non-profit organizations or CSL projects during Reading Week) or

through Go Global's international CSL program. At the same time, UBC aims to continue to be an innovative leader in the field of Community-University Engagement and to continue to provide high-quality learning experiences for everyone involved in these activities.

Achieving these ambitious goals will require substantial growth in faculty participation in CSL and CBR. This plan provides a framework for growth that is based on several sources: UBC's experience doing CSL and CBR over the past ten years, input received over the past two years from the various actors involved in UBC's CSL and CBR activities (including faculty members, administrators, students, staff, alumni, and community partners), lessons learned through the implementation of several pilot projects in the past two years, and relevant academic literature. It is hoped that this plan will assist Faculties as they prepare their strategic plans for student learning and community engagement and will stimulate discussion regarding several key questions that still need to be addressed.

Changing the Metaphor

It is common in the field of Community-University Engagement to talk about "partnerships" between universities and community organizations, to conceive of central units like the Learning Exchange as a "bridge" between the university and the community, and to decide to "scale up" programs that have been found to be successful. While these ways of envisioning the work of community engagement have value, they also have limitations. The idea of "going to scale," the image of a fixed structure connecting two separate, monolithic entities, and the metaphor of "partnerships" are all industrial-era, mechanistic metaphors.

Based on UBC's experiences over the past ten years, and especially the recognition that personal relationships are fundamental to the success of community engagement initiatives, it seems more appropriate to ground the growth of CSL and CBR in metaphors arising from the fields of biology, ecology, and living systems. Metaphors relating to complex adaptive systems suggest different ways of thinking about how cultural, organizational, and personal change can occur. For example, rather than expecting that the growth of CSL and CBR will occur primarily through the implementation of top-down institutional policies and the work of staff members who act as mediators between the community and the academy, the metaphor of complex adaptive systems suggests that change can occur through the contagious influence of champions, the creation of fertile conditions for collaboration, and the co-creation of "hybrid" cultural spaces where people from the academy and the community develop shared norms and cultural expectations (e.g., related to the legitimacy of different ways of knowing or tolerance for risk and uncertainty). Rather than the focus being on programs per se, the unit of concern becomes the network of actors engaged in a particular CSL or CBR project or activity. The role of centralized units like the Learning Exchange becomes that of a supportive facilitator of the networks of students, instructors, and community organizations who are doing curricular CSL and CBR rather than being directly involved in planning and implementing CSL and CBR.

This metaphor makes it clear that the terrain of activity is one where change, complexity, and diversity are to be expected, and the challenge of adapting to both crises and opportunities in the environment need to be embraced. There is an irony inherent in this metaphor being the foundation for a strategic plan. How can a large, hierarchical bureaucracy pretend to plan for the

activity of a multiplicity of self-organizing systems over the span of several years? In proposing the adoption of this different foundational metaphor UBC is aiming to avoid a command and control approach that would be antithetical to both the field of community engagement and the culture of the academy while still placing the activities of local networks of actors within the institutional context of *Place and Promise*.

Goals and Strategies

The four goals to be achieved through the implementation of this plan and examples of associated strategies are given below. The first two goals relate to intended outcomes while the last two relate to the processes whereby the outcomes will be achieved. Since the strategies outlined here are interconnected, it is expected that some strategies will contribute to the achievement of more than one goal.

Goal 1. Enhance Student Learning: Help to create an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship for both undergraduate and graduate students by providing learning experiences in a variety of off-campus community settings that enable students to apply their knowledge, skills, and talents to real-world issues while learning from the people and issues they encounter. These learning experiences will challenge students to reflect on the complexity of community issues and the range of ways that they, as citizens, might respond. (For a list of learning outcomes associated with CSL and CBR, and links to relevant references, see http://csl.ubc.ca/why-does-cslcbr-make-a-difference/research-outcomes/)

Examples of Strategies:
- Provide Faculty-specific and institution-wide professional development opportunities for instructors and teaching assistants to learn about CSL and CBR.
- Support students to play leadership roles in the initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of CSL and CBR projects and placements (e.g., have students work in self-directed teams to understand and respond to the priorities of community partners, support students to include CSL or CBR projects in Student-Directed Seminars).
- Create opportunities for community organization representatives and community members to act as co-educators with instructors (e.g., participating in defining course learning goals, giving guest lectures, taking part in panel discussions, or leading reflection activities).

Goal 2: Contribute to Society: Make a demonstrable contribution to the advancement of a civil and sustainable society by applying the intellectual and human resources of the university to important community issues, priorities, or needs. Increase the number of students, faculty, staff, and community organizations involved in CSL and CBR. Aim to have 10% of UBC students involved in CSL and CBR programs every year by 2013-2014.[1]

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[1] Appendix A presents one possible scenario for the growth of student participation in CSL and CBR at UBC Vancouver over five academic years. This scenario is somewhat arbitrary but is based on historical patterns of student participation and the adoption of strategic initiatives in the past year or two (including the hiring of professional staff whose role is to facilitate CSL in four faculties where the interest in CSL is strong: Arts, Applied Science, Land and Food Systems, and the Sauder School of Business).

Examples of Strategies:
- Develop clear and accessible Faculty-specific and/or institution-wide ways of informing community organizations about how to get involved in UBC's CSL and CBR programs.
- Support interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary courses with CSL and CBR components that are created to respond to specific, complex community issues.
- Support collaborations with community organizations that enable the achievement of long-term strategic goals set by both the organization and the university.

Goal 3: Extend and Deepen the University's Engagement with Community: Engage in mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations characterized by the collaborative development, implementation, and evaluation of students' learning, service, and research experiences.

Examples of Strategies:
- Develop coordinating protocols, policies, and procedures to manage UBC's relationships with community organizations. These coordinating efforts should be aligned with the complex adaptive system metaphor and take into account the enormous possibilities for interconnection that could develop (and the concomitant potential for confusion).
- Create governance bodies and decision-making processes related to CSL and CBR that involve community and student representatives in meaningful ways. These bodies and processes should allow for institution-wide, faculty-specific, and/or program-specific decision-making. They should respect the knowledge, interests, and realities of students and community partners (e.g., meetings should not all be held on campus, meetings should not focus only on issues of concern to UBC faculty, staff, or administrators.) These decision-making bodies and processes should be congruent with the complex adaptive system metaphor, i.e., designed to be fluid, flexible, and responsive.
- Based on input from community partners, provide support to community organizations that engage large numbers of students so they can work effectively with students while avoiding burdensome costs (e.g., designate a student leader to coordinate other student participants, offer grants for staff release time, or engage community professionals in UBC leadership training programs).
- Develop meaningful methods of recognizing the contributions of community partners.

Goal 4: To Embed CSL and CBR in the Academic Fabric of the University: Advance CSL and CBR by supporting Faculty-driven CSL and CBR initiatives while providing centralized, integrative support.

Examples of Strategies:
- Create and sustain networks of instructors, students, staff, and community partners engaged in CSL and CBR activities that share common features (e.g., a focus on specific thematic topics or goals such as sustainability, Aboriginal access to education, or building social capital in marginalized communities).
- Develop methods to recognize faculty participation in CSL and CBR, including recognizing achievement in CSL and CBR in promotion and tenure decisions and creating awards for leadership and innovation in community engagement.

- Engage alumni in CSL and CBR activities, especially recent graduates who may have done CSL or CBR during their time as students, e.g., have alumni mentor current students doing CSL/CBR.

Evaluating and Reporting on Progress

It will be important to build evaluation into the process of implementing the strategies that are pursued. In complex systems, clear and timely information about the consequences of the system's actions is foundational to the capacity to adapt. The strength and accuracy of reciprocal feedback loops are key factors in the system's success.

Evaluation should take place at multiple levels:
- **The institution**: Institution-wide indicators of progress will be examined, e.g., the number of students and faculty members involved in CSL and CBR each year, and changes in UBC's NSSE results associated with student participation in CSL or CBR.
- **The Faculties**: Indicators of success could include increases in the number of CSL and CBR projects undertaken, the number of instructors participating in faculty development sessions, and community organizations' level of satisfaction with the results of their collaborations with the Faculty.
- **Particular CSL or CBR projects**: Indicators of success could include reported learning outcomes and students' or community organizations' level of satisfaction with the type of planning and communication activities that were used in the project.
- **The community**: Indicators of success could include community perspectives on the costs and benefits of participating in CSL and CBR, duration and perceived strategic impact of partnerships, and growth in the number of students hosted at particular community sites.

Traditional evaluation methods can provide useful data on progress (e.g., by monitoring participation in programs and surveying actors in CSL and CBR networks at the end of projects to elicit their perspectives on project outcomes). In addition, given the complexity and contested nature of the concepts that are central to UBC's vision (including "global citizenship" and "civil and sustainable society"), and the "messiness" of experiential learning it will be fruitful to use qualitative methods and less traditional evaluation methods as well (e.g., networks of people doing CSL may identify ways that they can keep track of their progress and evaluate the outcomes of their projects using web-based media, video, or other artistic methods).

It will be important to develop processes whereby the lessons learned at the various levels outlined above are shared within and across the different levels of the system and synthesized at the institutional level.

Resources Required

Calculations of the association between Learning Exchange and UBC-CLI financial expenditures and student participation rates over the past ten years indicate that the annual cost per student of UBC's co-curricular and curricular CSL programs has historically been in the range of $500 to $1,000. Attempts to get comparable data for CSL programs in universities in the US and Canada

have not produced a great deal of information, but the data that have been obtained suggest that UBC's per student costs are reasonable compared to other universities' CSL programs. It will be important to monitor future spending associated with CSL and CBR as different approaches to advancing CSL and CBR are developed and institutionalized so that UBC can secure and appropriately allocate the financial and other resources needed to achieve the goals in this plan. It is likely that some economies of scale will be realized as curricular CSL becomes embedded in the work of faculties, schools, and departments. It is also likely that some costs will be relatively high at first, as faculty-based expertise is built and innovative approaches to these new pedagogies are tried out.

It is important to acknowledge that, because of the importance of building strong relationships with community partners and preparing students to engage skillfully in different community settings, these approaches to learning require significant investments by university faculty and staff. It will be wise to use these approaches strategically in contexts where they link directly to particular goals set by the faculty, school, or department. UBC is strongly committed to achieving the goals outlined in this plan (as evidenced by the recent increased allocation of ongoing core funds to the Learning Exchange). It is expected that this commitment will also be exemplified in the strategic plans (and associated budget allocations and fund-raising plans) of individual Faculties and units.

Questions for Further Discussion

Three broad topics require further discussion as UBC continues to build its CSL and CBR programs.

1. **How can curricular CSL and CBR be integrated into faculty academic strategies most effectively?**
   This question encompasses several more specific questions. For example, are there particular faculties, schools, disciplines, or subject areas or interdisciplinary contexts where CSL and CBR efforts should be focused? Should courses where CSL or CBR is embedded be more heavily weighted in terms of credit in recognition of their additional demands on students (similar to Science laboratory courses)? Should other ways to link course credit with community-based experiential learning be devised? How can the flexibility to respond in a timely way to community priorities be integrated with the need for appropriate approvals by curriculum committees or Senate?

   Currently, four Faculties where a strong interest in CSL and/or CBR has been demonstrated (Arts, Land and Food Systems, and Applied Science) or where strong demand from community organizations for assistance from that faculty's students has been communicated (Sauder) are working with the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI to make CSL and/or CBR a strategic priority. Coordinators have been situated in these faculties using a model similar to that used by the Development Office and Student Development where specialized staff members are co-managed by faculty-based and central administrators. Other Faculties have undertaken pilot projects or other strategic initiatives to advance CSL or CBR without significant central support. Given the intention to be strategic in the allocation of resources that underlies this plan, how can important CSL and CBR initiatives in smaller faculties be supported, other than through deploying a full-time coordinator for CSL and CBR in each

faculty? Further, how can the growth in CSL and CBR, and the university's relationships with community partners be coordinated and strategically aligned while ensuring ongoing faculty-based innovation and autonomy?

2. How can the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI effectively support faculty-based curricular CSL and CBR?

Over the past ten years, the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI has acted as a catalyst for the growth of curricular CSL and CBR at UBC. Staff members from these units have played a variety of roles including broker, planner, advocate, mediator, trainer, evaluator, and trouble-shooter. In order for the envisioned growth in curricular CSL and CBR to occur and for CSL and CBR programs to be harmonized with other programs that offer students enriched educational experiences, these programs must be embedded in the academic fabric of the university. As this institutionalization process is evolving, the role of the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI is changing. For example, rather than the Learning Exchange or the UBC-CLI being the entity that manages relationships between instructors and community partners, the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI is now playing more indirect roles, supporting instructors and students to work directly with community organizations. This is allowing the Learning Exchange to shift its attention to emerging issues at the institutional level such as how to systematically evaluate the success of UBC's efforts to advance CSL and CBR. As the strategies arising from this plan are pursued, it will be important to continually reflect on the question of how the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI, as a central support unit, can most effectively support the next stage of growth of curricular CSL and CBR at UBC.

3. How can the growth of CSL and CBR programs be funded?

As the goals and strategies outlined in this and the other planning efforts associated with *Place and Promise* are pursued, it will also be important to consider how CSL and CBR fit into the menu of enriched educational opportunities that will be offered to students and how these activities can be funded. Both CSL and CBR can be viewed as part of a larger category of "community-based experiential learning" that could include co-op work terms, internships, and practica done in community settings. How should limited central and faculty-specific resources be allocated to these various activities? The experience of the Learning Exchange suggests that CSL and CBR programs can attract significant external funding support from private foundations, corporations, and individuals. What new sources of funds might be secured to support these programs in the faculties and schools where they are a strategic priority?

Conclusion

As noted earlier, this plan is a component of the *Place and Promise* strategic planning effort that is underway across UBC, both at UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan. CSL and/or CBR are included as important strategies in the Sustainability Academic Strategy, the plan for Aboriginal Engagement, and the draft plan for Research Excellence. The elements of the UBC Vancouver plan for CSL and CBR will provide a useful starting point for the mid-level plan for Community Engagement that is being initiated and will inform other mid-level plans that are in development, especially those for student learning and international engagement. While this plan for CSL and CBR is focused on UBC Vancouver, its goals are congruent with the strategic plan that has been

guiding the evolution of the UBC Okanagan Learning Exchange and the associated growth of CSL at UBC Okanagan.

To provide input:

It is hoped that this plan and the discussions it inspires will facilitate the visioning and planning that is being done within Faculties, departments, and schools at UBC as well as within partner community organizations. If you would like to offer reflections on the questions outlined above, feedback about the goals and strategies outlined in this plan, ideas about how to advance CSL and CBR in your Faculty or unit or organization, or other comments, please go to http://csl.ubc.ca/strategic-plan/

Your input and ideas are most welcome. They will help to inform further iterations of this plan and determine the specific strategies that are pursued.

If you would like to arrange a meeting with staff from the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI to discuss the plan or the questions raised, please email Susan Grossman, Associate Director of the UBC-Community Learning Initiative, at susan.grossman@ubc.ca

For further information:
For further information about UBC's Place and Promise vision and strategic plan, visit: http://strategicplan.ubc.ca

For further information about CSL and CBR at UBC, please visit the new website designed to act as focal point for UBC's practitioners of CSL and CBR: www.csl.ubc.ca

This website provides access to a number of resources, including:
- Descriptions of examples of CSL or CBR activities in every UBC faculty.
- Annotated bibliographies related to: CSL; CSL outcomes; Reflection in CSL; Community-University Engagement.

For further information about the Learning Exchange and the UBC-CLI, please visit: www.learningexchange.ubc.ca

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Appendix A:
Possible Scenario for Growth in CSL and CBR at UBC Vancouver
The following chart presents one scenario for growth based on past experiences and the proportion of students in the various faculties at UBC Vancouver. It is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion about what the future growth in CSL and CBR might look like, not as a rigid set of targets that must be met.

UBC Vancouver Curricular CSL by faculty: (CSL supported by UBC-CLI or Learning Exchange)

Numbers for 07-08 and 08-09 are actual numbers; numbers for 09-10 and beyond are projected.

Faculty	% of student body	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	% of total in 2013-14
Arts	35%	95	295	325	475	550	675	800	26
Science	20%	95	173	200	250	250	375	500	16
Business	10%	0	0	25	50	75	125	275	9
Applied Science	15%	107	124	150	275	300	375	475	16
LAFS	5%	268	319	350	550	550	550	550	18
Other	15%	56	122	150	200	275	325	400	13
Total		**621**	**1033**	**1200**	**1800**	**2000**	**2,425**	**3,000**	

UBC Vancouver Co-curricular CSL

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Learning Exchange Trek Program	295	377	400	400	400	400	400
Reading Week in schools	196	265	400 RW is 2 weeks	200	250	300	300
International SL through Go Global		60	100	100	200	250	300
Total	**491**	**702**	**900**	**700**	**850**	**950**	**1,000**

UBC Vancouver Total curricular and co-curricular CSL and CBR

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
UBC-CLI and Learning Exchange	1,162	1,675	2,000	2,400	2,650	3,125	3,700
International SL through Go Global		60	100	100	200	250	300
Total	**1,162**	**1,735**	**2,100**	**2,500**	**2,850**	**3,375**	**4,000**