



Institutional Context

Vancouver Island University (VIU) is a dynamic institution dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, service and research. VIU is primarily an undergraduate teaching institution with a mandate to undertake applied research that is applicable to the needs and priorities of the region. For several years, VIU has concentrated on harnessing public and private sector resources to establish focused research centres and chairs to further the institution's strategic research goals. This carefully focused strategic matching of research themes, research chairs, research facilities and centres, with degree programs serves to increase the visibility and productivity of research programs, and to provide benefits to the institution and community.

Principles and Objectives of the Strategic Research Plan

Through the principles below, VIU is committed to research that:

- enhances the intrinsic relationship with teaching, learning, and the educational experience in general;
- calls for active participation of undergraduate and graduate students;
- reflects broad multi- and interdisciplinary opportunities;
- focuses on areas of institutional strength and expertise; and
- reflects VIU's commitment to partnership with First Nations communities and local residents.

The general objectives of the research plan are to support the objectives of VIU's Academic Plan. In particular:

- to expand and enhance the undergraduate research experience;
- to complement, build and strengthen graduate programs;
- to encourage cross-disciplinary research networks in keeping with the size and character of the institution;
- to encourage research dissemination and interaction through participation in and the hosting of research conferences, workshops, and symposia;
- to recruit and retain faculty with a commitment to undergraduate teaching through active research programs, community engagement and leadership, and the integration of research into the curriculum;
- to support and enhance research opportunities in areas of strategic importance to Vancouver Island University communities;
- to enhance the participation of First Nations partners in identifying research priorities; and
- to develop local partnerships that integrate research activities.

Research Priority Areas and Institutional Strengths

1. Healthy and Resilient Communities

Description of the Priority Area: Research to support healthy communities considers human health, social well-being, the environment, and sustainability. The Academic Plan (2016) identifies issues that will be critical to communities on Vancouver Island and coastal British Columbia and recognizes the importance of productive partnerships that *“explore a viable future by understanding regional demographic changes, understanding an aging population, identifying future health and human services, encouraging terrestrial and aquatic agriculture and food security, and promoting tourism and recreation.”*

Examples of Strategic Investment:

VIU is also proud to be home to the Recreation and Tourism Institute and the World Leisure Centre of Excellence (WLCE) in Sustainability and Innovation, led by VIU’s British Columbia Regional Innovation Chair (BRIC) in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development. The BRIC will be joined in 2018 by a new Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Leisure for Sustainability, Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. The topic of this CRC encapsulates the intersection of education, research and scholarship at the community level (whether geographically based, activity-based or ethnically-based) specifically regarding sustainability of a sector such as tourism, the cultural connections to well-being, and how aspects of leisure lead to resilient communities. Further, VIU will shortly be interviewing for a new Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in the area of Community-Based Research in Education with a focus in Aboriginal Community Engagement and/or Healthy and Resilient Communities.

In addition, there are several faculties at VIU that actively engage researchers and community members in health and resilience-related research and the institution has supported these research labs and centres through their creation and subsistence. In the Faculty of Health and Human Services, the close integration of the VIU Nursing program with the local health authority (Island Health), and local clinical settings, has readily facilitated health research by students and faculty. In addition to these faculty initiatives, VIU has established a number of related research centres and institutes, such as: the Centre for Community Outreach and Care, the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve Research Institute, the Resilience Research Lab and the Outreach Centre for Healthy Aging and Community Engaged Scholarship.

2. Integrated Sciences and Environment

Description of the Priority Area: VIU has continuously promoted the development of research centres that provide the necessary synergistic atmosphere in which scientists and technologists from different fields can use new approaches to tackle complex issues.

Examples of Strategic Investment:

- a. Applied Environmental Research Laboratories (AERL) – The AERL is an internationally-recognized research facility that conducts pure and applied research in analytical mass spectrometry and environmental chemistry. The group develops new and improved strategies for the measurement of chemical determinants of environmental and human health. VIU supports the AERL through protected research time for both co-directors and ongoing operational support for consumables and undergraduate and graduate student researchers and infrastructure support.
 - b. Centre for Shellfish Research (CSR) – The CSR facilitates the development of a vibrant, science-based shellfish aquaculture industry as an economic engine to revitalize economies throughout BC’s coastal and First Nations communities. VIU has built a research centre on our main campus, as well as the Deep Bay Marine Field Station, a unique research and educational centre in the
-

heart of the shellfish industry. These capital investments are augmented by ongoing operational support for these facilities. The research program was developed by a Tier 2 CRC in Shellfish Aquaculture Ecosystem Interactions whose tenure as chair has ended. To expand the research program areas, VIU is currently in the process of nominating a Tier 2 CRC in Shellfish Health and Genomics.

- c. International Centre for Sturgeon Studies (ICSS) – Sturgeon has a worldwide reputation as a premium food product (caviar and flesh) and an exceptional sport fish, and attracts considerable public appeal as a “living fossil.” The ICSS R&D facility at VIU’s Nanaimo campus supports peer reviewed research with outcomes that can be applied in support of both sturgeon conservation initiatives and aquaculture development.

3. Coastal Resources

Description of the Priority Area: Questions of social and economic impact and appropriate governance are intrinsic to research into the sustainable management of resources in a changing economy. VIU has a strong reputation for coastal resource management and policy research, which is an area well-suited to the setting, history, and character of the institution.

Examples of Strategic Investment: VIU has supported this area by hiring a Tier 2 CRC in Coastal Resource Management who also served as the Director of the Institute for Coastal Research (ICR). This CRC, who recently completed his 2nd term, examined the social-ecological systems in which Canadian coastal communities are embedded and played a key role in research, dissemination, and knowledge transfer in these areas. The ICR’s interdisciplinary research mandate focuses on coastal communities of British Columbia towards understanding and promoting the resilience of our coastal social-ecological systems. The forthcoming CRC in Shellfish Genetics and Health will also contribute to this priority area, as his research is expected to contribute significantly to the resilience and growth of the local aquaculture industry and the communities in which aquaculture is an economic driver.

4. Aboriginal Community Engagement

Description of the Priority Area: Maintaining a strong aboriginal student population and actively engaging First Nations communities are fundamentally important goals of VIU. Aboriginal student enrolment is now 10% in academic programs and VIU is proud to have more aboriginal students enrolled than any other post-secondary institution in BC.

Examples of Strategic Investment: As part of its commitment to Aboriginal Community Engagement, VIU has hired a British Columbia Regional Innovation Chair in Aboriginal Early Childhood Development (ECD). Working in conjunction with aboriginal communities and ECD providers, the Chair is developing a research strategy to investigate the current state of Aboriginal ECD training programs with the ultimate goal of ensuring that Aboriginal ECD programs are consistent with traditional language, culture, and values. VIU is also currently in the process of recruiting a Tier 2 CRC in Indigenous Land Use Management. The anticipated synergies between the new CRC in Indigenous Land Use Management, the new CRC in Community-Based Research in Education, and the BC Regional Innovation Chair in Aboriginal Early Childhood Development are expected to result in significant impacts by the institution in areas of aboriginal community engagement.

5. Cultural Communication and Expression

Description of the Priority Area: Traditional historical and literary fields emphasizing cultural communication and expression have been revolutionized by technological advancement due largely to the proliferation of the internet and digital communication. VIU is supporting emerging areas of research in fields such as humanities computing and prevention of cyberbullying.

Examples of Strategic Investment: VIU supports several research laboratories and groups across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities including: the Canadian Letters and Images Project; the Heritage Research Group; the Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre; the Humanities Interdisciplinary Research Group; the Innovation Lab; and the Literary Theory Research Group. In addition, capital investment further complements this important research theme. The Media Research and MeTA Labs, both created with funding from the CFI and BCKDF and supported by VIU, work to adapt and advance computing techniques in humanities scholarship and pedagogy.

VIU Research Chair Allocation

Chair Type	Chair Title	Tier	Research Discipline	Current Status	Granting Agency	Area of Institutional Strength
Canada Research Chair (CRC)	Community-Based Research in Education	2	Education/ Aboriginal Community Engagement	Interview Stage	SSHRC	Aboriginal Community Engagement/Healthy and Resilient Communities
Canada Research Chair (CRC)	The Role of Leisure in Sustainability, Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	2	Leisure and Resilience	Nomination Stage	SSHRC	Healthy and Resilient Communities
BC Regional Innovation Chair (* equivalent to Tier 2 CRC)	Aboriginal Early Childhood Development	2*	Aboriginal Studies	Filled	BC LEEF	Aboriginal Community Engagement
BC Regional Innovation Chair	Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development	2*	Tourism Management	Filled	BC LEEF	Healthy and Resilient Communities
Canada Research Chair (CRC)	Indigenous Land Use	2	Indigenous Knowledge, Planning and Justice	Recruitment Stage	SSHRC	Aboriginal Community Engagement/Healthy and Resilient Communities
Canada Research Chair (CRC)	Shellfish Health and Genomics	2	Animal Physiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics	Nomination Stage	NSERC	Integrated Sciences and Environmental Research/ Coastal Resources / Healthy and Resilient Communities

Inter-Institutional and Inter-Sectoral Collaborations

VIU maintains several ongoing formal institutional partnerships with other universities in Canada and abroad. One example of our expanding research and scholarly activity presence is in Africa. The SSHRC and International Development Research Centre funded *Protected Areas and Poverty Reduction: A Canada-Africa Research and Learning Alliance* project. VIU has partnered with other research centres such as the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre universities consortium, the local Fisheries and Oceans Canada centre, the Centre for Coastal Health, government agencies, First Nations communities, and private resource-based industries. Furthermore, VIU is closely integrated with community organizations and facilities such as Island Health and the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.

Assessment of Success in Meeting Research Objectives

The Provost and Vice-President Academic is responsible for overseeing assessments of the institution's success in meeting the objectives of the Strategic Research Plan, and for periodic reviews of the Plan. Areas of institutional priority and strength and research chair programs will be assessed for success based on detailed criteria. The success of the Strategic Research Plan will also be assessed against the broader objectives of VIU's Academic Plan, with the aim of maintaining and expanding research activity within the university.

Planning and Approval Process

The Strategic Research Plan is part of VIU's regular strategic planning process, culminating in an annual revision of the Institutional Service Plan. Strategic planning is subject to review at several internal levels and the institution's performance is measured annually against the Strategic Research Plan, Academic Plan, and Service Plan.
