

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Community Engagement Concept Paper

Updated May 16, 2014

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VP Communications & Community Partnership

FOREWORD

UBC's Strategic Plan, *Place and Promise*, outlines three core commitments: Student Learning, Research Excellence and Community Engagement (CE); and six priority commitments.

The Vice President, Communications and Community Partnership (VPC&P) has the lead to develop a CE strategy for UBC's Strategic Plan. To begin to prepare for this work, staff in the Community Partnership Unit have reviewed academic literature, learned from other universities, examined the past attempt at developing a plan, networked with staff, faculty, students and alumni, and connected with colleagues from the Community Engagement Unit at UBC-Okanagan¹.

Based on work to date, this document communicates the imperative for CE at UBC and presents a tone, approach and direction for UBC's CE strategy. Concepts presented are supported by UBC Executive.

This Concept Paper does not represent final language; rather, it is a tool to test our thinking and a foundation for further discussion and engagement. It is acknowledged that to date, much of the discussion has been among those "internal" to UBC. An approach to CE must and will include perspectives and participation from external communities.

Feedback and discussion about the language used in this document is welcome and will be used to continuously shape the strategies and approach to UBC's commitment to Community Engagement. Please [connect with us](#).

¹ While the foundational elements of a CE plan such as a strategic direction, vision and principles are system wide in their scope, specific approaches and activities will differ between Vancouver and the Okanagan to reflect their unique strengths and placements within their respective communities.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A CORE COMMITMENT

Engaging with external communities is not new at UBC. It has been a part of research, teaching, service and student-led initiatives since the institution was founded. The sidebar reflects a sampling of involved units and Community Engagement (CE) activities happening at UBC.

While CE is not a new concept, ‘why’ and ‘how’ CE is done is interpreted in many different ways across UBC. Although many may agree with the Carnegie Foundation definition of CE, CE is not always embraced as core to UBC’s mission or as a scholarly activity. In contrast, Student Learning and Research Excellence are understood and accepted as core commitments within UBC’s strategic plan.

Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching²

To be better understood and accepted across the institution, UBC needs a strategy that brings the CE commitment to life. The strategy is the expression of central administration’s strategic intent with respect to UBC’s CE commitment. As such it will:

- Drive recognition of the role of CE in the university so that together with Student Learning and Research Excellence, it is understood as foundational to UBC’s direction and identity;
- Celebrate, support and further enable community-university engagement scholars and champions;
- Make connecting with UBC more accessible to external communities; and
- Leverage UBC’s strengths and connections to stimulate actions that further benefit communities locally, nationally, and internationally.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPERATIVE FOR UBC

At the heart of the strategy is knowing why UBC is committed to CE, as proposed here:

1. **UBC is intrinsically linked to external communities. It is our responsibility to use UBC’s assets to stimulate action that contributes to a civil and sustainable society.**
2. **All communities have expertise and assets that bring value and benefit to engaging with UBC.**
3. **CE is part of excellent scholarship and essential to UBC’s mission. CE activates and motivates Student Learning and Research Excellence; it takes the university’s core functions and externalizes them.**
4. **UBC is made relevant and accountable through its relationships with communities. CE is beneficial to UBC and builds the university’s social capital.**

Community-engaged learning; community-based research; knowledge & technology mobilization; international partnerships; industry collaborations; government relations; research collaborations; faculty partnerships; public events; public programs; co-op programs; public-private partnerships; internationalization; Continuing Studies; multi-institutional partnerships; 16 sustainability “living laboratory” initiatives; Centre for Community Engaged Learning - 3391 students, working with 31 departments and programs and 313 community organizations and small businesses; 3,000 Co-op students work in industry, non-profit, and government placements; 979 UILO mediated research contracts and agreements with government and non-profit organizations; more than 630,000 people travel to UBC’s Vancouver campus annually for public events and venues; 261 mobility partnerships in 41 countries; medical education partnerships with 100+ clinical teaching sites; Faculty of Medicine: General Practice Residency community programs, affiliated regional centres, community education facilities, clinical teaching sites, Centre for Excellence in Aboriginal Health; Faculty of Forestry: Forestry Co-op; Forestry Aboriginal partnerships; Faculty of Law: international partnerships; Pharmaceutical Sciences Partner Appointments; Faculty of Science: Beatty Biodiversity Museum, Botanical Garden, Nitobe

² From http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/community_engagement.php. 12/16/13.

THE NEED FOR A UBC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

At UBC there are many scholars engaged in community-based work, a significant presence of quality relationships, and numerous faculties and units that have increasingly embraced and defined CE as part of their core work and vision. This is happening in the absence of a CE strategic plan and is a tremendous strength. At the same time, CE at UBC is described by some as:

- Disconnected micro communities doing individual projects that have limited to no knowledge of what others at UBC are doing;
- Sometimes hidden from the institution – which is seen as rule-bound and putting up barriers to CE work;
- Recognized only within a narrow definition of CE, which tends to exclude, limit, or oversimplify some community engagements;
- Defined only as service, rather than being an approach to research, teaching/learning and service;
- Used by units at UBC as part of a public relations exercise without taking a critical, scholarly approach to the work;
- Often dismissed, over simplified and undervalued; and
- Causing members of external communities, particularly the most vulnerable, to feel used; there can be a sense that the university benefits but external communities do not.

The comments above point to aspects of current practice and culture that can be improved. As suggested by some, the CE strategy has the opportunity to:

- Create awareness that CE is scholarly work, and supports the other core commitments of Student Learning and Research Excellence;
 - Develop ways to see how the specific CE work of faculty, staff and students fits into a larger, university-wide framework (i.e. connecting self-identity to institutional identity).
 - Respect the value of time invested in building relations;
 - Build on areas where CE is already seen as ‘part of the DNA’ of a discipline;
 - Be more aware of how UBC connects and contributes to society and how society in turn contributes to UBC;
 - Build structures and an institutional culture that supports CE work across UBC;
 - Leverage existing expertise and resources by creating stronger connections and networks; and
- Shift the overall perception of CE from being the “right thing to do” to being “core to what we do”.

Through engagement we can shift the established framework of higher education to a stronger level of societal relevance that transforms us into a stronger, wealthier and more equitable society while advancing institutional goals.³

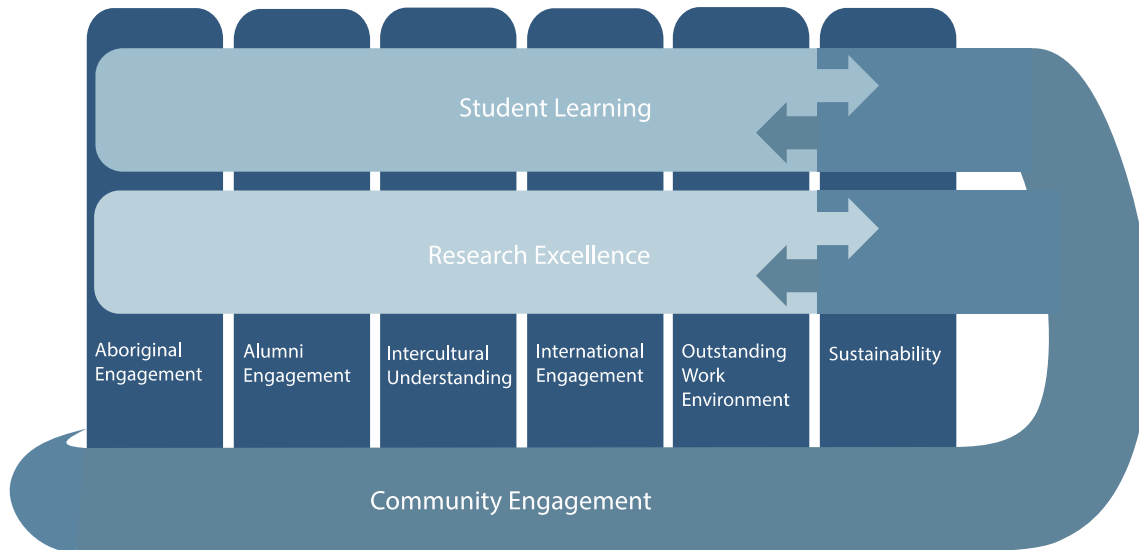
³ Bruns, K. , H. Fitzgerald, A. Furco, S. Sonka, L. Swanson (2011). Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education. Council on Engagement and Outreach Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. p. 1

Garden, Pacific Museum of the Earth, TRIUMF Saturday Morning Lectures, UBC Faraday Science Show, Life Sciences Workshops, GEER Up! Summer Camps, Science 101, aboriginal science education initiatives, Science Co-op; Faculty of Dentistry: children’s dental program, geriatric dentistry program, volunteer community clinic program, general practice residency community program; Faculty of Land and Food Systems: tri-mentoring, internships, career fairs, community health initiative, Dairy research and education centre; Faculty of Arts: Humanities 101, Arts Co-op, School of Journalism advisory council; joint academic programs; Faculty of Applied Science: innovation strategies, engineering co-op, industry partnerships, alumni and community engagement; Sauder: business ventures, experiential learning, lifelong learning, international collaboration agreements, Sauder Africa Initiative, Ch’nook Initiative, business co-op; Faculty of Education: community field experience, rural sites of learning, refugee teacher education, Investigating Our Practices conference, Virtual Immersive Educational World; UBC-O: Distinguished Speaker Series, Community Day, Community Service Learning Program; Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies: Centre for Indigenous Media Arts; Faculty of Human and Social Development: community placements;

UBC has the opportunity to be a Canadian pioneer in bringing institution-wide recognition of and support for community engagement to a top tier research institution.⁴

A CE strategic plan will be evidence of UBC's intention to not only celebrate, share and support CE activities, but also to ingrain CE into the culture, policies, and priorities of the institution. The plan will better reflect that CE is tied to the core commitments, mission and priorities of UBC (Figure 1). Building this culture of CE and realizing opportunities such as those listed above require a long-term vision and deliberate action.

Figure 1 Community Engagement runs through UBC Strategic Priorities



By seeing community engagement as a strategy for advancing institution-wide goals, engagement becomes seen as an integral part of institutional priorities. Engagement units can then begin to see themselves as contributing to the advancement of broader institutional change initiatives.⁵

Faculty of Management: management consulting, visiting speaker series, student mentorship; Faculty of Medicine, Southern Medical Program: integrated community clerkship program; Faculty of Education Community Engagement Showcase; Public Affairs Experts Database; Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability research map; UBC Global Reach; health authorities; school districts; public and private schools; local communities; provincial agencies; universities; UN agencies; businesses; donors; Knowledge Mapping; Patient and Community Voices; Downtown East Side; Ghana; China; Haida Gwaii; Learning Exchange; spin-off companies; kinesiology co-op; alumni engagement; SCARP reciprocal learning and development projects, School of Nursing advisory council; Computer Science Tech Career Fair, Industry Panels, Industry Point of Contact; Human Early Learning Partnership; Irving K Barber Learning Centre; Community Voices in Health Professional Education Community-engaged learning; community-based research; knowledge & technology mobilization; international partnerships; industry collaborations; government relations; research collaborations; faculty partnerships; public events; public programs; co-op programs; public-private partnerships; internationalization; Continuing Studies; multi-institutional partnerships; 16 sustainability "living laboratory" initiatives;

⁴ Until recently, smaller universities known for strong attachment to local communities have led the adoption of institution-wide CE. Large, globally connected research universities have relationships with communities across the world, making an institution-wide approach to CE more complex.

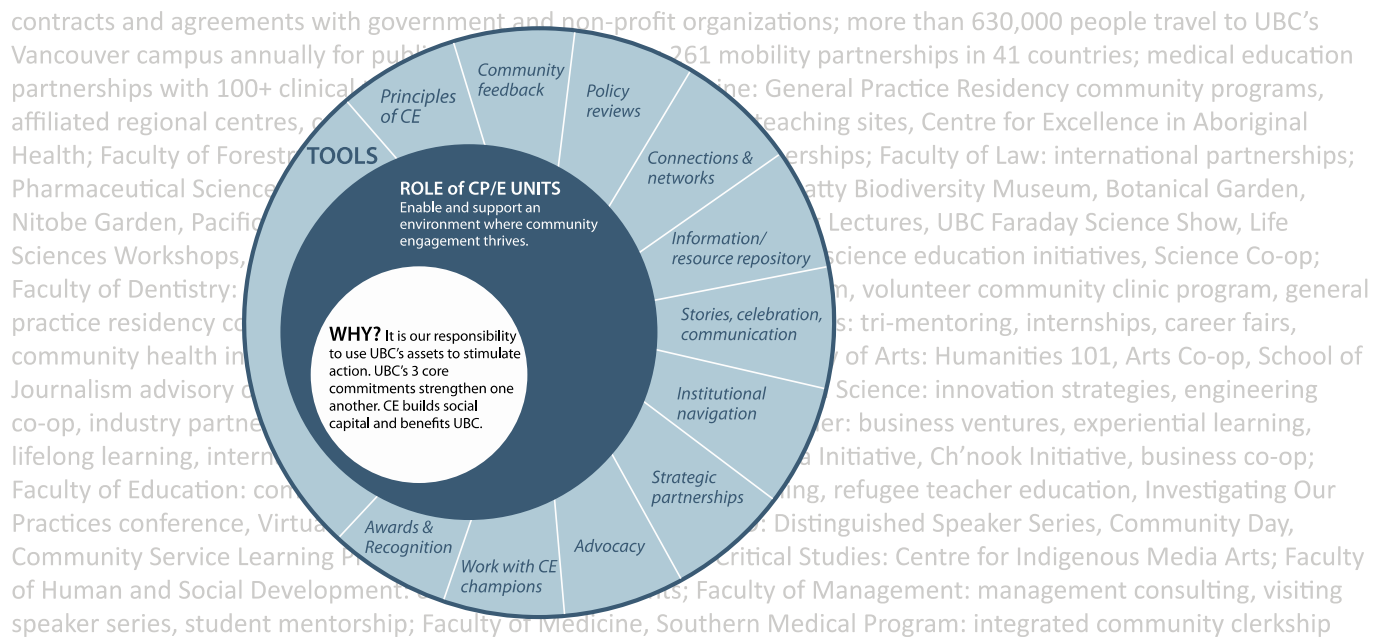
⁵ A. Furco, VP Public Engagement, University of Minnesota. Personal communication: January 22, 2014.

ROLE OF VP COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (VPC&P)

While accountability to develop a CE strategy lies within the mandate of the VPC&P, ownership of the multitude of CE activities and accountability for a successful strategy is spread across the entire institution. The role of the VPC&P within a CE strategy is to champion institutional strategic intent supported by central administration, within the authority of the Executive. Although faculty, students and staff own and animate the CE work, UBC's central administration has a critical role to play in connecting CE across the university and breaking down systemic barriers so CE can thrive. As the VPS has students as her central focus, and VPRI and VPA have research and faculty at their core, the VPC&P has a role to hold the institution accountable to the strategic direction, vision and principles of a CE strategy.

Figure 2 depicts the elements that give structure to the work of the Community Partnership/Engagement Units (Vancouver and Okanagan respectively). The units, guided by the stated intent (*Why*), will take on the role of enablers to reduce barriers and increase opportunities so high quality CE can thrive (*Role of CP/E Units*). To do so, the units will develop and/or leverage tools including strategic partnerships, awards/recognition, institutional navigation and more (*Tools*). The units will also develop principles to support excellent CE and redirect harmful or damaging forms of engagement. Tools are further described in Appendix A.

Figure 2 The CP Unit's motivation, role and tools in the context of CE



Community-engaged learning; community-based research; knowledge & technology mobilization; international partnerships; industry collaborations; government relations; research collaborations; faculty partnerships; public events; public programs; co-op programs; public-private partnerships; internationalization; Continuing Studies; multi-institutional partnerships; 16 sustainability "living laboratory" initiatives; Centre for Community Engaged Learning - 3391 students, working with 31 departments and programs and 313 community organizations and small businesses; 3,000 Co-op students work in industry, non-profit, and government placements; 979 UILO mediated research

TERMINOLOGY - SCOPE OF “COMMUNITY” AND “ENGAGEMENT”

COMMUNITY

Community, in the context of Community Engagement, refers to external communities. Whoever we reach or is touched by what we do is part of these communities. External communities include but are not limited to non-governmental organizations and other community groups, marginalized communities, governments at all levels, Aboriginal communities, schools and educational institutions, neighbourhoods, campus residents, alumni, local and global companies, and individual community members. UBC also has special relationships with the provincial government, local cities, and with the Aboriginal communities upon whose traditional territories the Vancouver and the Okanagan campuses are located.

While the CE strategy focuses on relationships external to UBC, there is a recognition that these interactions happen with internal communities, which include students, faculty, staff, residents, and others. These are important communities and relationships that will have an impact on the success of a CE strategy; however, the CE strategy primarily focuses on how UBC engages with external communities.

ENGAGEMENT

There is a continuum of valuable activities, from outreach to partnership, that occur in community-university engagement. The scope of engagement and this strategy remains broad to respect many forms of engaging, and recognizes that within and across disciplines there will be differences in defining effective scholarly community engagement. That said, there are also harmful or negative instances of engagement. A commitment to CE holds all of UBC accountable to principles of *how* we engage, irrespective of intensity or scope of the engagement, with great attention paid to the quality of engagement.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

Determining the best way to plan and implement a strategy requires an understanding of the current context and other considerations, including:

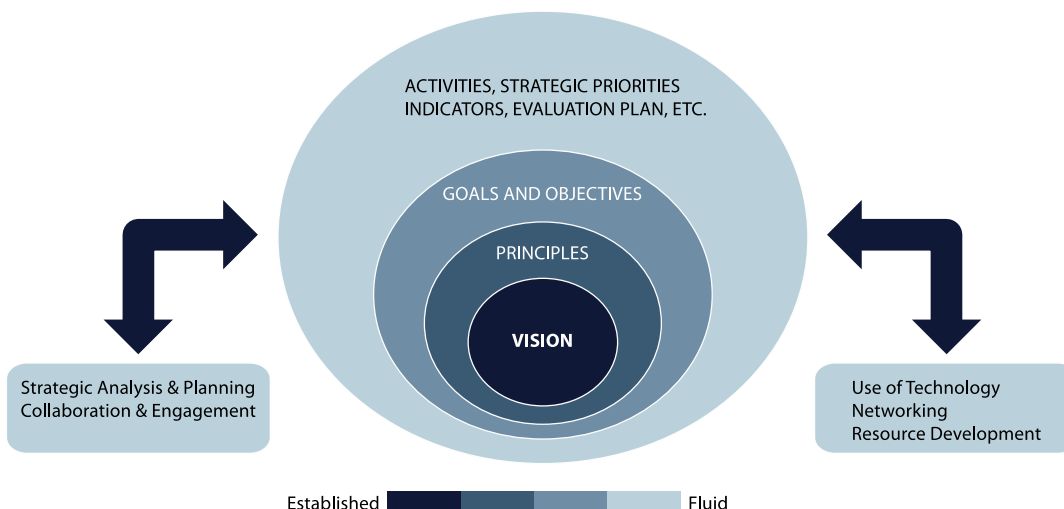
- **Opportunity for a unique role:** UBC has an opportunity, as a globally connected institution, to do CE differently and have a positive impact in communities around the world.
- **Value academic freedom:** Academic freedom is an indispensable quality of research universities. A well-crafted CE strategy will not compromise academic freedom, rather it will support and enable scholars who have been restricted from engaging in CE to expand and enhance their scholarship.
- **Respect for different approaches:** There are different definitions, methodologies and best practices for CE. One way is not necessarily better or worse than another, however there are also harmful or negative instances of engagement. A CE strategy can guide with principles of *how* we engage.
- **Shared accountability and strategies already in place:** Numerous faculties, institutes and units at UBC lead, manage and are accountable for specific aspects of community engagement. Many have developed infrastructures and strategies to support CE; a strong foundation to build upon.
- **Strength in the local:** While UBC has a global reach, it is a place-based institution embedded within Metro Vancouver, the Okanagan, and the province of British Columbia. There will be strength and concentration in connections with communities in these areas, including Aboriginal communities.
- **Indigenous territories:** A strategy that engages beyond these campuses has much to learn from protocols, practices, and processes of Indigenous scholars and communities locally, nationally, and internationally. The strategy must also acknowledge and respect that UBC campuses' are location on the unceded, ancestral and traditional lands of the Musqueam and Okanagan peoples.

- **Tenure and promotion:** Tenure and promotion is raised in almost every conversation about CE at UBC. Increased understanding and awareness of scholarly CE work can contribute to the tenure and promotion dialogue.
- **A focus on CE as scholarly work is not expected of everyone:** Not all of UBC needs, wants, or can incorporate CE. UBC will thrive on a strategic division of labour where scholarly specialization spans research and student learning that does and does not include engagement. UBC’s strength lies in the diversity of expertise and passion across the institution.
- **Interpersonal relationships are critical:** External partners may not see themselves as in partnership with UBC but rather partnering with an individual at UBC. Building a university-wide understanding of CE includes recognizing and building upon the strengths of one-on-one, in-person work.
- **Privilege and power:** Post-secondary institutions like UBC can be intimidating places of privilege. Connecting with external communities requires working past these real and perceived, historical and current barriers between UBC and outside communities. In addition, varying levels of power exist among relations and partnerships and consideration needs to be given to how principles and practices might unfold differently across relations.
- **Understanding impact of CE:** Governments and donors are increasingly looking for a measurable return on investment. A good strategy provides the appropriate tools needed to determine success, communicate the collective impact of CE, show accountability and make good decisions.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

This is a long-term process. An institutional culture of CE at UBC will be built upon a foundation that is developed over many years. While the principles behind traditional consultation are valuable, developing a CE strategy is not conducive to a series of consultations that result in a final paper. To remain true to the spirit of CE work, a process to develop a strategy requires multi-pronged, on-going engagement. The Community Partnership Unit becomes a curator, building and confirming the strategy through input, interaction, and learning over time. The contents of the strategy expand and adjust continuously. In this way the strategy is always current, versus a one-time snapshot that is periodically reviewed. As this work unfolds, elements of the strategy will be firmed up and solidified. For example, “principles” or a “vision” in Figure 3 may be solidified sooner than other parts. The development of other elements leads to some being confirmed over time, with other areas remaining open for change.

Figure 3: A process for developing the Community Engagement Strategy



STRATEGIC NEXT STEPS

What does this really mean in terms of action? We have identified three priority areas for next steps as we continue to listen, learn, engage, build trust and develop concrete deliverables: Strategic Analysis and Planning, Collaboration and Engagement, and Use of Technology and Digital Engagement.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

Developing a CE strategy requires listening and learning from others, testing ideas and conducting a well-reasoned analysis that articulates clear cause for moving in specific directions. We have begun a review of existing strategic plans, annual reports and web sites to be better informed and understand how many faculties and units do integrate CE into their plans and work. Following up with key contacts in faculties to learn more about current work, and how CE can be supported will be valuable. Other activities include determining options and uses for an “inventory” of what CE is happening at UBC today, exploring/establishing strategic partnerships and developing indicators for CE.

COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In general, the approach to building this strategy will include a range of CE processes, from outreach, to listening and learning, to partnership.

There are several possible next steps in terms of collaboration and engagement. Foremost is planning for internal and external engagement activities, starting with faculty, students and staff. Other key next

Faculty involvement and support for engagement are essential for furthering the institutionalization of engagement.⁶

steps include partnering with champion Faculties or areas – such as the Community Based Research Working Group chaired by the AVP Research – and developing a communications plan. Given the advantage of having a system-wide perspective, we have already been able to connect individuals, groups or initiatives from various faculties or units with common interests.

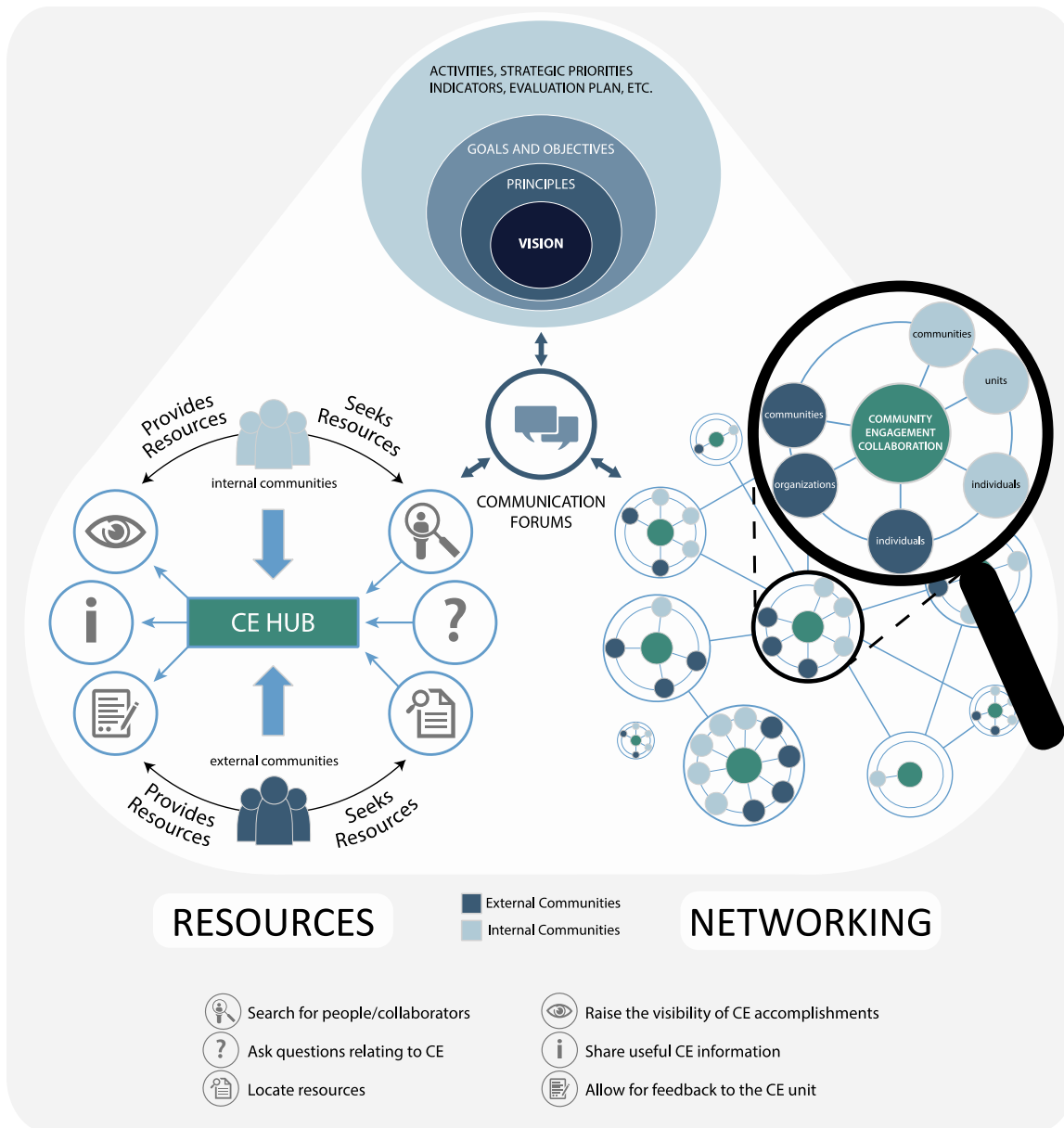
USE OF TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Digital engagement is an important part of developing a CE strategy that will help to inform the strategy’s evolution while addressing needs related to CE at UBC. A digital “place” will be developed to support two identified needs, networking and resources, and to support ongoing communication.

We currently envision the digital platform as supporting curated discussions that will inform the building of the CE strategy. Developing both online networking opportunities and resources also responds to needs we have heard expressed to date, thus creating early wins. Figure 4 illustrates early concepts for how digital engagement might provide tools for networking and resources while, via communication forums (both on- and off-line), support the evolution of a CE strategy that grows and changes over time.

⁶ Bruns, K. , H. Fitzgerald, A. Furco, S. Sonka, L. Swanson (2011). Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education. Council on Engagement and Outreach Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. p. 2

Figure 4 Community engagement digital concepts



Networking deepens existing, and facilitates new, connections within and outside of UBC. Both internal and external communities play important roles in seeking and providing CE resources, and in co-creating a CE strategy.

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

The strategic next steps indicated above are expected to lead to a more defined CE framework at an institutional level (June 2014), which will in the long term begin to lay a foundation for an institutional culture of CE. Embedding CE into a large research university takes time, well beyond the next 3 years; however, Figure 5 below shows a few immediate milestones and possible directions.

Figure 5 Short-term milestones and objectives

	2014 →			2015 →		2016 →
	<i>Commit intention and validate direction - - - - Bring purpose and opportunity - - - - Enable and embed CE - -></i>					
Strategic Analysis and Planning	<i>Ongoing research, planning and analysis to provide thoughtful direction that is strategic and measurable</i>					
	Early direction from Executive (complete)	Understanding approach to CE and current plans	Framework to Executive (June)	Propose CE award / recognition	Define value and indicators for CE at UBC	UBC policies, principles, protocol enables CE
Collaboration and Engagement	<i>Ongoing collaboration & engagement with internal/external communities to feed into an evolving CE strategy</i>					
	Internal engagement to validate approach: Deans, Faculty, Students	Engagement and comms strategy	Partner with internal/external champions	CE hubs and/or communities of practice formed	Known collaborations and networks within UBC and with communities.	
Technology and Digital Engagement	<i>Make and/or integrate digital communication tools to support the needs of internal and external communities</i>					
		Build and test networking tools and on-line resources; early implementation		Full-scale role out of digital tools	An iterative online CE strategy and resources built by community-driven content and interactive discussion	

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this document is to provide early concepts, a tone, and approach to developing a CE strategy. This is the beginning of a process and it will take time to articulate anticipated outcomes.

If we do not do anything we can assume that CE at UBC would carry on much like it is. That is to say the vast majority of community engagement will be of high quality and have a great deal of excellence in both scholarly output and benefit to communities. There may, however, be resentment towards the institution, a feeling that CE does not 'count' with regards to the academic career, a lack of communication and knowledge shared between practitioners, a neutral or negative impact on some communities and resources not leveraged or supported to their full extent.

If, however, we agree on the imperative for community engagement and that central administration is in a unique position to support CE at an institution-wide level, then a CE Strategy is necessary to make the following differences 5, 10 or 20 years from now. Positive changes will include improved/stronger:

- Awareness of community engagement at UBC and of CE as scholarship;
- Leveraging of knowledge and resources;
- Trust between CE practitioners and the University administration;
- Recognition of UBC as a leader in Community Engagement as well as in Student Learning and Research Excellence; and
- Reciprocal relations with external communities where together, UBC and communities stimulate actions that contribute to a civil and sustainable society.

APPENDIX A: TOOLS & ACTIVITIES FOR A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP UNIT

Following are potential tools and activities that the Community Partnership/Engagement Units (Vancouver and Okanagan) could use to support the implementation of the UBC CE Strategy.

Tool	Purpose
Principles of CE	Support the development of shared principles or values related to CE across UBC, including tools and processes that encourage a critical lens on CE work.
Community Feedback	Collate and analyze ongoing feedback from community about engagement experiences with UBC so we know how the university is perceived and what common issues exist.
Policy reviews	Identify and review institutional policies that are a barrier to or could enhance CE at UBC.
Connections and networks	Facilitate CE-related networking (online and in-person) within and between internal and external communities; support development of communities of practice.
Information /resource repository	Support the development, identification and sharing of resources so that those engaged in CE can provide and benefit from resources.
Stories, celebration, communication	Work with those engaged in CE and communications staff to celebrate, publicize and share existing CE work across campus.
Institutional navigation	Maintain an open door to internal and external communities; develop a digital hub to support both external and internal communities looking to understand the CE work happening across campus; support external communities to navigate UBC.
Strategic Partnerships	Identify opportunities for institutional partnership with specific groups that have a strategic link to UBC's vision/mission.
Advocacy	Build campus capacity for engagement; advocate for support for CE initiatives within UBC and beyond.
Work with those engaged in CE	Identify those involved in CE work; recognize, elevate and support them in their work and in being ambassadors of CE.
Awards and recognition	Recognize investment of time and energy in developing successful CE initiatives, and recognize outstanding CE through awards and/or small grants.

APPENDIX B: HOW CE IS REFLECTED IN EXISTING MID-LEVEL PLANS

Mid-level Plan	Overall placement of CE
Research Strategy	The research strategy identifies that UBC research is increasingly undertaken in partnership with external communities. For research to have its maximum impact, and to become a world leader in knowledge exchange and mobilization, researchers must connect and collaborate with external communities.
Student Learning	The student experience supports the development of CE through enriched student learning experiences and students' engagement in their communities and internationally.
Aboriginal Strategic Plan	The Aboriginal strategic plan embeds significant and thoughtful engagement with internal and external communities, through formal and informal channels. CE is a significant part of the work of Aboriginal Engagement.
Alumni Affairs Strategic Plan	Alumni are welcome and valued stakeholders of UBC. Alumni contribute to UBC as volunteers, convey UBC's contributions to economic and social vitality, and build UBC's presence in communities locally, nationally and internationally. Alumni engagement builds a culture of engagement at UBC.
The Intercultural Promise	Intercultural understanding is a 'way of being' that supports community engagement, as evidenced through many CE initiatives that involve intercultural understanding.
International Strategy	The International Strategy articulates UBC's connections with international communities. Part of that work is building on existing relationships and seeking out new partnerships in which the benefits flow both ways.
Outstanding Work Environment	The Outstanding Work Environment strategy aims to build a positive workplace experience for staff, including opportunities to participate in community-engaged programs such as the Community Leadership Program and Leave for Change.
Sustainability Strategies	Sustainability strategies, through local and global partnerships, enable UBC to act as an agent of change. Sustainability approaches develop the concept of UBC as a 'living lab'.