

STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN SUMMARY

The 2017-22 Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity Plan is a blueprint to guide the future development of research activity at Vancouver Island University (VIU) and to position the University as a leader in undergraduate research and community engaged scholarship.

THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY AT VIU

VIU is a teaching university with a complementary research agenda. The purpose of the institution is to be a leader in providing high quality learning and support the well-being of the people of Vancouver Island and coastal British Columbia by promoting a high quality of life for their communities through commitment to student success, community engagement and associated scholarship. At VIU, research and teaching are complementary activities as both contribute to the ultimate goal of the institution – high quality learning experiences.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN

The research plan uses a lifecycle approach to developing research excellence and identifies 12 objectives to be implemented over a 5-year period:

Cultivate Talent

1. Attract and develop capacity to undertake Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity (SRCA) among the student body
2. Support faculty engagement in SRCA
3. Cultivate talent through research and innovation chairs

Collaborate

4. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration in SRCA
5. Support research clusters
6. Develop research networks with external universities
7. Facilitate collaborative relationships with community/industry partners

Create Knowledge

8. Provide a user-centered system of services for students and faculty to engage in SRCA
9. Ensure the required resources to engage in SRCA are available and accessible across the institution

Communicate

10. Enhance the profile of VIU faculty and student SRCA by moving it into the public realm
11. Educate and support faculty and student knowledge mobilization initiatives

Celebrate

12. Create a culture of recognition and celebration of SRCA

RESEARCH STRENGTHS AND FOCUS AREAS

1. **Health, Resilience and Wellbeing:** This research theme focuses on the study of human and environmental health with the aim of improving the adaptive capacity of humans and systems such that greater levels of resilience and well-being are achieved. This theme is a strength at the institution and enables researchers from numerous disciplines to engage in disciplinary or interdisciplinary inquiry that aligns with the Academic Plan, which identifies issues that will be critical to communities in the Vancouver Island and coastal BC region: understanding regional demographic changes, identifying future health and human services, monitoring the impact of globalization and the condition of the natural environment, determining the effects of climate change and transitioning from fossil fuel dependence, encouraging greater levels of food security and promoting beneficial urban and regional development.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments: 1) The **Resilience Research Lab** investigates resilience within our community and internationally and is working to build a Western Resilience Network to contribute to interdisciplinary dialogue on resilience. Examples of past projects include a focus on resilience in families affected by AIDS in Uganda, the promotion of resilience in family practice residents, adolescent mothers, and adults living with Celiac disease. **2)** The **Centre for Healthy Aging and Community Engaged Scholarship** was established in 2013 with the mandate to promote excellence in healthy-aging research, education and practice. The Centre focuses on senior’s health care improvements, active and productive aging and the creation of age-friendly communities. It is aligned with the Faculty of Health and Human Services, Oceanside Healthy Aging Initiatives Committee, older adults and their caregivers, the municipalities of Parksville and Qualicum Beach and a diverse range of seniors’ organizations and health care practitioners.

- 2. Sciences, Technology and the Environment:** VIU has continuously promoted the development of research centers that provide the necessary synergistic atmosphere in which scientists and technologists from different fields can use new approaches to tackle complex issues. In the past decade, research centers and institutes have emerged in areas such as analytical mass spectrometry and environmental chemistry, shellfish ecology and genomics, and sturgeon research. These centers have enabled VIU to develop expertise that is both regionally relevant and internationally significant.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments: 1) The **Applied Environmental Research Laboratories (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. The work is on the leading edge of an evolution in bringing high precision chemical measurements to the sample rather than bringing “grab samples” to the lab. The facility supports training from undergraduate to post-doctoral levels. This work involves collaborations with numerous regional, national and international partners in academia, government agencies and the private sector. **2)** The **Centre for Shellfish Research (CSR)** facilitates the development of a vibrant, science-based shellfish aquaculture industry as an economic engine to revitalize economies throughout BC coastal and First Nations communities. With major infrastructure funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund (BCKDF) and Western Economic Diversification (WD) as well as other public and private funders, VIU has built a research centre on the main campus as well as at the Deep Bay Marine Station, a unique research and educational centre in the heart of the shellfish industry. The CSR has facilitated collaborative partnerships between industry, communities, government and academics that have led to a vibrant research program that advances knowledge globally while meeting regional needs. **3)** The **International Centre for Sturgeon Studies (ICSS)** is a knowledge and innovation hub for sturgeon research in Canada. 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”. VIU has been at the forefront of white sturgeon aquaculture since 2001 when it spawned captive broodstock and began supplying eggs to the first commercial operator. The ICSS facility at VIU was funded by CFI and BCKDF investments and supports research with outcomes that can be applied in support of both sturgeon conservation initiatives and aquaculture development.

- 3. Resilience of Island, Coastal and Rural Regions:** VIU is located in an island and coastal region comprised of mostly rural communities who have been experiencing numerous and significant shifts due to globalization, climate change, demographic shifts, and population migration. These shifts have presented opportunities and challenges for the region, pressuring it to adapt and remain resilient. This research focus area will enable researchers to study the realities, adaptive responses and consequences of people, communities and organizations in island, coastal and rural regions. The research outputs will inform regional planning, management and development while contributing to the growing literature on resilience in numerous disciplines.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments: The **Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI)** supports the UNESCO designated Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region through engaging in research that focuses on the human/nature connection. More than 60 undergraduate and graduate students in the past three years

have been connected to community-based, applied research through MABRRI that involves mid-Island citizens in issues of regional relevance. The Institute has also attracted visiting international researchers from Brazil, Mexico, and Macedonia, and publishes the International Journal of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

- 4. Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Social Change:** The rapid and widespread changes taking place in the public, private and not for profit sectors to innovate, create economy and better society provide important opportunities for research. This research theme will enable researchers to identify and monitor changes in the business and management models used across sectors as well as the associated outcomes of innovation and social change. When mobilized, the knowledge outputs will result in advancements and improved practices in a range of non-academic settings as well as the rapidly expanding literature in numerous disciplines.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments: The **World Leisure Centre of Excellence (WLCE) in Sustainability and Innovation** was established as a partnership between VIU and the World Leisure Organization (UNESCO affiliate status) in 2009. The WLCE brings together established and emerging scholars from around the globe to share innovative ideas, engage in dialogue and collaborate in research and teaching. The themes of the Centre include: 1) Sustainability: Questioning the relationship between leisure and sustainability, determining the level of sustainability of the leisure industry and inviting and monitoring new models and approaches to enhance sustainability; 2) Innovation: Rethinking the systems and structures that have evolved across the globe, creating a culture of innovation where new ideas emerge and flourish, and measuring the impact of innovation on sustainability efforts. The Centre has brought in over 30 world renown visiting scholars since 2010, convened over 50 public lectures, published an annual volume of case studies, and supported over 60 Master's students in thesis research.

- 5. Cultural Heritage and Creative Expression:** This thematic area deepens inquiry and creative activity to explore the various ways a culture, or cultures, use or have used literary, political, social, and artistic forms of creative expression. Exploration is done through the examination and analysis of texts and images, the restoration and presentation of works of art, the critical evaluation of elements of historical and modern culture, the theory informed study of past human activity and the creation of new knowledge and art and its performance.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments: 1) The **Canadian Letters and Images Project** is an online archive of the Canadian war experience, from any war, as told through the letters and images of Canadians themselves. Begun in August 2000, the Project is located in the Department of History at VIU. Through the digitization of contemporary letters, diaries, photographs, and other related materials, the Project permits Canadians to tell their story, and Canada's story, through their own words and images. 2) The **Humanities Interdisciplinary Research Group** functions as a think-tank to investigate the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research models and methodologies that are currently being applied within the humanities, with a focus on cultural, theoretical, literary-critical and digital humanities approaches.

- 6. Equity, Diversity and Social Justice:** As a values based institution, VIU is committed to respect, diversity and to promoting respectful, informed discourse about reciprocity and reconciliation as identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action. Issues of equity, diversity and social justice have gained elevated importance and urgency in recent years in order to ensure that access to social and economic resources are provided to everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality or social class. Researchers studying in this thematic area advance knowledge and inform practice on major equity and social justice issues.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments: 1) The **Centre for Community Outreach and Care** was established in April 2013 by VIU's Child and Youth Care Department. Its purpose is to provide enriched practical learning experiences for Child and Youth Care students through partnering with the local Harewood community to engage in child and family focused activities. Harewood is a unique community whose largest population sector is youth aged 15-24 with an area that has a large percentage of low income individuals. 2) In 2014, VIU established a **Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties and Reconciliation** to focus on advancing research, understanding, and public dialogue in relation to Pre-Confederation

Treaties from across the country and the challenge of reconciliation. Douglas White, (Kwulasultun and Tliishin) lawyer, former Chief of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and former member of the First Nations Summit Task Group and BC First Nations Leadership Council, has been appointed Interim Director. The Centre will provide leadership and education through advanced research, symposia, publications, and facilitation of dialogue.

7. Teaching and Learning: The teaching and learning focus area thrives within VIU’s special-purpose teaching university environment. Work within this area includes faculty inquiry into teaching practices across the disciplines and rich community-university partnerships conducting action research in a variety of teaching and learning contexts. Engaging in scholarly reflection and inquiry also allows faculty members to explore ways to reflect upon their practice, obtain evidence of their impact on student learning and it also has scholarly value to external audiences when it is shared beyond the University. This focus area will enable Vancouver Island University to make significant contributions to and position itself as a leader in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Examples of strengths and strategic investments **1) Graduate programs in the Faculty of Education** are designed to be flexible and accessible to meet the needs of working teachers who want to pursue higher education and result in over 100 graduate students engaged in action research thesis projects each year. This is a fertile ground for faculty to engage in community partnerships which have led to provincially and internationally funded projects. A Master of Education Research Conference has been running for 6 years providing knowledge mobilization opportunities for over 30 student presenters and 100 attendees (students, faculty and community members). **2) The Centre for Innovative Leadership** has lead numerous initiative such as the 3 Campus Project (Phase 1, 2015-2016), a formalized learning partnership among the BC Ministry of Education, three BC Faculties of Education, and numerous BC school districts. The aims of the 3 Campus project are: a) intensively support education transformation, b) experiential exploration, implementation, research, and documentation of BC’s education transformation. **3) The Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL)** provides a suite of capacity building offerings to enhance student learning including faculty consultations, curriculum mapping activities and teaching enhancement programs, along with a rich collection of resources including timely technology and pedagogy support. VIU has played a significant leadership role in the BC Campus Scholarly Teaching and Learning in Post-Secondary Symposium where faculty from across the province mobilize scholarly reflection and inquiry.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CHAIRS AT VIU BY TYPE AND RESEARCH FOCUS AREA

CHAIR TYPE	CHAIR TITLE	TIER	RESEARCH DISCIPLINE	CURRENT STATUS	GRANTING AGENCY	RESEARCH STRENGTH AND FOCUS AREAS
CRC	Shellfish Aquaculture/ Genomics	2	Evolution, genetics, breeding, and environmental adaptation	Filled	NSERC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated sciences and environment • Resilience of island, coastal and rural regions
CRC	The Historical Dimensions of Women’s Health	2	History, Health	Nomination stage	SSHRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, resilience and wellbeing • Cultural heritage and creative expression • Equity, diversity and social justice
CRC	Community-Based Research in Education	2	Education, Multidisciplinary and Multimedia Arts, Cultural Activities	Nomination submitted	SSHRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and Learning • Equity, diversity and social justice • Cultural, heritage and creative expression

CHAIR TYPE	CHAIR TITLE	TIER	RESEARCH DISCIPLINE	CURRENT STATUS	GRANTING AGENCY	• RESEARCH STRENGTH AND FOCUS AREAS
BC Regional Innovation Chair (BCRIC)	Aboriginal Early Childhood Development	2*	Childhood development, education, indigenous knowledge	Filled	BC LEEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and Learning • Equity, diversity and social justice
BC Regional Innovation Chair (BCRIC)	Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development	2*	Economic development, sustainability, tourism management	Submitted and under review	BC LEEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience of island, coastal and rural regions • Innovation, entrepreneurship and social change

*BC Regional Innovation Chairs are considered synonymous to Tier 2 CRCs.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN CRC NOMINATIONS

Since January 2017, VIU provides equity, diversity and inclusion training to all Deans, Department Chairs and selection committees involved in the recruitment of Canada Research Chairs. Job postings are reviewed to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment process. In addition, one of VIU's four CRC allocations is in a field specifically geared towards female applicants (Historical Dimensions of Women's Health). Historically, approximately 50% of our CRCs have been women.

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL AND INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATIONS

VIU maintains several ongoing formal partnerships with other universities in Canada and abroad. One example of our 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*. VIU has partnered with 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, and private resource-based industries. VIU is closely integrated with community organizations and facilities such as Island Health and the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.

ASSESSMENT OF SUCCESS IN MEETING PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Provost and Vice-President Academic oversees assessments of the institution's success in meeting the objectives of the Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity 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 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 direction set forth in this plan emerged after a consultative process between January and July 2017 with input from: the Deans of each Faculty; the Directors of each institute, centre and lab; faculty members; as well as graduate and undergraduate students. The draft plan was reviewed and approved by an advisory committee comprised of 16 faculty members from different academic programs, an undergraduate and graduate student, the Librarian, Aboriginal Education and Engagement, and the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning. The draft plan was approved by VIU's Senior Management Group, Board of Governors and the University's Senate in the fall of 2017.