



Message from the President

Éy swáyel

Welcome to the first edition of Paddles and Wings — the President's Office Newsletter. The name of the newsletter is inspired by UFV's official badge (yes, we have an official badge, derived from the hummingbird and canoe in our Coat of Arms).



The canoe, a tribute to the Stó:lō people upon whose territory UFV is situated, symbolizes our shared educational journey. The hummingbird, a symbol of joy, resilience, and agility, reminds us of the strength and spirit that carry us forward. Together, the paddles of the canoe and the wings of the hummingbird represent the energy and direction that propel UFV toward its vision: to be a gathering place for learners, leaders, and seekers, pursuing diverse pathways of scholarship that foster connection, reconciliation, and prosperity — locally and beyond.

[Learn about our Coat of Arms](#)

The purpose of the Paddles and Wings newsletter is to bring our community together — to share, celebrate, and stay connected. When we are informed and engaged, we move forward not just as individuals, but as changemakers across the many communities that we serve.

I hope you enjoy this first edition. Stay tuned for more editions throughout the coming months and I wish everyone a great start to a new academic year!

Coffee house feedback

Before officially starting my position on July 1 as President and Vice-Chancellor, we hosted a series of coffee houses at our Mission, Chilliwack, and Abbotsford campuses. It was an opportunity to gather together and to hear input from the university community on a number of issues such as:

- What makes UFV special for students and employees?
- How can I, as President, support you and your colleagues in your work?
- What is one piece of advice you'd like to give to the incoming UFV President?

What I heard

- People shared with me that UFV's special qualities include a close-knit community, strong student-faculty relationships, accessible opportunities, teaching excellence, and community connections across campuses. These attributes contribute to a student-ready mindset and a supportive environment for both students and employees.
- Faculty and staff seek visible, approachable leadership that listens, champions their work, fosters collaboration, supports research incentives, prioritizes accessibility, and maintains open communication.
- Attendees also provided me with sound advice as I started my role as President and Vice-Chancellor. They encouraged me to stay humble and human, leverage staff expertise, enhance UFV's visibility beyond the Valley, foster connections with all university members, be open to feedback, and maintain a positive, engaging presence on all campuses.

I want to thank everyone who attended for providing such valuable input and insight. This newsletter is a direct result of what I heard and an example of how I hope to maintain open lines of communication across the University. I plan on engaging in additional Coffee Houses over the coming months and years to build on listening and learning opportunities with members across our University community.

Thank you for being part of UFV's journey. I wish everyone a great start to this new academic year, and I look forward to continuing to engage with you in the months ahead.



Strategic priorities and progress

In June, the Senate and Board both received the [Íyáqáwtxw — House of Transformation Integrated Strategic Plan Annual Report for 2024/25 \(PDF, opens in new tab\)](#). While the University continues to engage consistently in meeting the strategic imperatives outlined in the plan, the report flagged that UFV's KPI of reducing graduation barriers for students remains at risk. The Registrar, in collaboration with Faculty Deans, Heads, Directors, and Institutional Research and Planning, has been working hard over the past several months to reduce waitlists and increase access for students in high-demand and required courses.

The Board and Senate also received updates on progress being made on [UFV's Strategic Enrolment Management Plan \(memorandum/report\)](#). Throughout UFV's 50th Anniversary year, UFV welcomed its largest number ever of total students (16,364) and international students (2,992). The number of domestic students (13,372) was the highest since 2012/13. Record enrolments and student headcounts were reported in each of the University's Academic Terms (Summer, Fall, Winter). Overall, UFV's total credit-based headcount increased 2.7% during the 2024/25 fiscal year. Increases were seen in both domestic students (2.6%) and international students (2.9%). To date, UFV has achieved 68% of its total SEM growth plan within the first two years of the plan. UFV was also successful in achieving its budget target of 3.0% FTE increase with an actual total growth of 4.3% in total FTEs and 5.5% in registrations during the academic year. While UFV continues to remain on target to reach its 7-year overall enrolment forecasts, the anticipated growth of domestic students is higher than expected, while declines in international students will be noticeable starting in 2025/26.

While credit-based domestic registrations continue to be strong for both the Summer (+13%) and Fall (+6.0%) terms, the total number of international students has declined significantly (-26% and -31%). This is a result of a drastic drop-off in the number of new international students (-51%) starting their programs at UFV this Fall. This trend is not only true for UFV, but for the vast majority of post-secondary institutions across Canada. (Note: Data as of September 1, 2025)

([This article written by Katie Hyslop in the Tyee](#) provides an excellent summary of the issues faced by post-secondary institutions in BC and Canada as a result of the federal immigration changes for international students.)

Study permit applications to IRCC for the first quarter of 2025 were down almost 50% compared to the first quarter of 2024, while a recent [BorderPass report](#) highlighted that study permit approval rates were only 38% for the first six months of 2025 compared to 60% in all of 2023. The result is that Canada's international reputation has been severely impacted, and the number of international students applying to Canada has significantly declined. It is [estimated](#) that Canada will only reach 20% of its 2025 target for new incoming international students. This will take years to rebuild.

UFV International continues to be actively engaged with a number of partners and in a number of emerging markets around the world to build our reputation for offering world-class university education. I am confident that as we continue to promote the value proposition of earning a credential from UFV, international students will once again make UFV and Canada their destination of choice when choosing to study abroad.

Xwe' eyelh Lets'e — One Health

UFV continues to move forward with its plan to launch a One Health Hub. [Visit the One Health Hub webpage to learn more.](#) Led by Dr. Lenore Newman, Director for the Food and Agriculture Institute and Special Advisor for One Health, the vision is to leverage the expertise across UFV to establish the Fraser Valley as the Hub. Here, Indigenous, public, private, and global expertise converges to create and implement innovative solutions that support sustainable growth, healthier people, sustainable food production, animal welfare, and more liveable communities. In the face of climate, technological, population, and global changes, we will inform how we can protect our environment, water, and lands, ensuring the secure production and access to safe, high-quality food and well-being for the Fraser Valley and British Columbia.

In June, I had the opportunity to spend time with Siyamiyateliyot Dr. Elizabeth Phillips to discuss One Health. Siyamiyateliyot was very generous with her time and with her gifts of the Halq'eméylem language with me, and shared a name for One Health in Halq'eméylem that is: **xwe' eyelh lets'e**.

Siyamiyateliyot encouraged me to bring the name to the Elders for discussion and their feedback and input. I had the opportunity to meet with the Elders in July and had a beautiful discussion with them. They are supportive of us moving forward together with the word **xwe' eyelh lets'e**.

I want to raise my hands to Siyamiyateliyot and all the Elders for spending time and inspiring me with their teachings. This engagement has been so meaningful, and the Elders have agreed to continue to meet with me throughout the year. I feel so honoured to have the opportunity to continue to learn from their wise counsel and teachings.

I also want to raise my hands to Betty Peters for bringing the Elders together and for arranging time for me to sit with and learn from Siyamiyateliyot.



Changemaker

In 2022, UFV embarked on a process to be designated as a Changemaker Campus by Ashoka Canada. Since that time, we have challenged ourselves to build on what we currently do and to seek new opportunities by aligning our resources to better recognize and engage our faculty, staff, and students as changemakers. As codified in our Coat of Arms, our motto of being a House of Transformation implies that we aspire to be positive changemakers. A changemaker is “anyone who takes action to address a problem, activates others, and works towards solutions for the good of all” ([Becoming a Changemaker Institution \(2020\) PDF — hosted on a webpage](#)).

Over the past year, CHASI’s Director, Dr. Martha Dow, has served as a Special Advisor to support a number of changemaker initiatives across the University, including the creation of the [Changemaker webpage](#). This dedicated page highlights the numerous initiatives that have taken place over the past year and showcases upcoming opportunities. New this Fall is the introduction of the [Social Innovation Certificate program](#), launched by the College of Arts. This certificate program is aimed at providing students with a collaborative opportunity to develop habits of mind and skills in changemaking.

As we take steps to become officially recognized as a Changemaker Campus and join a global network of other Changemaker Campuses around the world, there can be no question that UFV has and will continue to be known as a university dedicated to making a difference in the communities that it serves.

Dining Hall update

I am so excited to share that UFV's Dining Hall expansion project, a \$20 million investment in our campus, is nearing completion and will be ready to welcome students back when Dana reopens for food services on September 3.

This project represents a major step forward in creating a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment. The Cascade Café has been renovated and expanded to double the size of the dining hall, increasing seating capacity from 121 to 350 seats. A new second floor, connected by a feature stair and elevator, will provide beautiful, accessible spaces designed to promote wellness and community-building. With expanded food options and longer hours, the dining hall will better serve the needs of both students and employees.

This expansion is especially timely as we prepare to welcome up to 398 students moving into our new student housing building in January 2026, along with the 200 students living at Lá:lem te Baker. Together, these projects will transform the student experience by ensuring that our learners not only have places to live, but also vibrant spaces to gather, share meals, and build community.

A huge thank you to our Capital Projects team for their outstanding leadership on these projects, which will have a lasting positive impact on our entire UFV community. [Visit the current Capital Projects page for more updates.](#)



Property Trust Open House

UFV's Property Trust — Campus Communities initiative, proposed for both the Abbotsford and Chilliwack campuses, has moved into the community consultation phase. A series of Open Houses has been planned, and an [information website](#) has been established to communicate updates on the latest developments.



Community engagement

Throughout the summer, I had the opportunity to meet with the mayors of Hope, Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack along with other community leaders throughout Stó:lo Téméxw. What each of them shared with me is their full support for UFV. They each recognize the social, economic, and cultural impact that UFV has had and continues to have across the Fraser Valley. We are fortunate to have such strong community partners and advocates who play a vital role in supporting us in achieving our Vision and Mission.

I also had the opportunity to attend the First Fish Celebration hosted by Spuzzum First Nation at Shwimp. I was joined by Board of Governors members John Pankratz (more on John below) and Lesa Lacey. This Celebration was hosted by Interim Chief Janice Kuester, a UFV alum, and is a celebration of the return of the salmon to the Fraser River. Also in attendance was UFV Knowledge Giver Rodney Peters, who shared with those in attendance the cultural importance practiced by the Stó:lō people of sharing this first catch with others. This was an inspiring experience to connect and learn from those who have preserved Stó:lō Téméxw since time immemorial.



Campus and community highlights

Special shout outs

John Pankratz

On July 31, 2025, John Pankratz completed his term as Chair of the Board of Governors. John has served on-and-off as Board Chair for a total of 8 years at UFV. John is entering the final year of his second term as a Board member and will serve as the Chair for the Board's Finance and Audit Committee. John has made, and continues to make, a lasting impact at UFV and as an ambassador for the University throughout the community. Thank you, John, for your continued service and the longstanding contributions you have made to UFV.

Please join me in congratulating UFV's new Board Chair and Vice-Chair, Cristen Gleeson and Lesa Lacey, respectively.

- [Learn more about the 25/26 Board of Governors.](#)
- [Learn more about members of the 25/26 Senate.](#)

Thank you UFV employees!

In August, there was an electrical fire in the main electrical room in Building B on the Abbotsford campus. Thankfully, nobody was injured and the fire was quickly contained and the damage minimized, but it resulted in damage to the transformer/core coils. The use of an emergency generator has been required to regain power to Buildings A, B, and C while repair parts are on order.

Once again, in the face of a crisis, UFV employees rose to the occasion. Teams from across the University, including Safety and Security, Campus Planning and Facilities Management, IT Services, Communications, Student

Services, the Registrar's Office, Procurement, Finance, Human Resources, the Provost, and the VP Administration, worked tirelessly and together over a sunny weekend to get us back up and running quickly and with as little disruption as possible.

Thank you to everyone who stepped up and worked together.

To catch up on other news this past summer, visit the [UFV Today news webpage](#).



Upcoming events with the President

The following are some of the events where the President is scheduled to attend.

TUESDAY, SEP 16

Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce Leaders Lunch

11:30 am–1:30 pm, Abbotsford Centre

[Learn more about the event.](#)

THURSDAY, SEP 18

UFV 2025 Community Report Launch

11:30 am–1:30 pm, Chilliwack campus

[Learn more about the event and RSVP.](#)

TUESDAY, SEP 23

Chilliwack Chamber Connections Gathering featuring keynote speaker Linda Kay

5 pm–8:30 pm, Chilliwack campus

[Learn more about the event.](#)

[Please check the UFV Events webpage](#), your local libraries, and city websites for campus and community gatherings taking place in honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

WEDNESDAY, SEP 24

St'elt'elawtexw: a Celebration of Community

5:30 pm–9 pm, Mission campus

THURSDAY, SEP 25

Chai with Student Union Society President Bilal Faisal Faheem and Dr.

James Mandigo

2 pm–4 pm, Abbotsford Campus

[Email the President's Office for more information.](#)

SATURDAY, OCT 18

UFV Open House

10 am–2 pm, Abbotsford campus

[Check for updates on the webpage.](#)

Questions or ideas?

Have a question you'd like answered in the next newsletter, or want to share feedback or story ideas? Email the President's Office.

Share your question or idea

The University of the Fraser Valley is situated on the territory of the Stó:lō peoples. The Stó:lō have an intrinsic relationship with what they refer to as S'olh Temexw (Our Sacred Land). We express our gratitude and respect for the honour of living, learning, and working in this territory.



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