



UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

VALUING DIFFERENCE: A STRATEGY FOR ADVANCING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY AT UBC

PREAMBLE

Equity and diversity are not abstract goals; they are essential qualities of an outstanding institution.

UBC embraces equity and diversity as integral to our academic mission. We encourage and support participation of the widest range of perspectives in our exploration and exchange of knowledge and ideas. An essential component of academic excellence is a truly open and diverse community that actively fosters the inclusion of voices that have been underrepresented or excluded. Thus, UBC is committed to fostering a living, learning, and working environment to which all can contribute and within which all can thrive.

An environment that fosters equity inspires innovation in teaching, research, scholarship, and service. It enhances wide-reaching opportunities for mentoring. Its diverse communities and varied experience and expertise will make it a welcoming destination for the best and brightest faculty, staff, and students.

INTRODUCTION

UBC has a rich history. We recognize that part of this history includes the suppression or exclusion of some of the voices that make up our diverse society. UBC has taken great strides in moving beyond that history. Nevertheless, some legacies of exclusion must still be addressed. Women now comprise more than half of the UBC workforce, and almost a third of employees on the Vancouver campus identify themselves as “visible minorities”. However, women and visible minorities continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions. Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities are underrepresented in many sectors of the UBC community – indeed, the representation of people with disabilities is declining.¹ UBC’s student body appears to be more diverse than our workforce. But too many students from underrepresented

¹ Detailed information on the representation of women, visible minorities, Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities in the UBC workforce is available at the UBC Equity Office website at: <http://www.equity.ubc.ca/data/index.html>.

groups continue to report that they feel marginalized or tokenized within their classes and they do not see their lives and experiences reflected in the curriculum.²

Much has been done and continues to be done to make UBC more inclusive of and welcoming to groups that may have been excluded or underrepresented in the past. Many excellent initiatives are advancing equity and diversity in units across the University.³ The following plan is not intended to replace those initiatives. Rather, it aims to provide an overarching framework that will, over five years, embed equity and diversity more deeply into UBC's institutional practices and will support the efforts of individual units. For background on the plan, see diversity.ubc.ca.

As part of the Place and Promise project, this plan provides an opportunity to embed equity and diversity goals in all aspects of strategic planning. There is a particularly close relationship between the goals of this plan and those of the Focus on People and the Aboriginal strategic initiatives.

“Equity” and “diversity” are broad terms capable of many interpretations. The plan begins, therefore, by defining these terms and providing some context.

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY – DEFINITIONS AND PHILOSOPHY

The focus of this plan is on **diversity** within UBC's workforce and student body. We embrace diversity because it enriches our institution. While all diversity is of value, some types of diversity are particularly relevant to the university's mission. According to a leading researcher, relevant diversity for organizations “means differences in how people see, categorize, understand, and go about improving the world.”⁴ These differences are central to the academic mission. A diverse and excellent academic community, working together, will generate innovative research and scholarship. Students who are exposed to diverse perspectives will have more cognitive tools for understanding new ideas and resolving problems and will be better prepared for the challenges they will face after graduation.

For these benefits to be realized, the diverse perspectives must be fully included and valued. Beyond a mere “accounting for” difference, the way in which people are different – for example, in gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, family status or socio-economic status – must be respected. Thus, diversity in an organization means taking individual difference into account, respecting the ways in

² See, for example, the interviews with Aboriginal students in *What I learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom*, a research project by Karmen Crey and Amy Perrault at <http://fnsp.arts.ubc.ca/projects/classroom/>.

³ For some examples of those initiatives, see *Exemplary Practices in Equity and Diversity Programming: University of British Columbia – Vancouver* (2009) a report for the Equity Office prepared by Lori J. Charvat (http://www.equity.ubc.ca/assets/pdf/publications/reports/exemplary_practices_in_%20equity_%20and_diversity_programming_UBCV.pdf).

⁴ Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups Firms, Schools, and Societies* (2007, Princeton: Princeton University Press).

which that difference manifests, and taking full advantage of the exchange of diverse perspectives and ideas that result in a robust and collegial environment.⁵

Equity at its heart is about fairness; it is about equal access – to education, to employment – and equal opportunity to succeed in these domains. Promoting and achieving equity requires that institutions, such as universities, reflectively examine their policies and practices related to such areas as hiring and promotion of faculty and staff, admission of students, measurements of success, curricula and climate.

Equity is not the same as *formal equality*. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. In this way, equity can be seen as the equivalent of the concept of *substantive equality* built into the Canadian legal system. Equity recognizes that some groups were historically disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and were, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. The effects of that exclusion often linger systemically within organizational policies, practices and procedures. One goal of this plan, therefore, is to increase diversity by ameliorating conditions of **disadvantaged groups**.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* explicitly provides for special measures aimed at “the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups” Under the *Charter*, disadvantaged groups include those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation. For this plan, disadvantaged groups may also include groups who experience systemic barriers due to other factors such as family status, socio-economic status or gender identity.

The focus of this plan is on present or emerging, not historical, disadvantage. We recognize that current barriers may have their origin in historical exclusion. We must continue to identify and address those that are rooted in that historical disadvantage. However, groups that have experienced disadvantage may no longer face barriers or may face them in some areas or activities but not others. On the other hand, research may result in groups (such as first-generation learners) being added to those identified as “disadvantaged”.

⁵ Some material from the preamble and other sections of this document is drawn or adapted from the language and definitions set out in *Exemplary Practices in Equity and Diversity Programming: University of British Columbia – Vancouver* (2009) a report for the Equity Office prepared by Lori J. Charvat.

CONTEXT

- **UBC's Vision, Values and Commitments** – The values of integrity, mutual respect, equity and the public interest are all specifically referenced in UBC's proposed Vision Statement and Values.⁶ Further, UBC has made express commitments to International Engagement, Aboriginal Engagement, Creating an Outstanding Work Environment, Community Engagement and building Intercultural Understanding. Accordingly, to enable UBC to advance our Vision, Values and Commitments, equity and diversity issues must be an integral part of all strategic planning.
- **Excellence** – UBC strives for excellence through its students, faculty, staff and alumni. This value is reinforced by ensuring that equity and diversity are incorporated into policies and practices that enable UBC to draw on the broadest possible pool of qualified students, faculty and staff.
- **Demographics** – Changing demographics, brought about by immigration, globalization, greater participation of disadvantaged groups and changing ideas of inclusiveness, have drastically altered the pools of potential students, staff and faculty available to attend, live and work at UBC. In order to attract the best talent available, UBC must be prepared to cast our nets as widely as possible. To retain and engage this talent, UBC must ensure that campus facilities, policies and climate are welcoming and that programs and services are diverse and accessible to all. These programs and services must also be sensitive to the differential impact of demographics, both on campus and in the surrounding communities, on the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses.
- **Societal Good** – In our role as a leader and educator in the community, it is important that UBC acknowledge and address injustices and systemic barriers that may prevent disadvantaged groups from seeking higher education or employment at UBC. If UBC is to live up to its Public Interest Values statement of creating “opportunities to bring together scholars and the wider community to enhance societal good”, we must be active leaders in not only promoting equity and diversity within our own backyard but also in providing the tools and programs for our students, staff, faculty and graduates to bring these values back to the community at large.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

- **Commitment** – Achieving equity and diversity at UBC requires more than vision; it requires an adjustment in our practices at many levels. Such organizational change will not happen without a genuine commitment to take action to achieve the vision. Moreover, the commitment requires more than rhetoric; it must be supported with resources.

⁶ found at http://www.strategicplan.ubc.ca/vision_mission

- **Honesty and Accountability** – UBC must be open, honest and accountable in assessing its progress towards achieving equity and diversity. UBC must recognize where inequities exist and must be transparent about its efforts to remedy them. It is equally important to recognize and celebrate individuals and units that are having a significant impact in advancing equity and diversity at UBC.
- **Leadership** – Although change must happen at all levels of the organization, it is essential that UBC’s leaders demonstrate a commitment to action. Commitment can be demonstrated through inclusion of equity and diversity in strategic planning, policy-making and resource allocation, and in the diversity of those appointed to leadership positions.
- **Shared Responsibility** – At UBC, change happens most effectively at the level of academic or administrative units. It is there that members of the UBC community learn, teach and work and it is there that most policy is implemented. To be effective, therefore, change needs to be directed at that level. UBC is also a highly decentralized organization and the needs, priorities and resources will vary greatly from one unit to another. Success in achieving equity and diversity will require actions and resources that empower individual units to implement change that meets their needs in their particular context. That means setting goals that are broad enough to advance the vision of the university while respecting the differences across units, faculties and campuses. And it means providing the support and resources that are necessary to enable units to meet their goals.
- **Empowerment** – Also essential in advancing equity and diversity is the work of dedicated individuals and groups who advocate from the grassroots. This plan is intended to be a tool that empowers these individuals and groups to advance the University’s mission and that recognizes their contribution.
- **Innovation** – To become a university that embraces equity and diversity as part of its academic mission and that reflects the diversity of Canadian society, UBC must be prepared to recognize and change policies and practices that are barriers to inclusion and participation. Change at large organizations like UBC is often a challenge. However, UBC has frequently demonstrated through its academic and research advances that its members have the capability to create and embrace innovation. UBC needs to harness that power to innovate as we pursue our vision to be a leader in equity and diversity.

ACTION PLAN

A. STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

A strategic commitment, in its most visible form, means that the leadership includes people whose diverse lived experiences can expand thinking and direction by bringing new perspectives, who can represent voices from the perimeter, and who can challenge the status quo. It is at the strategic level that faculties can establish sustainable change through earmarked resources and visible champions, can foster a welcoming and supportive campus environment and can ensure that grassroots initiatives are properly supported and recognized. Most if not all of the actions in later parts of this document can be incorporated into strategic plans proposed in this area.

Actions [Timeframe]	Possible Metrics	Oversight
<p>Incorporate equity and diversity goals into strategic planning and review processes of every UBC unit directly reporting to a Vice President or the Deputy Vice Chancellor. [Ongoing]</p> <p>Increase diversity of UBC's leadership, including the Board and Senates. [Ongoing]</p> <p>Develop and report on measures of progress in furthering equity and diversity goals.[years 1, 3 and 5 of plan]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Faculties, Colleges and VP portfolios which have equity and diversity plans with measurable outcomes • Representation of members of disadvantaged groups in senior positions • Public report summarizing progress on this plan 	<p>President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Provosts, VPs</p>
<p>Develop university-wide strategies for internal and external communications that will reinforce equity and diversity as integral to UBC's programs and identity. [18 months]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications strategy with measurable outcomes; visibility of resources that foster equity and diversity at UBC; public statements relating to equity and diversity by UBC's leaders 	<p>Executive Director, UBC Public Affairs (UBCV), Director, Alumni & University Relations (UBCO)</p>
<p>Develop guidelines and implementation practices to enhance accessibility of the physical environment at UBC for people with disabilities. [18 months]</p> <p>Increase childcare spaces and related family services for UBC families. [Five years]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines on accessibility standards and regular reports of accessibility enhancements • Significantly reduced waiting lists for UBC childcare; support for other services such as emergency or dependent care 	<p>Campus Planning, UBC Properties Trust, VP Students</p>
<p>Expand opportunities and training for individuals who are taking the lead at the grassroots level on equity and diversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of funding for grass-roots equity and diversity initiatives; number of applications for such 	<p>President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor,</p>

initiatives and celebrate their successes. [One year] Establish awards recognizing outstanding equity and diversity initiatives or contributions. [One year.]	funding, quality of training and support, mechanisms to recognize efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and prestige of awards 	AVP Equity
--	--	------------

B. CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Curriculum and Scholarship

Curriculum and academic inquiry are powerful tools for promoting diversity and equity. A curriculum that reflects and embraces diversity challenges and enriches students and provides them with the best possible preparation for dealing with the complexities of an increasingly globalized society. While stand-alone courses with words such as “women” or “aboriginal” or “critical race” in the title are evidence of curricular efforts, it is important that curriculum planning incorporates a strategic commitment to educating for diversity in other courses as well and in co-curricular enrichment activities. Research guides curriculum, so it is important that faculty are supported to conduct academic inquiry into areas that reflect the experiences and interests of disadvantaged groups. Such research will also fulfil the university goal of enhancing societal good.

Actions [Timeframe]	Possible Metrics	Oversight
Strike a Task Force to identify ways to expand students’ options for courses and co-curricular experiences which deepen their understanding of equity and diversity issues and that are appropriate to their field of study. A plan may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifying existing courses and creating new courses, or extra-curricular experiences; • Identifying new resources needed to sustain such courses, including the funding of teaching assistantships. • Identifying ways to increase flexibility in students’ curricula [18 months]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of courses focusing on diversity issues • Number of other courses that include significant content related to equity and diversity • Publication of Task Force plan 	Provosts

<p>Conduct a feasibility study on ways to promote both basic and institutional research related to equity and diversity including identification of mechanisms that would foster, coordinate, and disseminate research regarding equity and diversity issues. [Two years]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of funding for research on diversity issues • Publication of a feasibility study 	<p>Provosts, VP Research</p>
<p>Create programs, such as second degree programs or interdisciplinary options, that provide new ways for entering fields in which certain groups are significantly underrepresented [Ongoing]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and uptake of alternate routes to programs; graduation rates of students from underrepresented groups 	<p>Provosts, Deans</p>

Classroom Climate

Creating a Climate for the Lessons of Diversity

As a university community, we consider the free and lawful expression of ideas and viewpoints to be essential to our mission. As scholars, we believe that discussion across boundaries and across pre-conceptions is a necessary condition for the resolution of even the most intractable conflicts. As instructors, we have the responsibility to ensure that these discussions take place within our classrooms. Indeed, the university classroom is where these vital lessons must be taught if we are to equip our students to confront and address the conflicts of the future.

Despite the intractability of some conflicts, we are a community that values respect for all others, even those with whom we disagree fundamentally. For a university, anything that detracts from the free expression of ideas is just not acceptable. Robust debate can scarcely occur, for example, when some members of the community are made to feel marginalized or even personally attacked, not for their ideas but for their very identity. When this happens, university disciplinary policies come into play, and there may be recourse to provincial human rights and federal anti-hate legislation.

A strategic commitment to equity and diversity means that we must act in ways that proclaim and define the parameters of respectful debate, and that we must foster vigorous debate within those parameters. Our classroom and co-curricular climates must welcome the testing of new ideas, diverse and marginalized viewpoints, and emerging opinions as well as majority viewpoints. To this end we will take the following actions:

Actions	Possible Metrics	Oversight
Develop a classroom climate policy statement for UBC and tools to measure its effectiveness.	Achievement of statement; campus-wide awareness measures; instruments for assessing progress on classroom climate	Provosts, AVP Equity , Ombudsperson
Hold an annual open forum about the meaning of respectful classrooms – model respectful debate in this setting.	Achievement of the event; attendance at this event	VP Students
Work with the GSS on a graduate studies climate policy, taking account the mixed classroom/research setting of graduate studies.	Establishment of this policy; breadth of engagement of grad student community	Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies (UBCV), Dean, College of Graduate Studies (UBCO), Ombudsperson
Support students to develop ways of expressing their concerns about classroom climate, both through various media (e.g. Film, UBC publications, student radio; etc) and to those at the university who can address those concerns.	Amount of financial support Number of students who take up this opportunity	

C. RECRUITING AND ADMISSION

A diverse community of excellent students, faculty, staff and senior administration brings a variety of perspectives to curriculum, research and scholarship and innovation and fresh ideas to our work. UBC’s workforce (including student employees) serves as advisors, mentors and role models for UBC’s diverse student body. Effective recruiting strategies will strengthen UBC’s capacity to reach out to qualified students, faculty and staff who have been discouraged or excluded from participating in the UBC community because of systemic barriers within UBC or the broader community.

Student Recruitment and Admission		
Actions [Timeframe]	Possible Metrics	Oversight
Conduct research to identify barriers that prevent qualified applicants from disadvantaged groups from admission to UBC, whether they arise during the application process or earlier. Develop tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people and communities reached through outreach initiatives • Number of qualified people 	VP Students, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies (UBCV), Dean,

<p>to measure progress in removing those barriers. [Ongoing with annual progress reports]</p> <p>Develop effective recruitment strategies, including outreach initiatives, that address barriers experienced by undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows from disadvantaged groups. [Ongoing with annual progress reports]</p>	<p>from targeted groups who apply and enroll in UBC's programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination of research findings 	<p>College of Graduate Studies (UBCO), Deans, Provosts</p>
<p>Investigate ways to broaden the criteria used for admission to UBC's undergraduate programs, so that qualifications of all applicants are fully recognized.</p> <p>Review individual student admission processes to graduate and professional programs across UBC to identify both best practices and systemic challenges, e.g. through random selection of a sample of processes, and use results to inform best practices across campus. [Ongoing with annual reports of progress]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breadth and quality of admissions criteria Number of reviews annually Report of review findings 	<p>VP Students, AVP Equity, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies (UBCV), Dean, College of Graduate Studies (UBCO)</p>
<p>Increase availability of scholarships that are specifically allocated to qualified applicants from disadvantaged groups. [Ongoing]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of targeted scholarships; level of funding 	<p>President, Deputy Vice Chancellor, VPs</p>

Workforce Recruitment		
Actions [Timeframe]	Possible Metrics	Oversight
<p>Revise the existing UBC Employment Equity Plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine hiring targets for groups that are significantly underrepresented, including groups not currently designated in federal employment equity legislation; Create mechanisms to expand the applicant pool through active recruitment and to track rates of recruitment of staff and faculty from underrepresented groups. [One year] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual employment equity workforce reports Human Rights Tribunal approval of Employment Equity Plan 	<p>AVP Equity</p>

<p>Educate search committees on effective recruitment and selection processes, addressing issues such as the need for diversity within search committees and unconscious bias in evaluating applicants that may exclude otherwise qualified candidates. [Ongoing with annual reports of progress]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of search committees which undergo training • Evaluation and dissemination of training impact 	<p>Provosts, Deans, AVP HR, AVP Equity</p>
<p>Support units in expanding the diversity in job application pools and in hiring first-choice candidates, including both central and unit support for partner accommodation and hires of outstanding candidates from underrepresented groups at senior ranks. [One year]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of funding • Amount of diversity hiring supported by funds 	<p>Provosts, Deans</p>
<p>Review individual recruitment and selection processes across UBC, to identify both best practices and systemic challenges, e.g. through random selection of a sample of searches. [Ongoing with annual reports of findings]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of reviews annually • Annual report of review findings 	<p>AVP Equity, AVP HR</p>

D. SUPPORTING SUCCESS

The benefits of a diverse community are maximized when all members of the community are included and valued in the discussion and exchange of knowledge and ideas. Full participation in the life of the institution enhances well-being and thus retention and performance.

All students, particularly those who have been underrepresented within the community, must be confident that they can participate in every aspect of campus life without being subject to arbitrary barriers. An institution that truly supports and enhances student success ensures that the values taught in the classroom and promoted by the institution are reflected in all aspects of the university including the provision of housing and support services. To this end, UBC should ensure that both the academic and non-academic student experience is in accordance with UBC’s values, including those of equity and diversity.

Similarly, UBC must ensure that its workforce, including faculty, staff and senior administrators, are able to participate in the opportunities that a career at UBC offers without being impeded by unnecessary barriers.

Supporting Student Success		
Actions [Timeframe]	Possible Metrics	Oversight
<p>Educate UBC’s workforce on ways to recognize and address challenges and opportunities that arise in the context of their work that relate to the diversity of the student population. Specifically, provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on classroom climate and equity and diversity issues in a pedagogical setting for faculty and teaching assistants; • Training for non-teaching staff who provide services (such as counseling, advising, residence and housing services, food services and medical, health & wellness services) to students at UBC. <p>[Development in first year; expansion in subsequent years]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope, quality, and degree of use of accommodation services • Teaching evaluation measures • Scope and number of training programs provided; level of participation in training (numbers and representation of different schools and services); quality and impact of training • Availability and quality of resource materials 	<p>TAG (UBCV), TLC (UBCO), AVP HR</p>
<p>Form a Working Group responsible for addressing gaps and identifying opportunities in supporting students from disadvantaged groups, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in financial assistance that may deter students from participating in work study programs or travel abroad programs; • Gaps in support for students, including those with disabilities and students with dependents; • Barriers to student participation and engagement in specific areas of campus life, such as residence life and athletics. <p>[Working Group recommendations in 18 months; implementation thereafter]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rates of students from disadvantaged groups • Level of participation of students from disadvantaged groups (including students with disabilities and students with dependents) in extra-curricular programs • Policies to address gaps and opportunities for support; evaluation of their effectiveness • Indicators of participation and satisfaction on student surveys 	<p>VP Students, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies (UBCV), Dean, College of Graduate Studies (UBCO), Ombudsperson</p>

Supporting Workforce Success		
Actions [Timeframe]	Possible Metrics	Oversight
<p>Identify and address barriers to well-being and success of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Track measures of success, such as promotions, salary, or awards, and address systemic inequities in these measures. [Ongoing, expanding scope over time]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of employee satisfaction and climate surveys • Rates of retention and promotion of staff and faculty from disadvantaged groups • Rates of success of faculty in disadvantaged groups in research funding and awards; equitable compensation for all employees 	<p>AVP Equity, AVP HR, Provosts, VP Research</p>
<p>Expand and improve the quality of coaching, mentoring and training provided to new faculty and staff, especially for those from disadvantaged groups, and for existing faculty and staff moving into non- traditional areas.</p> <p>[Ongoing, expanding scope over time]</p>	<p>Number of mentoring/coaching policies and programs; quality of, and level of participation in mentoring/coaching programs</p>	<p>TAG (UBCV), TLC (UBCO), AVP HR</p>
<p>Expand services and support for faculty and staff, including those with disabilities and those with family responsibilities or religious commitments. [Two years]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uptake on services and accommodations provided • Clarity, levels of inclusion and visibility of policies around services and support 	<p>AVP HR</p>