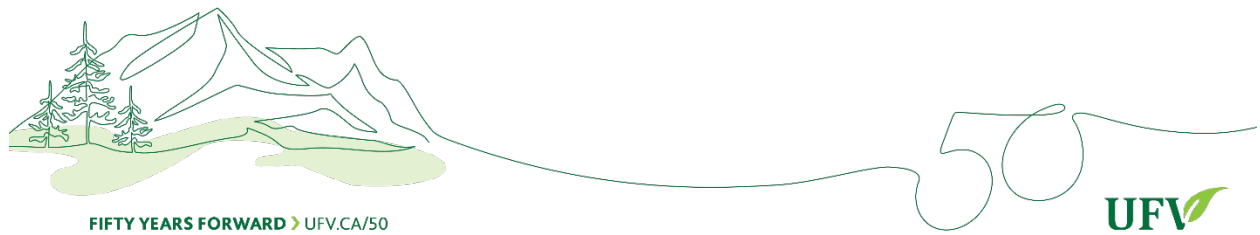


Listening, Learning, and Sharing: A Presidential Reflection on UFV's Strategic Future

By James Mandigo, PhD

President and Vice-Chancellor

January, 2026



I would like to thank Dr. Tracy Ryder Glass, Dr. Alisa Webb, Dr. Awneet Sivia, Dr. Lenore Newman, Dr. Martha Dow, Doran Hoge, and Christina Forcier for providing feedback on an earlier version of this document.

Introduction

Since time immemorial, the Stó:lō (people of the river) have lived on the land on which UFV is located. As UFV continues its journey towards authentic Truth and Reconciliation, we seek to learn from the Stó:lō people and to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing throughout the University. In Stó:lō culture, the practice of tómiyeqw represents the connections between the past, the current, and the future. It represents the connection between 7 generations in the past to 7 generations of the future. The decisions we make today are meant to honour those who have come before us and to support those who will come after us. Our ability to reflect upon and connect the past, present, and the future inspires and empowers us to be transformative.

In 2024, UFV celebrated its 50th anniversary. By embracing the practice of tómiyeqw, UFV took time to reflect upon the work of those who have guided and shaped who we are today to help us look forward to the future.

On July 1, 2025, I officially started my first term as President and Vice Chancellor at UFV. During my first six months of my term, I embarked on what I called a “listening and learning” tour by meeting with various members of UFV’s internal and external community across the Fraser Valley and beyond. My goal was to listen deeply so that I might better understand the dreams and aspirations that members of our UFV community had for our University as we enter our next 50 years.

This “listening and learning” tour also included paying particular attention to the current and emerging opportunities and challenges within the communities that we serve and to contemplate how UFV, a university with a regional mandate, can best support the economic, social, and cultural development both locally and beyond.

The purpose of this reflection paper is to share what I learned and attempt to articulate the opportunities that build on UFV’s strengths, align our strategic priorities with our mandate as a regional university, and identify UFV’s value proposition. My intention is not to “impose” these concepts on UFV but rather present them to you for your consideration to help inform our discussions surrounding our next integrated strategic plan as we look ahead to our next 50-year journey together.

Our Integrated Strategic Plan - Íyáqáwtwx

Embedded within UFV’s Coat of Arms is our motto Íyáqáwtwx. It is the Halq'eméylem word meaning House of Transformation and is the name of UFV’s [Integrated Strategic Plan](#) approved by the Board of Governors in 2021. It provides a foundation upon which we

identify the strategic priorities that capture our attention and focus across all areas of the University. Our Vision provides us with direction as we set out to live up to this motto: *UFV will be known as a gathering place for learners, leaders, and seekers. We will pursue diverse pathways of scholarship, leading to community connection, reconciliation, and prosperity, locally and beyond.* We seek to pursue our Vision by focusing on our Mission and the goals that they inspire:

- Engaging Learners / Yoystexw ye totilthet: *Provide inclusive learning environments for everyone*
- Transforming Lives/ Ayeqet kw'e shxwaylexws: *Provide opportunities for people to discover, develop, and share their gifts while also recognizing and celebrating the gifts of others*
- Building Community: Thayt kw'e st'elt'elawtexw: *Collaborate and partner in pursuits that enrich the lives of all people on our campuses, in our local communities, and beyond*

Our commitment to achieving the goals outlined by our Mission is articulated through 7 strategic imperative themes with corresponding key performance indicators to track our progress towards achieving these commitments: Indigenization & Reconciliation; Applied Research; Lifelong Learning; Student Experience & Success; Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion; Personal and Professional Development; and Engagement with Community. Over the past 5 years of the plan, UFV has made significant progress in achieving its goals and meeting the key performance indicators. Access to the annual reports is available [here](#).

Building from Íyáqáwtxw

As we look forward to UFV's next 50 years, there is much to be excited about. UFV has matured into a university that has seen significant population growth over the past decade and further infusion of the university into many aspects of the economic, social, and cultural development of the Fraser Valley. However, after years of [population growth](#) amongst young people 25 years and younger, lower projected immigration levels are expected to slow this growth over the next 10 years. Rapid changes in artificial intelligence, labour shortages, alternative private education providers, conflicting geopolitical and domestic ideologies, and dwindling financial support from government funding have called into question the relevance of a higher education credential.

For UFV to thrive in this time of flux, we must identify our value proposition by clearly articulating the contributions we will make to the people of the Fraser Valley and British

Columbia. We must be willing to clearly articulate what *we will be known for* when it comes to honouring our commitment to *Íyáqáwtwx* - being a house of transformation.

While UFV has many diverse strengths, I would like to focus on four themes that have emerged throughout numerous conversations and dialogues as having a particular symbiotic relationship with community needs and opportunities with areas of collective strength to which UFV can contribute and differentiate itself.

- a) Truth and Reconciliation
- b) Changemaker Campus
- c) Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʘ One Health
- d) Student Ready

Truth and Reconciliation

“Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it.” Honourable Justice [Murray Sinclair](#), Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

As an educational institution located on Turtle Island, we have a responsibility to redress the harmful impact that education has played in the [genocide of Aboriginal people](#). This commitment is codified within the Board of Governors [Policy 200.05](#) on Fulfilling our Commitment to Aboriginal People that states: “The University is also committed to promoting knowledge of and respect for Aboriginal history, language, culture, values and Indigenous ways of knowing in its educational, research and service programs, and to including Aboriginal voice in its planning and decision-making.” As a member of [Universities Canada](#), UFV is also a signatory to this national organization’s commitments to Truth and Reconciliation “in breaking down the barriers to university education faced by Indigenous students, in providing equitable employment opportunities for Indigenous faculty and staff, and centering the needs of Indigenous Peoples in teaching and research.”

Within the academic activities of the University, we must first acknowledge the evidence of the harmful and ongoing effects of colonization on Aboriginal people; and strive towards authentic reconciliation that will embrace and celebrate Indigenous ways of knowing across the academy.

UFV’s [Lálém ye mestíyexw](#) (“House of the Peoples”) lays out UFV’s commitment to Indigenize the Academy in support of Truth and Reconciliation. Its purpose lays out a plan to “... allow the university to fully embrace its commitment to Reconciliation, Indigenizing Our Academy and improve our ability to be both responsive and responsible to Indigenous peoples’ goals for self-determination and well-being.” [Lálém ye mestíyexw](#) provides the University with a guide of how to act on the [94 Calls to Action](#) from the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the [46 actions](#) within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

Infusing Indigenous ways of knowing throughout the University fosters a welcoming and supportive environment for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty while also enhancing efforts towards authentic truth and reconciliation. It can also serve as an example to inspire our surrounding communities to see the benefits of weaving Indigenous knowledge, culture, and traditions into economic, social, and cultural development.

UFV – A Changemaker Campus

From the very beginning, FVC, then UCFV, and now UFV has been envisioned as an opportunity for positive change throughout the communities it serves. As codified in our Coat of Arms, our motto of being a House of Transformation implies that we aspire to be positive changemakers. UFV was [officially recognized](#) as a [Changemaker Campus](#) by the international Ashoka Network in the fall of 2025. This designation recognizes the impact of UFV's faculty, staff, students, and alumni as changemakers who are making a difference to enhance the communities that they serve. UFV has been built on the vision as a place where anyone can become a changemaker when given the opportunity to thrive. This vision is reinforced by the Stó:lō belief that everyone carries a gift, and we have a responsibility to help discover, nurture, and celebrate these gifts.

Being known as a Changemaker Campus is not something new for UFV. In fact, being positive changemakers is embedded in our DNA from the community founders of our institution. Being locally and globally known as a Changemaker Campus that is committed to being a House of Transformation embraces the principles of tómiyeqw by honoring our past as we look towards our future.

We have now reached a point in our history where clearly articulating our strength and commitment as a Changemaker Campus and being recognized as such are signals to our communities that we have embraced this responsibility and are committed to collectively harnessing and using our gifts to be positive agents of change. Weaving this commitment throughout our activities within and outside the academy will ensure that our actions support our collective vision.

For example, in October 2023, the Senate approved an updated set [of Institutional Learning Outcomes \(ILO\)](#) that were officially launched on July 1, 2024. The updated ILOs were the result of a yearlong process led by Dr. Awneet Sivia, AVP of Teaching and Learning, that infused the Changemaker Campus principles of being a purpose-driven access University. The process utilized engaged forms of pedagogy to gather input and support active

engagement of faculty, staff, and students from across the University. The eight ILOs grouped within the themes of Know, Connect, Transform, and Reflect represent the competencies that students develop through their engagement in UFV's academic programs.

Another example is UFV's commitment to the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\)](#). The SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability. UFV officially became a signatory to the [SDG Accord](#) in 2023 and a member of the [United Nations Academic Impact](#) group in 2022. Our progress on supporting the SDGs is [available here](#).

When we harness the collective gifts and resources of the academy to focus our efforts on contributing to one or more of the 17 SDGs, particularly through system change, we are demonstrating our commitment to being changemakers who strive to make a positive difference not only to our local communities, but to the global community as well. We are part of a connected network that aspires to take real action and make real progress on making our world a better place to live for everyone and everything.

Utilizing a systems-thinking approach through the lens of a Changemaker Campus will help us focus our discussions and decisions around what we do and who we to be the catalyst to support positive social change. It will foster discussions throughout the University of the role new and current programs can have to support the ILOs based on the principles of changemaking. It can help spark innovative curricular discussions specific to courses and pedagogical practices. It can help forge even stronger connections with support areas across the University who are working together to achieve a common goal of being a Changemaker Campus. It can inspire current and future students who can discover and nurture their gifts in ways that can have meaningful impact for themselves and others. It will help prepare the next generation of BC's labour force with not only the technical skills in high demand jobs such as patient centred health care, green technology, environmental science, community planning, education, sustainable and inclusive food security, and ethical business practices, but also with the competencies and practical experience to drive positive change in their chosen field of study. Being known as a Changemaker Campus also significantly enhances UFV's credibility with community stakeholders and leaders, faculty, staff and student recruitment efforts, potential funders, and industry partners. In short, it articulates an identity that will guide and demonstrate UFV's commitment to being an agent for positive change.

As we look forward to the next 50 years of UFV, being known as changemakers provides us with a framework to articulate the core identity of being a house of transformation where changemakers gather to pursue diverse pathways of scholarship, leading to community connection, reconciliation, and prosperity, locally and beyond.

[UFV's Changemaking](#) initiative is currently being led by the [Community Health and Social Innovation Hub](#).

Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʘʘ One Health

An emerging priority for the Fraser Valley and British Columbia is the concept of Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʘʘ One Health. Stated simply, Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʘʘ One Health is a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of the health of humans, animals, and the environment. The Province of British Columbia in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control have also recently developed a Nuts a maht | One Health Guiding Strategy which UFV has participated in its development.

The Fraser Valley continues to experience first-hand the consequences of an imbalance amongst this ecosystem as our climate changes, agricultural practices evolve, and populations diversify, grow and age. We only need to look at the recent damaging floods across the Fraser Valley, the annual outbreak of avian influenza, or chemical contamination of the Fraser River that are direct consequences of this imbalance.

UFV's location in the heart of the Fraser Valley holds particular importance. The region is not only home to historic places of Indigenous peoples and British Columbia, but it is also the epicenter for a broad range of food production with past and future vulnerabilities from the effects of climate change. UFV's presence in this area positions it as a logical focal point for studying ecosystem health and charting holistic solutions in the face of a changing climate, growing population, and agricultural technology. UFV is ideally located to harness its academic gifts and resources to help tackle some of the “wicked problems” such as zoonotic disease, food insecurity, climate crisis, persistent flooding, pollution, housing insecurity, socially constructed inequities, and health security challenges that impact the communities that we serve and position UFV as an applied research leader in agritech, health innovation, and sustainability.

UFV's vision for Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʘʘ One Health is for the University to be a hub for the Fraser Valley where public and private sector expertise with cultural exchange comes together to create sustainable growth and act on solutions that: i) make people and communities healthier, ii) protect our changing environment, water, and lands; and iii) grow secure quality food production for the Fraser Valley, British Columbia, and the world. This

vision is applied, and solutions oriented. By building on existing faculty and program excellence already in place, UFV can harness its resources by embracing an interdisciplinary approach that connects and educates local and global talent and infuses cultural and shared traditional knowledge practiced by the Stó:lō people who have held a special connection to the land, water, and animals since time immemorial.

The Stó:lō people view the environment as a holistic and interconnected entity. They understand that their well-being is intricately linked to the well-being of the land, waterways, plants, and animals. This perspective encourages them to treat the environment with respect and care, as any harm done to it can affect their own way of life. The Stó:lō people's connection with the land and environment is multifaceted, encompassing cultural, spiritual, historical, and practical aspects. Their profound relationship with the land and water reflects a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms and a commitment to maintaining a balanced and respectful coexistence with the natural world. There is much we can learn from the Stó:lō people to ensure all living things can thrive together in harmony. Through this approach, UFV will seek to learn from Indigenous voices, acknowledge their wisdom, incorporate it into the Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʔʔ One Health framework, and share knowledge and new discoveries among participants and the public.

UFV already has many of the foundational components to tackle issues that would benefit from a Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʔʔ One Health solutions-based approach. Academic areas such as agriculture, biology, nursing, kinesiology, business, culinary, technology, environmental sciences, and regional planning are natural fits and lend themselves well to the importance of [cross-pollination across academic disciplines needed to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills](#). Several research Centres and Institutes such as the Food and Agriculture Institute, Community Health and Social Innovation Hub, Centre for Justice, Equity, and Sustainable Action, Centre for Education and Research on Aging, and the Esposito Family Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship are also ideally positioned to collaborate on Xwe' eyelh Lets'e ʔʔ One Health issues through active learning and applied research initiatives. However, other academic areas across the University can also bring new and fresh perspectives that may not have been considered before. When experts from both within the university and from the community bring ideas across diverse areas and collaborate, novel ideas to wicked problems that require more systems thinking to produce solutions have the potential to emerge.

The [One Health Hub@UFV](#) is currently being led by the Food and Agriculture Institute.

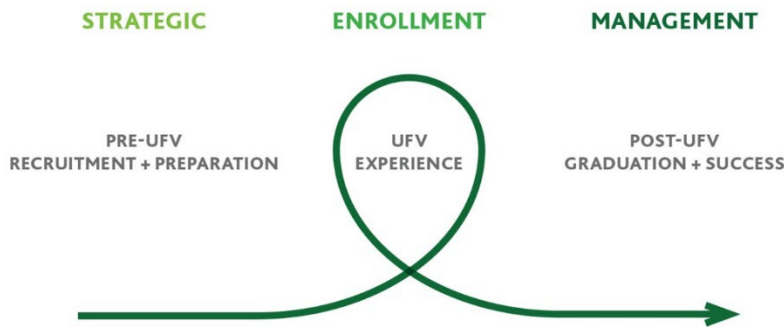
Student Ready University

A Student Ready University is committed to meeting the diverse needs of its students through supportive transition into the university, access to relevant academic programs, flexible learning opportunities, and proactive student support. It's about shifting the focus from students being "university-ready" to the collective efforts of the institution being ready to meet students where they are and support every student's academic success, personal growth, and career readiness to support their development to being future ready to thrive in the next phase of their lives.

[UFV's Strategic Enrolment Management \(SEM\) Plan](#) illustrates the educational journey of a student, supporting them from recruitment to graduation and beyond. The SEM Plan outlines our commitment to being Student Ready ensuring they can successfully complete their academic programs and transition to their next journey, whether it is further education, career aspirations, or other personal contributions.

Expressed through the metaphor of a clothoid loop in the SEM Plan (see Figure 1), the loop provides a preparation pathway into the University through various recruitment and engagement opportunities before a student officially becomes a UFV student. For example, UFV has hosted two Education Summits with administrators and teachers from across the surrounding school districts in the Fraser Valley. These learning opportunities have helped School District and UFV faculty, staff, and administrations to better understand learners' unique needs so that we can all be better prepared to support student transition into postsecondary education. Then, once a student becomes a member of the UFV community, the structure of a clothoid loop is such that it is designed to support a student throughout their UFV experience to minimize the stress and barriers students might face so that they can successfully complete their programs of choice. The student experience can include leaving and then returning to UFV, sometimes completing the program they left or embarking on a new program. For example, UFV has been recognized as an [Age Friendly University](#) for its commitment to support lifelong learning. The inclusive nature of the loop is intended to provide students with seamless opportunities to continue their journey when they are ready to rejoin. Upon graduation, the momentum provided by a student's UFV experience should prepare them to be future ready when transitioning onto their next journey.

Figure 1: UFV's Strategic Enrolment Management Clothoid Loop Commitment



The [Office of the VP Students](#) has developed a Resource Package to assist areas in identifying ways in which they can Student Ready.

Emerging Issues Impacting Post-Secondary Education

As we start looking forward to our next 50 years, there are several emerging issues that are already impacting or going to be impacting how post-secondary education is delivered and prioritized by governments and community.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy

AI has become one of the largest disruptors to education in recent memory. However, at the same time, education has consistently shown its ability to embrace technological advances and incorporate them into supporting learning. From Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century, to the invention of chalkboards in the 19th century, to calculators and computers in the second half of the 20th century, to widespread access to the internet at the beginning of the 21st century, education has embraced these technologies and found ways to incorporate them to the benefit of learners. Each time these technologies were introduced into the education system, faculty members found ways to adapt and enhance their pedagogical approaches.

Governments at all levels have been making significant investments in AI. For example, the Federal Government recently appointed the first ever [Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation](#). At the Provincial level, BC has been highlighting the impact of AI on current and future jobs in its annual [Labour Market Outlook](#). In the [2024 Edition](#), a study conducted by [Statistics Canada](#) suggested that close to 90% of jobs performed by employees with a bachelor's degree will be impacted by AI. However, the study indicated that AI will not replace these jobs, but rather, require employees to effectively utilize AI as a

companion in successfully performing their job requirements. The province also recently launched its [Digital Learning Strategy](#) and the creation of a [K-12 Advisory Committee](#) to explore the integration of AI platforms into the education system. These frameworks align with [industry is stressing](#) the importance of fostering AI Literacy skills amongst students to enhance their post-graduation careers.

According to the [BC Student Outcome Survey](#), 87% of UFV’s Bachelor Degree graduates said the knowledge and skills gained in their program of study were useful in performing their job. For UFV to maintain and/or enhance this important graduate outcome and to build on the AI skills being developed through the K-12 system, students will need to further develop their AI literacy skills throughout their courses of study at UFV and enhance their *critical understanding* of how this technology can help tackle complex questions.

To support faculty with the infusion of AI into their courses, the Teaching and Learning Centre has developed a series of [Guidelines and Principles](#). As AI evolves in its use and integration, so too will our guidelines and principles. However, I am confident that just as we have infused other major technological advances into our classrooms, so too will we be able to embrace the effective use of AI to prepare a technologically literate generation of students.

Labour Market Shifts & Industry Alignment

In the [2025 BC Labour Market Outlook](#) report, the province is projecting one million job openings over the next decade out to 2035. Of those openings, 75% of them will require some level of post-secondary education.

Late in 2025, the Province of British Columbia released its [Look West: Jobs and Prosperity Strategy](#). This strategy is an attempt to align BC’s talent and resources to its own economic development and the national economic priorities set out by the [Federal Government](#). Highlights from the Look West strategy include: growing diverse sectors such as technology, the marine sector, agriculture, aerospace, critical minerals, clean energy, life sciences, forestry, and national defence; [doubling investment in skilled trades training](#); and, diversifying global markets to conduct trade.

To align the labour force with the skills required by industry and business in these priority growth sectors across BC, publicly funded post-secondary institutions will be required to demonstrate how the competencies developed through its academic programs are in “sync with evolving fields and major projects needs” and how BC’s skills-training system “can adapt to needs and expectations of our priority sectors.” This will not only require curricular and pedagogical reforms, but also a further investment in work-integrated

learning opportunities through co-ops, internships, clinical placements, community service and practicums for students to apply their skills through “on the job” training.

Many [employers](#) are emphasizing the importance of competence-based learning rather than simply relying on outcomes associated with traditional degrees. For example, the Royal Bank of Canada recently published a paper entitled: [A Smarter Path: The case for postsecondary education reform](#) that reinforces the importance of work-integrated learning opportunities for students, the importance of universities [being more articulate](#) about the career readiness skills of its students, and the ability of students to stack their credentials (e.g., microcredentials, badges, certificates) to create a skills portfolio for potential employers. Results from the Business and Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) national roundtable series on the [Future of Post-Secondary Education](#) also reinforced the importance of better workforce alignment through work-integrated learning opportunities and engagement with industry in the development of curriculum and assessment practices.

Internationalization & Geopolitical Changes

In 2025, “elbows up” became the rallying cry in response to threats to Canada’s sovereignty and economy from the United States. Canada was not alone in its response to diversify its reliance from the United States as [many other countries](#) sought to strengthen existing and forge new international trade partnerships. Countries such as Germany, France, and China have challenged the traditional “big 4” markets of Canada, USA, UK, and Australia to recruit international students in response to labour market shortages and recruitment of students into high priority areas such as STEM.

While Canada is trying to diversify its international trade markets and strategic alliances, the Federal Government continued to restrict the number of international students who would be issued study permits to Canadian post-secondary institutions. [ApplyBoard](#) has forecasted that IRCC will only issue 80,000 study permits in 2025 which would represent over a 70% drop compared to 2024 and is less than 20% of its stated target. As part of the [federal budget](#) announcement in November 2025, the Canadian government announced that it is further cutting the number of study permits it will approve **in half** starting in 2026 and continuing through 2028.

For 2026, the [federal government](#) has allocated British Columbia 32,596 study permit application spaces. This represents a 57% cut from the 2025 allocation of 76,087 which follows a 40% cut to British Columbia’s undergraduate allocation in 2025 compared to 2024. For 2026, BC’s public institutions have been allocated 80% of the total number of

available PALs. UFV's PAL allocation for 2026 is 928. This represents a 48% drop from the 2025 PAL allocation and 64% drop compared to 2024 PAL allocation.

It is reasonable to assume that the Federal Government is committed to reducing immigration levels, and in particular, the number of international students it will allow to enter the country and study at a [Designated Learning Institution](#) in Canada based on the following statement in the budget: "New international student arrivals have also declined by approximately 60 per cent compared to 2024. This is a start, but we recognise there is more work to do" (p. 96).

These policy changes and public announcements have had a significant impact upon Canada's brand as a destination that welcomes international students from around the world. According to [ApplyBoard](#), the anticipated number of study permits to be issued by IRCC in 2025 is 80,000. To put this in perspective, the total number forecasted under the new "cap" system through the Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL) program was 316,276 for 2025. That equates to only 25% of the forecasted intake of new international students in Canada this year and would represent the lowest intake in over a decade.

Despite a devastating year for international education in Canada, there are some recent [signs of hope](#) now that there appears to be some clarity on Canada's international student policy. While I do not foresee a return to the record international student enrolments we saw in 2023 or 2024, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and India point towards opportunities for the two countries to form strong partnerships through education. These partnerships will not be dominated by the one-way flow of students from India to Canada that we have seen in the past, but rather, a more balanced relationship involving transnational education collaborations in research and degree programs (e.g., dual degree, 2+2). Canada's strategic priority of diversifying its global trade partnerships will open new opportunities in emerging markets that will encourage further mobility and collaboration of students and faculty members. Finally, BC has made attracting top international talent to the province a strategic priority by streamlining credential recognition in high-demand jobs. This will open new opportunities at BC's post-secondary institutions to provide up-skilling and reskilling opportunities in collaboration with professional accreditation bodies.

For Canada, and UFV, to become competitive once again in recruiting international students, it will be important to control the things we can control. While we can not control who does or does not get a study permit application approved by IRCC or who goes on to get permanent residence or Canadian citizenship, we can control the quality of the education that we deliver, the type of programs we offer to attract top international

students, and the strength of the international partnerships that we develop. By focusing and promoting our strengths to the rest of the world will provide a solid foundation to rebuilding a currently damaged “brand Canada”.

Sector Sustainability

Minister Jessie Sunner [announced](#) on November 25th, 2025 that the Ministry of Post Secondary and Future Skills has launched a review of the financial sustainability of BC’s publicly supported post-secondary institutions.

As outlined in the [Terms of Reference](#):

“Presently, most PPSIs are under mounting operational and financial pressure due to several compounding challenges. Rising operational costs, including above-average inflation combined with abrupt, large-scale revenue losses from unilateral changes from the federal government have created substantial pressures for most institutions at a time when many were still recovering from the impacts of the pandemic. The system is not structured to adapt quickly in response to such dramatic shifts in the financial environment.”

The independent review is being led by Don Avison, KC, former B.C. deputy minister and former board chair of Emily Carr University of Art + Design. The report will contain recommendations that will guide government’s work to keep the system accessible, affordable, sustainable, and aligned with provincial economic priorities. Minister Sunner stressed that the Province is not in a financial position to add additional resources to the sector and that the review will primarily focus on finding efficiencies within the system.

While the review is set to be published by March, 2026, it has been made clear to the sector that not only is there no new money being invested in post-secondary education in BC, but that maintaining current levels of public funding will require PSIs to align themselves with provincial economic priorities.

To date, there have been no concerns expressed to me surrounding the province’s confidence in UFV’s long-term financial sustainability. Quite the opposite in fact. I have commonly heard supportive comments from government about UFV’s successful financial stewardship of living within our means (i.e., annual operating expenses = annual operating revenues). For example, over the past 10 years, over 728,000 students have registered in a credit-based course at UFV. The tuition revenues from these registrations make up approximately 50% of UFV’s total annual operating revenues. Through a data-driven, comprehensive, and holistic approach to forecasting these enrolments, UFV’s budget developers have forecasted on average within 99.2% of the actual budgeted enrolments.

Being able to accurately forecast expected revenues each year and balancing that with anticipated expenses has put UFV in the enviable position of being able to create long term sustainable financial plans.

With international enrolments severely limited by federal regulations for the foreseeable future, caps on domestic tuition, and the province signaling that there will not be any additional investments in the post-secondary sector, UFV will need to leverage its existing resources to attract additional sources of revenue to support strategic investments. It will also need to review and update the current [SEM Plan](#) to ensure that the enrolment forecasts are realigned with the new reality around our ability to recruit international students to UFV.

As we look ahead, an additional source of revenue that will be made available will be the profits generated from UFV's property trust initiative called [Campus Communities](#). These revenues can then be reinvested to support strategic investments such as future capital expansions identified in our [campus plans](#). The Provost has also repurposed the Vice-Provost position for 2026 to focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship opportunities throughout the academic enterprise. Led by Dr. Chris Schinckus, this position will explore opportunities for revenue generation by utilizing existing resources to build a new non-credit, revenue generating model.

Threats to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Throughout 2025, we watched in real time as a generation of progress in support of equity, diversity, and inclusion on University campuses around the world came crumbling down around us. The politization of EDI derailed progress that has enabled millions more to have access to a post-secondary education system challenged to broaden awareness and redress systemic barriers.

At UFV, we have made EDI an important strategic priority. We see it as a source of unity when many are trying to use EDI as a form of division. Our [EDI Action Plan](#) continues to help establish concrete goals and actions. Diversity of culture, thought, ideas, experience, lifestyles, and expertise is what fuels innovation, empathy, and excellence. When we lean into diversity as an opportunity to unite rather than divide, we set an example not only for our institution but for our broader community—showing what is possible when everyone is empowered to thrive.

This, however, does not come easy. As President Obama once said, “hard things are hard”. For UFV to both respond to attacks against the importance of EDI and to demonstrate to our community its importance, we must ensure our university does not become an echo

chamber for just the loudest or privileged, but rather, a place where all voices are valued and where diversity is protected through respectful, inclusive, and evidence-based dialogue. Imagine if Galileo had been successfully silenced by the geocentric majority of his peers and the rulers of his day for his evidence-based support of the heliocentric model of the earth revolving around the sun. A recent article in [University Affairs](#) reinforces the importance of diversity to support scientific inquiry and points to successful Nobel Laureates who embraced diversity as the foundation for their discoveries. EDI means creating space to hear all voices and perspectives as long as it is done respectfully and within the boundaries of respecting human rights and [UFV's Values](#) of integrity, inclusion, excellence, and community.

Conclusion

As UFV begins its next 50 years and looks to update and renew its integrated strategic plan, UFV stands at a crossroads, facing both significant challenges and promising opportunities as it navigates shifting provincial priorities, financial constraints, and evolving societal expectations. While the financial challenges at the moment may seem daunting, they require us look inwardly to ensure we are aligning our strategic priorities with our resources to ensure we are having the maximum impact we can have across the many communities that we serve. Our commitment enshrined in our coat of arms to being a house of transformation – *Íyáqáwtxw* - and to be known as Changemakers creates opportunities for UFV to weave strategic priorities such as Truth and Reconciliation, Student Ready, and Xwe'eyelh Lets'e ʔʔ One Health across many areas of the university which in turn, can have a positive impact in community.

I believe while these strategic priorities provide a solid foundation to engage learners, transform lives, and build community, we must also be prepared to address how external factors such as artificial intelligence, changing labour market demands, industry engagement, internationalization, geopolitical changes, sector sustainability, and protecting EDI are a part of our long-term planning and identity.

The *Íyáqáwtxw* integrated strategic plan has served us well since 2021 and we have demonstrated considerable progress in achieving the goals that we set for ourselves over the past 5 years. As we review, reflect, and look to renew our integrated strategic plan over the next 12 months, we have an opportunity to come together as a community to help shape UFV's path forward for the next 50 years while building on our successes during our first 50 years. I hope that this reflection paper, rooted in an attempt to engage in deep listening and share what I have learned, will help to stimulate further collaborative conversations of our collective vision of continuing to be a house of transformation.