



Learning Everywhere: The UFV Education Plan, 2016-20

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“The locus of control for *learning* needs to shift to the learner.”
--Comment from Focus Group of Teacher Education Alumni (emphasis added)

This is the first UFV Education Plan that can begin with a comment from a student or former student. This is because this Education Plan is the product of a unique process at a unique moment in the history of post-secondary education. Previous Education Plans were developed almost exclusively by faculty and academic administrators. This Plan drew on the work of everyone at the University. All had the opportunity to be involved in a variety of ways and through a variety of modes of consultation.

The planning process began with a longer-term visioning exercise in recognition of the dramatic changes currently transforming the landscape of post-secondary education globally. This certainly includes Canada. “The ‘slow explosion’ of change is underway at Canadian universities and it is affecting the professional lives of all members of the university community.”¹ *Continuous* might be a more appropriate adjective than “slow.” Some of the change is occurring very quickly and there is no sign of it slowing down or ending. The cumulative effect is a recasting of the norms for what a university is and does.

UFV 2025: A Vision for our Future (see Appendix A), discusses some of these factors that are or have been changing: learners; learning; faculty; the discipline-based organization of universities; funding and the university business model (for UFV, government funding, once in the 80% to 90% range, now sits around 46% of our budget); the impact of information technology and digitization;² increasing competition-- locally, globally, and online; and growing expectations by students, parents, governments, taxpayers, and more for ever-higher degrees of accountability and quality assurance. In particular, universities are being asked to provide assurances as to the quality of the education and services they provide and to account for what students are learning.

To this list, one could add (and this is by no means an exhaustive list) the challenges of:

- Globalization.
- Indigenization (perhaps the most pressing and radical challenge facing Canadian universities in the early twenty-first century).
- Personalization: True personalization of higher education is now possible thanks to computers, which allow us to provide an instantaneous evaluation of student thinking—especially their mistakes—and artificial intelligence (a challenge in itself), which enables us “to create digital

¹ Nicolette Bradley, et al, “The Use of a Learning Management System (LMS) to Serve as the Virtual Common Space of a Network for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in an Academic Department,” *Education Sciences*, 2013, 3: 137.

² “Today, powerful digital technologies and ubiquitous connectivity have created a knowledge economy that promises to spark the greatest changes in human history. . . . Technology is advancing at a pace we have *never* experienced before in human history—and the pace of change will only increase.” Deloitte, “Age of disruption: Are Canadian firms prepared?” 2015, <http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/insights-and-issues/ca-en-insights-issues-future-of-productivity-2015.pdf>, 2, 3.

learning environments where the education design *changes* based on the learner himself.”³ And computers and A.I. do this unimpeded by the rigid and artificial spatial and temporal structures (lecture classrooms, 3-hour classes, and 13-week semesters) of traditional universities.⁴ “We are also figuring out how to capture that learning in portfolios that can be judged by a common rubric but are as different as the students who compile them.”⁵ (The same technology that permits personalization, also facilitates cooperation, collaboration, and the social learning that a digital generation is used to and expects.)

- Student record reform: Changing ways of assessing, recognizing, and demonstrating student learning because grades or credit-hours are no longer seen as the only or best way of doing so. This includes everything from e-portfolios to transcripts that record co-curricular and extracurricular activities, as well as the learning outcomes they can demonstrate, instead of just the courses they took and the grades received. Eventually, students will have a “record that is digital (and thus easily shared with employers and other institutions); comprehensive (in that it credits all types of learning, not just the in-classroom type); and portable (i.e., ‘owned,’ and for the most part maintained, by the student rather than the institution). . . Students will have a comprehensive, flexible, permanent and portable record of their learning — no matter where or how that learning was attained.”⁶
- A heightened focus on outcomes-based education and ensuring graduates are “job ready,” partly due to high youth unemployment and record levels of student debt.
- “Massification” and the ever-pressing issue of access.
- Changing demographic trends.
- Public and media questioning of the value of a university education.

Many of these changes were highlighted in the *UFV 2025 Forums* and the *Update* document circulated at the end of April 2015. The hope was that awareness of these changes would inform the answers to the two questions we asked the UFV community.

The first, “what should UFV look like in 2025?,” resulted in the document circulated last November and appended to this Plan, *UFV 2025: A Vision for our Future*. The core of that vision is succinctly stated towards the end of the document:

UFV in 2025 will be a community- and regionally-based university that is learner- and student-centred, whereby the learning drives the system and structure of the institution. Students and local communities will view UFV as a centre for intellectual and social development throughout their lifetimes, and as a place to learn how they can be better global citizens.

The second question was: based on this vision, “what are the five goals that UFV must achieve from 2016-20 to set ourselves up for 2025?” After a collective goal-setting exercise stretching from

³ Kevin Carey, *The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere* (Riverhead Books: New York, 2015), 103.

⁴ Margaret A. Miller “What I Believe,” *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 48:1 (2016): 4-5; Carey, ch. 5.

⁵ Miller, 5.

⁶ *Lumina Foundation Focus*, Fall 2015, <http://focus.luminafoundation.org/>.

November to the end of January, these five goals were finalized in early February, 2016. They are outlined and explained in the following table:

UFV Education Plan, 2016-20: Goals

At the University of the Fraser Valley, we will:

<p>1. PRIORITIZE LEARNING EVERYWHERE</p>	<p>UFV values the learning of faculty, students, staff, and community no matter when, where, and how it occurs. Courses, schedules, programs, and administration put the journey of the learner first. UFV recognizes that our learners are diverse; this necessitates diverse learning options and settings. UFV works to create learning opportunities in communities both inside and outside of UFV.</p>
<p>2. COMMIT TO FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS</p>	<p>UFV recognizes the importance of agility in its programs and administrative units to enable us to adapt and respond to the diverse learning needs of our students, faculty, staff, and community. We will streamline organizational procedures and practices that limit creative problem solving.</p>
<p>3. COLLABORATE ACROSS BOUNDARIES</p>	<p>UFV supports and develops opportunities for collaborative and interdisciplinary work. This involves collaboration around research, programming, learning, and community development. It also involves collaboration with other educational institutions, community organizations, and industry, both locally and globally.</p>
<p>4. DEVELOP LOCAL AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP</p>	<p>At UFV, we develop and model civic engagement and social responsibility. Our students, faculty, and staff recognize the importance of nurturing a global awareness that supports the health and safety of citizens around the world. Part of being a UFV citizen also involves responsibility to our communities and environment. Locally we work on the unceded territory of the Stó:lō people and the Indigenization of UFV is a priority. Indigenization informs everything we do at the university in every program, department, and service area, through the inclusion of indigenous content, perspectives, and ways of knowing.</p>
<p>5. INTEGRATE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING</p>	<p>UFV will ensure opportunities to incorporate experiential learning both inside and outside of the university classroom. This may involve assignments and assessment activities, field experiences, community placements, laboratory experience, research, and co-operative learning.</p>

These are the top five goals that Faculty/College Councils, administrative groups, support units, and the Student Union Society Executive collectively said UFV needs to achieve by the end of 2020. They speak to UFV's history and university traditions (developing citizenship); to the demands of the present for multi/interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration, flexibility, and experiential learning; and to identifiable trends that promise a different future for universities. That future was captured in the April 2015 "Update on UFV 2025": "If the 20th-century university was built around *instruction by faculty* in the classroom, the 21st-century university will be built around *learning by students—everywhere*.

The five goals align with *UFV 2025: A Vision for our Future*. They echo the recurring themes in submissions from students, staff, faculty, and administrators. If achieved by the end of 2020, they will position us well to realize our vision for 2025. Our collective, institution-wide commitment to achieve our goals will strengthen UFV.

As stated last fall, the institutional goals will be accomplished by setting and achieving institutional strategies at the Faculty/College, unit, and administrative levels. Each Council, department and unit, therefore, will be responsible for developing specific, observable, implementable, and measurable strategies each area will focus on over the next five years. We have asked units throughout the institution—including the administrative support areas—the following questions: what would be the indicators that these institutional goal statements are true in five years in your area? How will you get there? How will you know you have gotten there? The completed strategy statements will become appendices to the *Education Plan*.

In this visioning and planning process, a special effort was made to involve students. Students contributed as members of the UFV 2025 Visioning Committee, through a presentation to the Committee by the Student Union Society Executive, on an online blog and an online "Have Your Say" site (165 submissions), in final projects for a special offering of PHIL/EDUC 362 ("The Philosophy of Education"), in focus group interviews, on Comment Walls (460 coded submissions) on both the Chilliwack and Abbotsford campuses, and at the 2025 Forums.

The opening quotation is representative of what we heard from current and former students. They consistently expressed a desire for a more learner-centred university, more learner-centred teaching and learning opportunities, wider and more flexible ways for assessing and recognizing learning, especially when it occurred outside the classroom and/or off-campus. They want learners, and not just faculty, to be making learning decisions and performing the teaching and learning tasks. They want more autonomy and agency. They want more relevance in their courses and learning experiences. They want teachers who enable them to apply the knowledge they acquire. They want teachers who have more than content expertise and can also develop their learning skills.

Although many comments from students spoke to faculty dedication to student learning and success and the high quality of education they believe they are receiving at UFV, the students were also surprisingly critical. This criticism was unexpected given the excellent results UFV has repeatedly

received on provincial and national surveys of our students, including the BC Outcomes Surveys, the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Canadian University Survey Consortium, and the *Globe and Mail University Reports*. UFV and our faculty regularly receive high scores and compare very favourably with universities and faculty across both B.C. and Canada in the areas of “Student-Faculty Interaction,” “Effective Teaching Practices,” “Quality of Interactions,” “Discussions with Diverse Others,” and the “Overall Quality of Their Education.” (The most frequently chosen options for areas needing improvement are “Sense of Community among Students” and “Opportunities for a Social Life.”)

The recurring student recommendations and suggestions submitted in the UFV 2025 consultation process were, in some striking ways, not always consistent with the survey results mentioned above. These recommendations and suggestions included:

- “UFV needs to be **innovative and flexible**.” This includes flexible scheduling: “Online learning and semesters that start at any time of year is [sic] the future.”
- An increase and strengthening of **faculty-student connections and interactions**.
- A **more vibrant campus community**.
- **Relevance** (in courses, in skills acquired, in learning experiences in general).
- More **practicums, internships, co-op** placements—including “mandatory co-op opportunities in the community”—**applied learning** (“more opportunities to experience the ‘real life’ aspect of careers” and more connections with employers).
- More **experiential learning** and “**hands-on [learning] experiences**.”
- A greater variety of teaching styles (“**rather than just a lecture style**.”)
- More **interactive learning**. “Perhaps the lack of student engagement in class results from courses that follow **dated instructional methods**. Many of UFV’s classrooms are set up to have the students attend lectures, take notes, and then leave. Some courses include group discussions, while many still do not. A dated instructional method is a problem because not all students learn as efficiently or effectively without interaction.”
- More **interdisciplinary courses and experiences**. Students want “more connected learning experiences between disciplines, less isolation by subject areas.” “Interdisciplinary courses . . . are beneficial in numerous ways. They help bridge the differences between subject areas, help students to consider solutions from multiple perspectives, and provide a transition to University that is easier than a fragmented course load. It is worth considering expanding the availability of these courses.”
- Greater recognition and reflection (among teachers, staff, and administrators) of **diversity** (of age, culture, race, ability, and learning style). There is a need for more diverse learning experiences and assessment techniques. There is a need for “up-to-date assessment practices in UFV courses.” Students made particular mention of the need to prioritize both **Indigenization** (all at UFV must be made aware of “the impact of colonization, residential schools and the Indian Act”) and **Internationalization** (there is “a large gap between professors and international students. This is partially due to many professors’ lack of experience with cultural diversity”). There was a suggestion that diversity training for faculty should be “mandatory.” Having a Director of Teaching and Learning makes it possible for faculty to receive “the appropriate

information, skills, and support needed to be able to provide great learning experiences with international students. Ideally, we would like to see this being required for each member of faculty as at the present moment it is not mandatory.”

- More **recognition of prior learning experiences**.
- “Opportunities for **research**” by students.
- A greater **connection between the university and the surrounding communities**.
- More and improved **on-line classes** utilizing “**best practices**” in online education.
- A better and more educated use of **educational technology**.
- Better **communication**.
- More **peer mentoring and tutoring** opportunities/programs.
- Expanding **faculty development** programs and perhaps making them mandatory. Students want **faculty trained in teaching and learning** and “able to provide a diverse range of learning experiences.” “It would be nice if some professors took a **course on how to teach** their students and connect with them.” Students want faculty who are more than content experts: “I would like it if some **professors had to take education courses before they teach**. They may be great at their topic, but have no idea how to teach it. To learn to be a good prof, not just learn their stuff.”
- “More opportunities for students to **gain credits for extracurricular activities and volunteer work** that can be applied towards their degree in lieu of general electives.”
- More “**individualized** learning.”
- More “**collaborative**” learning.
- More **integrative** learning.
- **Teaching evaluations that matter**.

In their submissions, comments and recommendations, the students were clear: they wanted UFV to be more than an institution that relied on its reputation for excellent teaching and its established practices for teaching and learning. They wanted a university that valued the continual improvement of teaching and learning, where faculty were committed to learning as much as students were, and this meant continually learning from students, colleagues, and Teaching and Learning Centres, how to improve their teaching, how to incorporate new pedagogies and education tools into their teaching practices, and how to adapt to the changing expectations and learning behaviour of new generations of students.

Leaving aside the dissonance with the provincial and national surveys mentioned earlier, there is nothing peculiar about the student recommendations. A number of them are consistent with the scholarly literature on “high impact” educational practices. They also echo the core recommendations of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance’s 2015 Report, *FORMULATING CHANGE: Recommendations for Ontario’s University Funding Formula Reform*.⁷ Like our students, Ontario students express concern with the quality of university education. Ontario students are looking for “a

⁷ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, *FORMULATING CHANGE: Recommendations for Ontario’s University Funding Formula Reform*, 2015 <http://www.ousa.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Funding-Formula-Draft-for-Upload.pdf>.

demonstrably high quality experience that goes beyond traditional lecture-based learning.” They desire “best practices in pedagogy, such as experiential learning or other high impact experiences.” They define such experiences as “one[s] in which a student ‘learns by doing’ and where students can “apply theoretical skills and insights to real-world, contemporary applications.” Such learning, they argue, better prepares them for future employment. Like UFV students, Ontario students want undergraduate research opportunities and the integration of research into undergraduate learning. They, too, are concerned with the overall “quality of the student experience”, and this includes a concern for “an increasingly strained student support service environment.”⁸

Moreover, UFV faculty descriptions of the nature and role of faculty and learning in 2025 repeat many of the themes in the student comments. In departmental submissions and online comments, faculty say:

- They will be facilitators and mentors and not just content experts.
- Because of PLAR and other developments, they will be required to think differently about what counts as learning. More recognition of informal learning.
- They will prioritize the integration of research, scholarly work, and teaching.
- There will be more support for faculty development.
- “Technology permeates throughout the learning experience.”
- “Learning is ubiquitous.”
- “Learners take responsibility for their own learning.”
- UFV will build “programming around the student learning journey and the educational needs of its region.”
- “More community partnerships.” “Faculty will need to be connected to practice and the community.”
- “Learning spaces are flexible.”
- There will be fewer classrooms, but they will be “equipped with the latest technology.”
- There will be “fewer faculty offices.”
- “More fluid pathways between the University and the workplace/world.”
- Flexible scheduling, which means we will need to reimagine “the structure of a ‘course’ and a ‘credit’.” “We should no longer think in terms of education being equal to 13-week segments of time done in the same place with the same people.”
- Flexible workload.
- “An integration of Aboriginal languages, culture, and ways of knowing into the curriculum.”
- “A seamless and integrated use of technology into our teaching and learning.”
- Courses will be “relevant, real world, applied, and competency based.”
- More peer learning.

⁸ Ibid, 18, 24. Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, *Focus on Outcomes, Centre on Students: Perspectives on Evolving Ontario’s University Funding Model. Final Consultation Report* (https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/audiences/universities/uff/UniversityFundingFormulaConsultationReport_2015.pdf), 37.

- Students “will design their own programs” and will “want greater flexibility to develop their own individualized education.”
- University will be about learning; it “will no longer be a repository of knowledge.”
- Students will be more diverse.
- Learning communities may replace disciplines.
- “Education will be project based.”
- There will be more “interdisciplinary study” and “collaborative learning.”
- There will be “flexible programming” “allowing students to design their own journey” and there will be “more completion pathways for students.”

It is also worth noting that many of the student and faculty comments are supported by the scholarly literature on teaching and learning. One student comment is particularly relevant here: “It seems as though we have not applied the research about learning to the current classroom model.” A central contention in both *Taking Stock: Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (edited by Julia Christenson Hughes and Joy Mighty) and Maryellen Weimer’s, *Learner-Centred Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, is that thanks to decades of cognitive science research and to scholarship and research on teaching and learning, we now know so much more about how the brain works and people learn and which teaching methods are most effective (active, inquiry/problem-based, learner-centred, hands-on, community-engaged) and least effective (traditional lectures); but much of this research is not widely known and most teaching practices, curriculum design, and curriculum planning remain unchanged and not evidence-based.⁹

Although these are widely accepted contentions by leading scholars in the teaching and learning field, one should be cautious about overstating this case. First, there is evidence (Teaching and Learning conferences and journals), that there is at least a significant and growing minority of faculty who are interested in the science of learning and employing its lessons in their teaching. Second, faculty are increasingly using innovative teaching and learning practices. Throughout campuses, we can find examples of self-directed, self-paced learning; online and blended learning; collaborative and interdisciplinary learning; work-integrated, experiential, and co-curricular learning; peer tutoring and mentoring; first-year seminars and cap-stone courses; undergraduate, community-engaged research and service learning; internships, and more. It is true that much of this occurs only on the margins of what we normally do, but this is changing. Third, faculty by themselves are not responsible for the continued dominance of traditional educational practices. Universities as a whole employ and support the “unscientific” educational models of which traditional lectures are just one part. As Halpern and Hakel observe, “it would be difficult to design an educational model that is more at odds with the findings of current research about human cognition than the one being used today at most colleges and

⁹ Julia Christensen Hughes and Joy Mighty, eds., *Taking Stock: Research on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010); Maryellen Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, 2nd Ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 2013.

universities.”¹⁰ Everything, they and others argue, from rigid classroom design and semester scheduling, to testing for memorization of facts rather than deep understanding, to *covering* content rather than *using* it to develop “learning skills students will need across a lifetime of learning,”¹¹ needs to be reconsidered to accommodate varying learning styles, the growing diversity of learners, and best (evidence-based) educational practices.

UFV 2025 and our five Education Goals prompt us to do exactly this, to reconsider “an educational model at odds with the findings of current research about human cognition.” *UFV 2025* states that we can only realize our vision for UFV “if *learning drives the system and structure* of the university, rather than the structure shaping the learning.” *Goal 1* states: “Prioritize Learning Everywhere.” Both statements mean organizing the university around the student learning journey and an educational model that is learner-centred and increasingly learner-controlled.

“The locus of control for *learning* needs to shift to the learner” may seem like a radical statement, but it is really only a rephrasing of Socrates’ central point about education: you cannot give knowledge to a student because the knowledge is already inside them. The teacher’s role is to help the student discover that and to help “make students *more responsible for learning*.”¹² This doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time and is lots of work, for both the teacher and the student. But the demonstrable results for learning and learners suggest it is worth the effort.

To move in a learner-centred direction, universities have established or expanded resources for Teaching and Learning Centres, provided professional development opportunities for instructors to work with faculty development experts/advisors, and encouraged faculty to engage in research or scholarship into their own pedagogical practice, either individually or in collaboration with other faculty and/or staff. Institutions have also recognized that other staff, including librarians, advisors, and I. T. and educational technology experts, also “need support in becoming effective facilitators of learning.”¹³

Of course, universities like UFV will only know and be able to demonstrate that these efforts are successful if they measure improvements in student learning. There is growing appreciation for the urgent need for transparent and consistent measurement and assessment of learning across the post-secondary system. And there are increasing calls on provincial governments to direct their energy, resources, and public policy commitments—and encourage the efforts of the universities and colleges they fund and regulate—towards “measuring and improving . . . higher order thinking skills [like problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication] rather than attempting to match all program disciplines with very specific jobs, especially in a rapidly evolving labour market.”¹⁴ In many

¹⁰ Diane F. Halpern and Milton D. Hakel, “Applying the Science of Learning to the University and Beyond: Teaching for Long-Term Retention and Transfer,” *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, (July-August, 2003): 37-38.

¹¹ Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching*, 11.

¹² Weimer, *Learner-Centred Teaching*, 11.

¹³ Christensen Hughes and Joy Mighty, “A Call to Action: Barriers to Pedagogical Innovation and How to Overcome Them,” in *Taking Stock*, 274.

¹⁴ This was the conclusion of the *Final Consultation Report* into Ontario’s university funding model, *Focus on Outcomes*, a conclusion generally supported by employers. *Focus on Outcomes*, 38.

jurisdictions, measuring and assessing learning outcomes has not only become a priority for institutions but also “a condition of funding”¹⁵ from government.

Should the British Columbia government follow suit, we need to be ready. Establishing and aligning our UFV institutional, program, and course learning outcomes was a crucial first step. *UFV 2025* was the second, and the five Education Goals we have set for the 2016-20 period are the third.

The five goals of the *UFV Education Plan, 2016-20* not only prepare us to measure and assess student learning. They position UFV to maximize both the quantity and quality of student learning and thus to provide a UFV response to the multiple challenges all post-secondary institutions face. As we *Prioritize Learning Everywhere, Commit to Flexibility and Responsiveness, Collaborate Across Boundaries, Develop Local and Global Citizenship, and Integrate Experiential Learning*, we will be able to distinguish ourselves from much of our competition (particularly from private online competitors); we will be able to stay true to the integrative mission of a liberal education; we will be able to **support learning everywhere**; and, in a world of constant and dramatic change, we will be able to engage with and even lead much of this change while staying true to the UFV core values of serving students and communities by enabling their development and transformation.

¹⁵ This is the case in much of the U.S. and has been recommended in an official report to the government of Ontario. *Ibid.*, 45.

