

December 3, 2009

**TEACHING & LEARNING COMMITTEE**  
**Vancouver Senate**  
2016 - 1874 East Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

To: Vancouver Senate

From: Senate Teaching & Learning Committee

Re: Item of Broad Academic Interest: Community Service Learning (CSL) and  
Community-Based Research (CBR) at UBC (information)

In March of 2009, the Senate Agenda Committee issued a call for submissions of topics of broad academic interest. The topic of Community Service Learning and Community-Based Research was proposed by Dr. Margo Fryer, Director, Learning Exchange and UBC-Community Learning Initiative. The Agenda Committee subsequently referred the topic to the Senate Teaching & Learning Committee.

The Senate Teaching & Learning Committee met with Dr. Fryer to discuss current participation by UBC students and faculty as well as future goals. The Learning Exchange aims to eventually have 4000 UBC students participating in CSL and CBR. As the Committee believes that this topic will be of interest to many Senators, we hereby submit it as a Senate agenda item for information and discussion.

Members of the Senate may want to consider the following questions:

- In light of the goal for significantly increased participations, how do you think that UBC might best advance CSL and CBR over the next five years?
- Are there real or perceived barriers for faculty participation that need to be addressed?
- What would successful CSL and CBR outcomes look like from the student perspective? From the community perspective? Are there barriers to engagement?
- What are the implications associated with the plan to advance CSL and CBR?
- What role(s) should the Senate play to help advance the plan for CSL and CBR?

Attached please find a briefing note for the Senate on the advancement of CSL and CBR at UBC.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Margaret Friesen, Chair  
Senate Teaching & Learning Committee



## **Senate Briefing Note re the Advancement of Community-Service Learning and Community-Based Research**



**December 2009**



**Margo Fryer, Director  
UBC Learning Exchange and  
UBC-Community Learning Initiative**



## **Introduction**

This briefing note provides background information for members of the UBC Senate about the growth of Community Service Learning and Community-Based Research at UBC and also gives an overview of UBC's strategic plan for the further advancement of these approaches to experiential learning. This information will be supplemented by a presentation by Margo Fryer at the Senate in 2010.

### **The Growth of Community Service Learning at UBC**

Community Service Learning (CSL) has three key elements: classroom learning; volunteer work that responds to community-identified priorities; and structured reflection activities that challenge students to make connections between what they are studying and their experiences in the community.

At its inception in 1999, the Learning Exchange began bringing student volunteers into non-profit agencies and public schools in the Downtown Eastside. Students' enthusiastic response to this opportunity resulted in a doubling of the number of student participants every year until 2004 when enrolment had to be limited. In 2002, the Learning Exchange began working with faculty members to integrate students' volunteer work into academic course work. In 2006, the UBC-Community Learning Initiative (UBC-CLI) was created, with funding from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and UBC, to develop innovative approaches to course-based (curricular) CSL. With the integration of students' community-based activity into course work and the focus among many faculties on providing students with research experience, students also began doing Community-Based Research (CBR), which is the conduct of research that addresses questions or issues identified by a community organization.

In 2008-2009, almost 1700 students engaged in CSL and/or CBR through the Learning Exchange or the UBC-CLI, a 44% increase since the previous year. About 60% of these students did CSL or CBR as part of their participation in a course. The 31 courses that incorporated this kind of community-based experiential learning in 2008-2009 covered a variety of disciplines and subjects. In addition to the students who take part in CSL or CBR activities supported by the Learning Exchange or the UBC-CLI, many students take part in courses where the CSL or CBR activities are facilitated by an individual faculty member (in 2007-2008 about 350 students were involved in such courses). For more information about student participation rates in CSL and CBR activities in 2008-2009, see Appendix A.

### **The Strategic Plan for the Advancement of CSL and CBR**

The strategic plan was developed in response to a call from the President and other leaders within UBC to significantly increase the participation of students and faculty in community-based experiential learning. This challenge to "scale up" is especially focused on two approaches to experiential learning that are growing quickly at UBC, i.e., Community Service Learning (CSL) and Community-Based Research (CBR). The continued advancement of CSL and CBR will enable UBC to significantly expand and deepen its engagement with external communities thereby contributing to the achievement of the UBC *Place and Promise* vision and associated commitments, especially the commitment to community engagement.

The goals and strategies outlined in this plan are intended to move UBC's use of CSL and CBR increasingly towards the "thick" end of the spectrum of community-engaged scholarship where decisions about means and ends are made collaboratively by the university and the community, both costs and benefits are shared, and learning is a reciprocal, iterative process.

This plan is grounded in the recognition that a rethinking of the processes whereby CSL and CBR programs are initiated, planned, implemented, and evaluated will be required if UBC is to achieve the significant growth that is envisioned (from approximately 1,000 students per year in the period from 2004 to 2008 to 4,000 students per year by 2014) while at the same time achieving "thick" community engagement. This plan aims to achieve changes in social or cultural factors (e.g., conventions around how decisions are made) as well as structural changes (e.g., formal roles and responsibilities). It is recognized that difficulties will inevitably arise as these strategies are pursued.

Based on UBC's experiences building its CSL programs over the past ten years, and especially the recognition that personal relationships are fundamental to the success of community engagement, we propose that the advancement of CSL and CBR at UBC be grounded in metaphors arising from the fields of biology, ecology, and living systems. Metaphors related to complex adaptive systems are highly applicable to the terrain of Community-University Engagement where change, complexity, and diversity are the norm and the challenge of adapting to both crises and opportunities in the environment needs to be embraced.

The four specific goals to be achieved through the implementation of this plan are given below. Examples of specific strategies and indications of which entities will take the lead in implementing each strategy are also given.

**Goal 1: To Enhance Student Learning:** Help to create an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship for both undergraduate and graduate students by providing learning experiences in a variety of off-campus community settings that enable students to apply their talent, knowledge and skills to real-world issues while learning from the people and issues they encounter. These learning experiences will challenge students to reflect on the complexity of community issues and the range of ways that they, as citizens, might respond.

#### **Examples of Strategies:**

- Provide faculty-based professional expertise to work with instructors to incorporate CSL and CBR into academic courses where these activities will contribute to students' learning. This support will include assistance with: designing or redesigning courses to include a focus on community issues; defining learning goals; designing and facilitating structured reflection activities; and evaluating students' community-based learning. (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Faculties*)
- Provide faculty-specific and institution-wide professional development opportunities for instructors and teaching assistants to learn about CSL and CBR. (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL); Faculties*)
- Provide funds to support faculty research into the efficacy of CSL and CBR as pedagogies. (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Centre for Teaching and Learning*)

- Support students to play leadership roles in the initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation of CSL and CBR projects and placements (e.g., have students work in self-directed teams to understand and respond to the priorities of community partners, support students to include CSL projects in Student-Directed Seminars). (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Student Development; Faculties; community partners*)
- Create opportunities for community organization representatives and community members to act as co-educators with instructors (e.g., participating in defining course learning goals, giving guest lectures, taking part in panel discussions, or leading reflection activities). Develop meaningful methods of recognizing the contribution of community partners. (*Faculties, Instructors, community partners*)

**Goal 2: To Contribute to Society:** Make a demonstrable contribution to the advancement of a civil and sustainable society by applying the resources of the university (including people, knowledge, and methods of inquiry) to important community issues, priorities, or needs. Increase the number of students, faculty, staff, and community organizations involved in CSL and CBR. Aim to have 10% of UBC students involved in CSL and CBR programs every year by 2013-2014.

**Strategies:**

- Support and recognize CSL and CBR activities that are based on relevant research (e.g., evidence about the effectiveness of different kinds of community programs) and use research to assess the impact of student activities in community settings. (*Faculties; Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI*)
- Support interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary courses with CSL and CBR components that are created to respond to specific, complex community issues. (*Faculties*)
- Support collaborations with community organizations that enable the achievement of long-term strategic goals set by both the organization and the university. (*Faculties; Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Irving K. Barber Learning Centre*)
- Encourage strategic alliances between particular faculties, schools, and units and natural partners in relevant sectors in the community. (*Faculties, community partners*)

**Goal 3: To Collaborate with Community:** Engage in mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations characterized by the collaborative development, implementation, and evaluation of students' learning, service, and research experiences.

**Strategies:**

- Identify ways for communities to initiate CSL or CBR activities (e.g., develop links between United Way community-based planning roundtables and faculty members doing CSL or CBR). (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; community partners; Faculties, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre*)
- Provide faculty-based professional expertise to assist with the formation and stewardship of relationships with community organizations. (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI*)
- Develop the capacity for UBC's community-based experiential learning activities to use an asset-based community development approach (where the focus is on gifts, assets, and resources, rather than needs, deficits, and problems) (e.g., provide professional development opportunities for instructors, teaching assistants, and professionals from the

community to learn about asset-based community development principles and practices). (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Centre for Teaching and Learning*)

- Develop ways to recognize and reward community organization contributions to CSL and CBR initiatives (e.g., create scholarships or fellowships for community members or professionals engaged in CSL and CBR to enable them to study at UBC) (*Faculties, community partners, Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI*)

**Goal 4: To Embed CSL and CBR in the Academic Fabric of the University:** Advance CSL and CBR by supporting Faculty-driven CSL and CBR initiatives while providing centralized, integrative support.

**Strategies:**

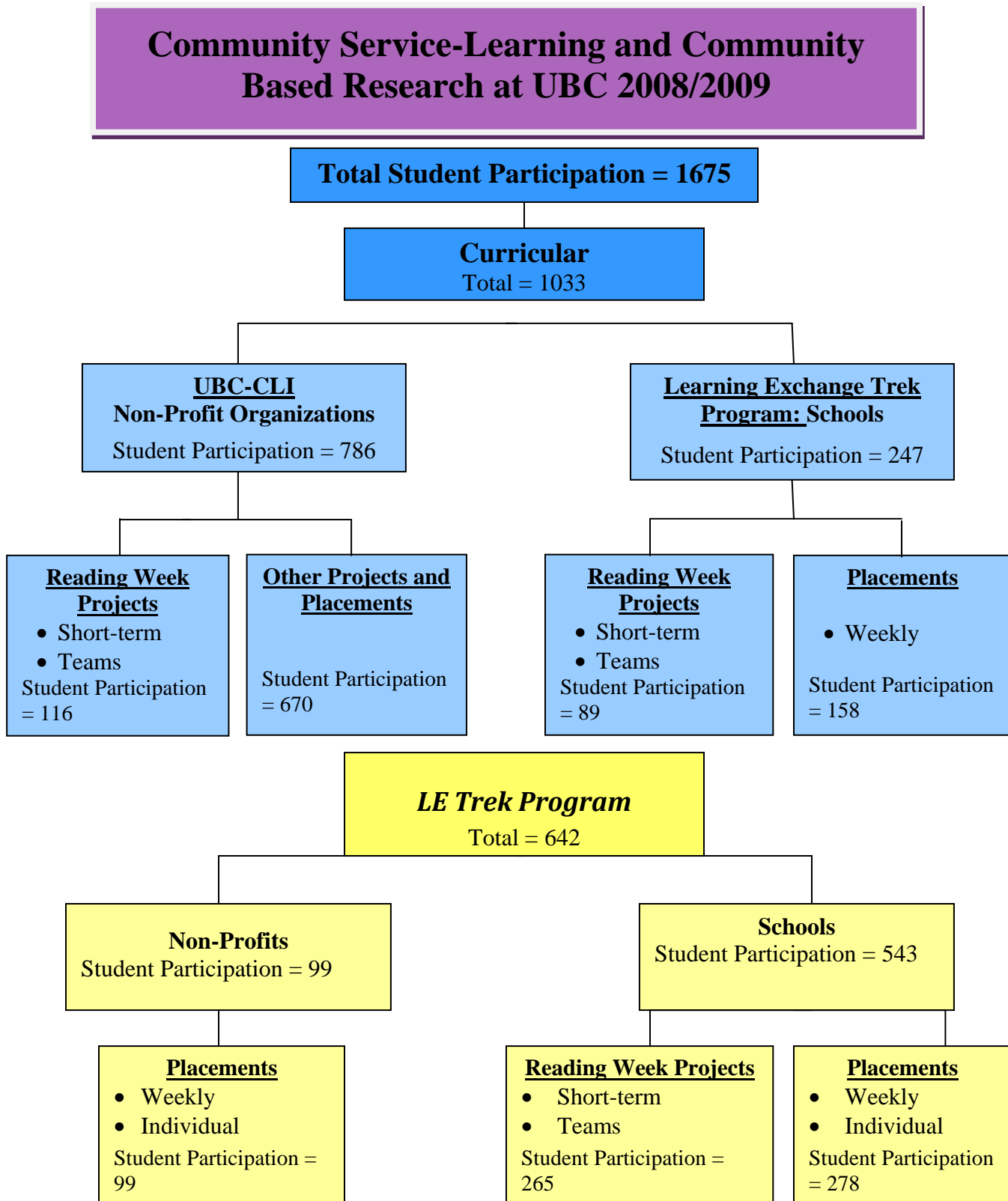
- Base some CSL/CBR professional staff in faculties, with faculty-specific roles and shared accountability to the faculty and the Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI. Other professional Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI staff will provide central support in cross-cutting areas such as strategic planning, research and evaluation, professional development and training, development and dissemination of resources to support CSL and CBR practice, and policy development. (*Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI; Faculties*)
- Develop methods to recognize faculty participation in CSL and CBR, including recognizing achievement in CSL and CBR in promotion and tenure decisions and creating awards for leadership and innovation in community engagement. (*VP Academic; Faculties*)
- Engage alumni in CSL and CBR activities, especially recent graduates who may have done CSL or CBR during their time as students, e.g., have alumni mentor current students doing CSL/CBR. (*Faculties; Alumni Affairs*)
- Establish departmental research ethics review committees in departments or faculties with high levels of CBR activity, to facilitate the inclusion of CBR into courses. (*Faculties, Office of Research Services*)

Methods of regularly assessing the progress towards the achievement of these goals are outlined in the plan.

The plan also contains several appendices that provide supplementary background information, including descriptions of examples of faculty-specific community-based experiential learning activities and a summary of research regarding the outcomes of CSL.

The complete strategic plan will be available on the *Place and Promise* website in early 2010.

**Appendix A:**  
**Student Participation in CSL and CBR in 2008-2009**



## Highlights of 2008/09:

- A total of **1675** students participated in Community Service-Learning (CSL) or Community Based Research (CBR) placements and projects through the Learning Exchange and UBC-CLI this year. This represents a **44%** increase from 2007/2008. Last year's total student participation was 1162.
- **62%** of total participants this year did their CSL or CBR project or placement as part of a course.
- There was a **66%** increase in the number of students who participated in course-based CSL or CBR compared to the 2007/2008 academic year.
- There were **19** Reading Week projects in the schools through the Learning Exchange and Student Development and **15** projects in Non-Profit Organizations through the UBC-CLI. The projects took place in the City of Vancouver and other parts of the Lower Mainland.
- 14 students from the University of Guelph and 14 students from the University of Calgary were also involved in Reading Week school projects. They are not reflected in the participation numbers in this document.

## Participation in Curricular CSL and CBR:

<u>Courses</u>	<u># of Students</u>
<i>Projects during Reading Week:</i>	
Food, Nutrition and Health 250	6
Food, Nutrition and Health 473	35
Co-ordinated Arts Program 105	12
Applied Sciences 263	8
Sociology 312A	26
Biology 121	75
Rehabilitation Sciences & Occupational Therapy 519	43
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>205</b>

### *Placements:*

Rehabilitation Sciences & Occupational Therapy 519	4
Biology 121	25
Human Kinetics 454	15
Biology 200	27
EDST 314	32



Biology 201	53
Food, Nutrition and Health 473	26
Creative Writing 522	6
Italian 202	10
Italian 102, 302, 343	10
Philosophy 235	23
Sociology 461B	19
Women's Studies 480	10
Women's Studies 320	27
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>287</b>

*Other Projects:*

Agricultural Sciences 350	
• Term 1	196
• Term 2 (on-line)	56
Community and Regional Planning 548B	6
Civil Engineering 201/202	116
Geography 410	8
Geography 371	8
Geography 447	4
Geography 495	22
History 483	55
Sociology 354B	55
Student Directed Seminar	15
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>541</b>