

SFU COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

*Always ask the question: How is the community better?
Add value in ways that are important and real.*

K. Magnusson, Dean of Education

In reporting on its evaluation, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) review team complimented SFU on “the breadth, depth, and quality of its community outreach efforts” and “its remarkable effort to inculcate community values and serve local, provincial and international constituencies.” Including community engagement as core to our vision and mission sets SFU apart from other universities in Canada and around the world. SFU must continue to advance its practices to become “Canada’s most community-engaged research university” and to maximize its contribution to the economy and society of B.C. and beyond. This three-year strategy is intended to assist in this evolution.

1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

SFU's new Vision as an "engaged university" provides a launch pad for our first institutional community engagement strategy. The Vision's goal and objectives specific to community engagement are as follows:

Goal: To be Canada's most community-engaged research university.

Objective 1: Integration

SFU will maintain and expand its community connections as an integral part of its academic mission, creating opportunities for practical and experiential learning; informing and inspiring research; and contributing to its relevance and success;

Objective 2: Reach

SFU will develop partnerships and maximize the capacities of its three campuses to enhance the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities locally and globally;

Objective 3: Relationships

SFU will build respectful and mutually beneficial community relationships;

Objective 4: Lifelong Learning

SFU will meet the lifelong learning needs of students, alumni and the community, and respond with innovative programs and learning opportunities for academic, personal and professional development; and

Objective 5: BC's Public Square

SFU will be BC's public square for enlightenment and dialogue on key public issues; it will be the institution to which the community looks for education, discussion and solutions.

Community engagement is defined as collaboration between the university and communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.¹ The term *engagement* contrasts with that of *outreach* which typically refers to one-way dissemination and communication to the public. SFU's communities are local, provincial, national and global and our partnerships and initiatives involve both public and private sector organizations in a variety of sectors and industries as well as academic and professional networks.

This three-year strategy is intended to advance SFU's efforts by facilitating community access to SFU people, knowledge and resources, and by connecting, embedding and communicating SFU's engagement efforts. The events, meetings and reports that informed this draft strategy are listed in Appendix A.

¹ This definition is used by the Carnegie Foundation, an organization that provides a community engagement classification service for US institutions. For a review of the various terminology used in practice, see <http://www.mun.ca/engagement/defining.php>

2. EMBEDDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SFU seeks to integrate community engagement in its Academic and Research plans, thereby enriching the teaching and research enterprises. The 2013-2018 Academic Plan has identified the following community engagement objectives:

ACADEMIC PLAN OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBLE GROUP
Obj. 1.1.1 Increase experiential learning opportunities	Faculties and Departments
Obj. 1.1.8 Develop new programs for mature, returning and non-traditional students	Faculties and Departments
Obj. 1.2.2 Improve access for under-represented communities	Faculties and Departments
Obj. 3.1.1 Increase opportunities for alumni to be involved in undergraduate and graduate education	Faculties and Departments

These objectives could result in additional professional programs to provide new avenues for knowledge mobilization and bring SFU into greater contact with practitioners. An existing committee is also exploring possible expansion of online education. During consultations, the opportunities for expanding SFU NOW and cohort-based degree completion programs were also raised.

In its research enterprise, SFU faculty and staff members and diverse set of research centres and institutes have strong links to community organizations and are addressing research issues of importance to SFU’s many communities. The current Strategic Research Plan supports a range of knowledge mobilization and community research activities.

Those in the Academic, Research and Administrative communities consulted for this draft identified the initiatives on the following page as possible initiatives that would advance SFU’s community engagement. The VP External Relations office would support the leadership units to determine the feasibility of these initiatives and proposed workplan by the end of 2013/14.

Possible Community Engagement Priority Initiatives Identified During Consultations

INITIATIVE	LEADERSHIP UNIT
Initiate external funding program to enable community organizations with limited means to hire SFU students on coop education work terms	Student Services, Advancement
Create a program to support SFU student mobility (local and international)	Student Services, SFU International
Increase faculty exchanges with international organizations	VP Research
Increase faculty exchanges with local community organizations	VP Research
Expand special collections and cultural projects, and build network with municipal libraries	Library
Expand SFU Surrey volunteer student ambassador program to Burnaby and Vancouver campuses	Student Services
Expand and deepen engagement with aboriginal communities	Office for Aboriginal Peoples
Formally recognize students' community engagement activities and contributions	Student Services
Create a student speaker's bureau for community organizations and provide professional public speaking development opportunities for students, staff and faculty	Student Services, Public Affairs
Expand activities that bring K-12 students on SFU campuses (eg Starry Nights, Summer Camps)	Student Services, Faculties, SFU Surrey Campus
Facilitate non-credit adult participation in international and local field schools and offer free educational apps	Student Services, SFU Int. and Cont. Studies
Increase opportunities for alumni mentorship or teaching roles, and link alumni to SFU varsity sports activities	Alumni Relations, Student Services
Establish career service for alumni	Alumni Relations
Expand diploma programs for teachers across the province and reconsider admissions criteria to reach more teachers/instructors	Education

The balance of this strategy lists three priorities to be pursued by the Vice-President, External Relations in collaboration with departments and faculties.

3. VP External Relations' Community Engagement Priorities

3.1 Priority One: Measure, Communicate and Celebrate

SFU has a long tradition of community engagement, a fact confirmed during the NWCCU self-study process. But that process also revealed an opportunity to improve the university's capacity to document existing initiatives, for two reasons:

1. To **measure** what counts – to ensure that our efforts are benefiting the community and building long-term, sustainable relationship;
2. To benchmark SFU's community engagement efforts against other universities.

We also can do more to **communicate** our success and our improvements to stakeholders, and to **celebrate** our accomplishments, in part by submitting our practices and policies for local, national and internal awards.

2013/14 Actions:

- Develop quantitative and qualitative targets and measures for SFU community engagement, and identify how best to collect this information while minimizing administrative burdens on staff, faculty and students
- Assess the feasibility of using Lifelong Learning's SERA database to register public lectures and events to better track attendance
- Select reference university group and other methods for institutional benchmarking
- Implement a President's Award for Staff and Faculty Community Engagement
- Accelerate Media and Public Relations and Government Relations efforts to disseminate news and information about SFU's community engagement activities and impacts
- Track research and best practices relating to university-community engagement
- Increase submissions for community engagement awards

3.2 Priority Two: Improve Community Access

3.2.1 Create an Online Community Engagement Portal

Envision>SFU consultations revealed a common difficulty experienced by members of the external community in identifying a person or unit at SFU to contact for assistance. This challenge has grown with the expansion of the Burnaby campus and establishment of Vancouver and Surrey campuses. It's clear that SFU needs a highly visible "storefront and referral site."

Accordingly, the Vice-President External Office, working with departments and units across the university, will develop a **Community** link to SFU's home page, where it will appear under **Academic Programs, Teaching & Learning**, and **Research**. This will provide a Community Engagement gateway, featuring obvious pathways to:

- people (e.g. Directory of Experts/Faculty CV's and publications);
- reports (e.g. graduate theses);

- facilities (e.g. SFU Galleries); and
- programs (e.g. internship programs).

The portal can also be used to publicize community events and activities more effectively. It will also link directly to an expanded engagement map and a listing of engagement initiatives and opportunities, searchable by topic, location and category (e.g. a comprehensive listing of youth outreach programs, SFU galleries and cultural experiences including online projects such as the Komagata Maru website), and an ability to submit questions to be answered by email.

3.2.2 Improve SFU Burnaby Community Interface and Establish Community Engagement Team Across Campuses

SFU has two externally-funded community engagement personnel: one at the SFU Vancity Office of Community Engagement; and one at the newly created SFU Surrey-TD Community Engagement Centre. Additional staff assistance is provided by the Executive Director Offices at SFU Vancouver and SFU Surrey. The “community front door” at SFU Burnaby is more distributed. Vice-President, External, from existing funding, will create the position of Community Engagement Director, a resource and referral person based at SFU Burnaby. This person will help develop and maintain the Community Engagement Portal, track and measure engagement initiatives, and facilitate community access to SFU Burnaby based faculty, staff and students. This distributed team with support from other SFU departments will also provide the following support:

- Monitor and provide staff assistance for existing strategic partnerships by working with the primary SFU liaison to document ongoing relationships and initiatives, which often occur across a number of Faculties and Departments
- Support VP Research, Faculties, and Units by identifying possible community organizations for experiential learning projects and research mobilization projects, including identifying new sources of external funding
- Identify opportunities for SFU staff, faculty and students to serve on community boards and committees; identify community representatives to join SFU advisory groups and boards
- Provide online community engagement resources, including tools and funding sources; and document best practices
- Facilitate staff, student and faculty networks, roundtables and workshops to share community engagement experiences. Topics might include community-based research and effective community partnerships

2013/14 Actions:

- Hire Community Engagement Director
- Create a Community Engagement Portal (funded by University Priorities Fund and VPE)

3.2.3 Improve Community Access to SFU Facilities and Make Them More Welcoming

SFU should review current practices and identify strategies to make our facilities as accessible as possible to community groups. Subject to funding, this may include long-term physical infrastructure projects that will help make our campuses (and particularly the Burnaby campus) more welcoming – e.g., a Visitor’s Welcome Centre (staffed by student volunteers) and a First People’s House and Economic Development Centre. The evident benefits of community and tourism access to Burnaby Mountain will also bolster the case for a Burnaby Mountain gondola.

2013/14 Actions:

- Assess community use of facilities and identify policy and practice improvements
- Assist departments by identifying funding sources and helping with partnerships, proposals and presentations to government for physical infrastructure projects

3.3 Priority Three: Leverage Signature Initiatives and Support Select Integrated Community Engagement Projects

SFU Public Square was the first “signature initiative” to be launched following the release of SFU’s new Vision. Further such initiatives and projects could be undertaken in three categories: around themes that respond to key community challenges; where SFU has strengths; and where community partnerships are desired. SFU’s work with municipalities, relationship building with the Asia Pacific, and Aboriginal health are areas that were highlighted in recent consultations.

The role of the Vice-President External Office would be to provide staff assistance and identify and apply for external funding.

2013/14 Actions:

- Plan and develop SFU Public Square’s 2013 Summit and identify events, lectures and dialogues that could benefit from the support and growing profile of SFU Public Square
- Consider implementing a China Advisory Council, with SFU Vancouver providing the secretariat role
- Provide seed funding (through the University Priorities Fund and VPE) to support faculty, student and staff initiatives and pilots that mobilize research findings
- Identify funding opportunities for graduate internships and public/private sector visitorships

APPENDIX: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

2010: enVISION>SFU Consultation Process

A dozen roundtables and events were held in communities served by SFU and included meetings with business and industry groups, arts organizations, first nations representatives, multicultural communities, and mayors and councils of eight BC municipalities. At SFU, 13 focus group sessions were among a variety of ways to gain the input of staff, faculty and students. More than 15,000 people visited the enVISION>SFU website.

2011: Reports Commissioned by Vice-President, Academic

- “Strengthening Community Engagement at Simon Fraser University: Key Resources and Models for Success Examples From Canada and Abroad, and Recommendations for SFU” (Author Johanne Provençal, February 28, 2011)
- “Recognizing and Rewarding Community Engagement at Simon Fraser University” (Author Johanne Provençal, April 15, 2011)
- “Community and Civic Engagement for Students at Simon Fraser University: Considerations for the University Administration, Faculty Support, and Curriculum Offerings” (Author Johanne Provençal, July 31, 2011)

2011/2012: Development of Core Theme of Community and Citizenship description outcomes, and initial evaluation as part of the self-evaluation report for the NWCCC. Identification of performance indicators for University Planning Framework.

2012: Interviews and Discussions

- Interviews with all SFU Deans and discussion of draft report at Deans’ Council
- Discussions with numerous community engaged units (First Nations Centre, Student Services, Alumni Relations, Continuing Studies Community Education, Vancouver Community Engagement Centre)
- Visits to University of Brighton, Bristol University, Newcastle University, and UK Public Engagement Project. Scans of community engagement units at universities in UK, US and Australia.
- Discussion at VP Academic Retreat, VPs Retreat, and VPs meeting

2013: Dialogues and Discussions

- Discussion at Surrey Campus and Vancouver Campus Coordinating Committees
- Community Engagement Dialogues (SFU Burnaby)
- Discussion at SFU Surrey Community Advisory Council
- Discussion at SFU Board of Governors

REFERENCES:

SFU envision consultation paper: <http://envision.sfu.ca/>

SFU Vision Paper: <http://www.sfu.ca/engage.html>

SFU Alumni Engagement Strategy: <http://blogs.sfu.ca/departments/alumni/?cat=6>

SFU Academic Plan: <http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic.html>

Report on Experiential Learning: <http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic.html>