Identifying Barriers: What we heard from our community

Summary report (April 11, 2022)

Introductory Context:

Purpose: The phase 3 engagement survey was designed to ask our community to identify key barriers to experiencing equity, feeling that diversity is valued, and feeling a sense of belonging. The survey was launched in conjunction with a number of face-to-face consultation meetings with groups, units, and faculties across campus. The collected data will inform the development of the Equity Action Plan's Universal Goals as well as the key actionable objectives, which will guide meaningful change at UVic.

Context: The survey was available for the month of March 2022. It was advertised across various platforms and methods, including the EAP website, UVic social media accounts, and by word of mouth. Fact-to-face consultation meetings were coordinated using purposeful recruitment methods.

Development: The Reflection and Challenge Committee developed the questions for both the survey and the consultations as a collective group.

Summary Statement:

In total, our phase 3 engagement survey garnered 500 responses. Of these responses, 123 surveys were incomplete in some fashion (e.g., providing demographic data, but skipping the climate assessment). In total, 22 group/unit consultations, 11 public conversation cafes (affinity groups and open sessions), a Noon Networking Event for Indigenous Students and an event for Indigenous Staff and Faculty were conducted. The cumulative trends of both data sets are presented below. Part 1, 2, and 3 highlight survey responses, while part 4 outlines the identified barriers across both methods of data collection.

PART 1: Self-identification demographic summary

Q1 – Please indicate your relationship to the University of Victoria

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Staff	138 (28.2%)
Faculty	67 (13.7%)
Sessional Instructor	20 (4.1%)
Undergraduate Student	226 (46.1%)
Graduate Student	66 (13.5%)
Alumni	30 (6.1%)
*My relationship to UVic is…	16 (3.3%)

***My relationship to UVic… – answers included:** external and grant-funded staff, volunteer, parent of student*

Q2 – Are you an international student?
Question only appeared for those who selected 'Undergraduate student' or 'Graduate Student' in Q1

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	39 (13.7%)
No	245 (86.3%)

Q3 – Please select what gender you identify as:

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Woman	308 (63.6%)
Man	109 (22.5%)
Non-Binary	31 (6.04%)
Two-Spirit	3 (0.62%)
Prefer not to say	21 (4.3%)
*My gender identity is...	12 (2.9%)

***My gender identity is… – answers included:** gender queer, gender fluid*

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Q4 – Do you identify as transgender or as having trans experience?

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	37 (7.6%)
No	432 (89.3%)
Prefer not to say	15 (3.1%)

Q5 – Do you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, Two-Spirit, or another minority sexual orientation?

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	161 (33.2%)
No	300 (61.9%)
Prefer not to say	24 (4.9%)

Q6 – Do you identify as a person with a disability (invisible, visible, mental and/or physical)?

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	143 (30.7%)
No	315 (64.8%)
Prefer not to say	22 (4.5%)

Q7 – Do you identify as Indigenous?

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	25 (5.1%)
No	449 (92.4%)
Prefer not to say	12 (2.5%)

Q8 – Do you identify as an Indigenous person of North America?
Question only appeared for those that selected 'Yes' to Q7

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	22 (88.0%)
No	3 (12.0%)
Prefer not to say	0 (0.0%)

Q9 – Do you identify as someone who is racialized or a person of colour?

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	96 (20.3%)
No	362 (76.4%)
Prefer not to say	16 (3.4%)

Q10 – Beyond the answers you've provided to the questions above, do you identify as belonging to an underrepresented, marginalized, or equity seeking group?

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Yes	186 (39.3%)
No	259 (54.8%)
Prefer not to say	28 (5.9%)

Q11 – Other self-identification information provided:

→ Socioeconomic status; First generation student status; Immigrant/refugee status; Specific learning challenges (e.g., ADD); Religious and spiritual community members; Visibly religious symbols; Jewish community members; Muslim community members

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PART 2: Climate assessment – Descriptive tables

For the climate assessment, respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed or disagreed, disagreed, or strong disagreed with the following statements:

Q1 – UVic is an equitable learning, living and working place.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	43 (10.5%)
Agree	123 (30.2%)
Neither agree or disagree	84 (20.6%)
Disagree	111 (27.2%)
Strongly disagree	45 (11.0%)
Prefer not to say	2 (0.49%)

Q2 – At UVic, I have experienced barriers to equity.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	78 (19.1%)
Agree	135 (33.0%)
Neither agree or disagree	77 (18.8%)
Disagree	73 (17.9%)
Strongly disagree	41 (10.0%)
Prefer not to say	5 (1.2%)

Q3 – At UVic, I have witnessed barriers to equity.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	119 (29.2%)
Agree	156 (38.3%)
Neither agree or disagree	51 (12.5%)
Disagree	44 (10.8%)
Strongly disagree	29 (7.1%)
Prefer not to say	8 (1.9%)

Q4 – Diversity is celebrated at UVic.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	48 (11.8%)
Agree	165 (40.6%)
Neither agree or disagree	102 (25.1%)
Disagree	63 (15.5%)
Strongly disagree	26 (6.4%)
Prefer not to say	2 (0.5%)

Q5 – At UVic, I have experienced instances of discrimination related to social identity and/or position.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	69 (17.4%)
Agree	116 (28.6%)
Neither agree or disagree	65 (16.1%)
Disagree	100 (24.7%)
Strongly disagree	47 (11.6%)
Prefer not to say	8 (1.9%)

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Q6 – At UVic, I have witnessed instances of discrimination related to social identity and/or position.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	102 (25.3%)
Agree	121 (30.0%)
Neither agree or disagree	57 (14.1%)
Disagree	73 (18.1%)
Strongly disagree	41 (10.2%)
Prefer not to say	9 (2.2%)

Q7 – UVic is an inclusive environment that promotes belonging.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	32 (7.96%)
Agree	125 (31.1%)
Neither agree or disagree	134 (33.3%)
Disagree	70 (17.4%)
Strongly disagree	39 (9.7%)
Prefer not to say	2 (0.5%)

Q8 – I have experienced barriers to feeling a sense of belonging at UVic.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	72 (18.1%)
Agree	149 (37.5%)
Neither agree or disagree	61 (15.4%)
Disagree	79 (19.9%)
Strongly disagree	29 (7.3%)
Prefer not to say	7 (1.8%)

Q9 – I have witnessed barriers to feeling a sense of belonging at UVic.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	92 (22.8%)
Agree	156 (38.7%)
Neither agree or disagree	81 (20.1%)
Disagree	50 (12.4%)
Strongly disagree	22 (5.5%)
Prefer not to say	2 (0.5%)

Q10 - Having experienced and/or witnessed instances of inequity, exclusion, and/or discrimination, I felt/feel comfortable accessing support at UVic.
*Question only appeared for those who selected 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' in Q5/Q6

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	22 (6.3%)
Agree	94 (28.3%)
Neither agree or disagree	75 (22.6%)
Disagree	91 (27.4%)
Strongly disagree	45 (13.6%)
Prefer not to say	6 (1.8%)

Q11 - The culture at UVic is such that equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are prioritized and encouraged.

QUESTION OPTIONS	RESPONSES – n (%)
Strongly agree	47 (11.8%)
Agree	133 (33.4%)
Neither agree or disagree	114 (28.6%)
Disagree	61 (15.3%)
Strongly disagree	38 (9.6%)
Prefer not to say	5 (1.3%)

PART 3: Climate assessment – Comparison statements

Part 3 of this report presents comparisons carried out across demographic groups with the likelihood of responses to the climate assessment statements. Comparisons were conducted using chi-squared analyses; significant results are presented in likelihood statements.

- **Respondents who identified as racialized or as a person of colour were MORE likely than non-racialized respondents to have:**
  - ✓ Experienced barriers to equity at UVic;
  - ✓ Experienced and/or witnessed instances of discrimination related to social identity and/or position at UVic.

- **Respondents who identified as racialized or as a person of colour were LESS likely than non-racialized respondents to feel:**
  - ✓ As though UVic celebrates diversity;
  - ✓ As though UVic is an inclusive environment;
  - ✓ Comfortable accessing support at UVic.

- **Respondents who identified as a person with a disability (invisible, visible, mental and/or physical) were MORE likely than respondents living without a disability to have:**
  - ✓ Experienced and/or witnessed barriers to Equity at UVic;
  - ✓ Experienced and/or witnessed instances of discrimination related to social identity and/or position at UVic;
  - ✓ Experienced and/or witnessed barriers to feeling a sense of belonging at UVic.

- **Respondents who identified as a person with a disability (invisible, visible, mental and/or physical) were LESS likely than respondents living without a disability to feel:**
  - ✓ As though UVic celebrates diversity;
  - ✓ As though UVic is an inclusive environment;
  - ✓ As though the culture at UVic is such that equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are prioritized and encouraged.

- **Respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, Two-Spirit, or another minority sexual orientation were MORE likely than heterosexual respondents to have:**
  - ✓ Experienced barriers to equity at UVic;
  - ✓ Experienced barriers to feeling a sense of belonging at UVic.

- **Respondents who identified as transgender or as having trans experience were MORE likely than cis-gendered respondents to have:**
  - ✓ Experienced barriers to equity at UVic;

✓ Experienced and/or witnessed instances of discrimination related to social identity and/or position at UVic.

- **Respondents who identified as transgender or as having trans experience were LESS likely than cis-gendered respondents to feel:**

    ✓ As though the culture at UVic is such that equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are prioritized and encouraged.

PART 4: Identifying barriers

Part 4 of this report details the barriers identified by our community throughout both the phase 3 survey and the face-to-face consultations. The barriers are organized into five broad groups: (1) Equity centered culture; (2) Recruitment, hiring, and retention; (3) Accessibility and supports; (4) Institutional accountability; and (5) Relationality and belonging. These groups were identified using the phase 3 data, in addition to the desired future data from phase 2.

Equity-centered culture on campus
- At UVic, there continues to be a hesitancy from senior leadership to acknowledge the oppressive and inequitable systems of power that the University was built around (e.g., colonialism, whiteness, etc.). A lack of accountability and commitment to changing these dominant systems of power results in barriers to equity.
- There is no collective understanding of UVic's core goals, values, and definitions relating to equity. As a result, equity work across campus lacks cohesion and collective action.
- Often, the individuals making equity decisions have not necessarily experienced racism, oppression, or inequity.
- Cultural literacy and safety are not prioritized or evaluated within individual units, departments, or faculties. Training is inconsistent and/or voluntary.

Recruiting, hiring and retaining diverse students, staff, and faculty
- Hiring practices do not adequately consider retention of faculty and/or staff from equity seeking groups (e.g., Indigenous Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, Members of Visible Minorities).
- Hiring practices do not adequately account for inherent biases of individuals in positions of power (e.g., department chairs) or the power dynamics of the committee structure. As a result, policies concerning equitable hiring processes can be (and have been) undermined.
- Inconsistent or non-existent follow-up with unsuccessful applicants means that feedback is not collected on the hiring process. This reproduces expectations of the ideal professional fit and limits opportunities for future applications/success.
- Job descriptions for staff hires are generally inaccessible and inconsistent in the details provided; this limits who may be deemed 'qualified' for the position. Similarly, faculty postings continue to prioritize the traditional (and colonial) academic curriculum vitae (e.g., publications, conference presentations, grants, etc.).
- The lack of available affordable housing for students/staff/faculty is inhibiting recruitment and retention efforts.

Accessibility and supports
- Financial barriers to succeeding within higher education re/produce inequities across campus (e.g., having to work a full-time job in order to afford tuition/rent/living expenses) for students. Financial supports to address these barriers are too strict, narrow, and inaccessible.

- Mental health supports across campus do not represent the community they serve. As a result, students/staff/faculty from equity-seeking communities don't have access to counsellors who share or understand their experiences.
- Cultural safety and accessibility are not integrated within the support systems across campus.
- Supports for persons with disabilities (e.g., physical, mental, and/or academic supports) are inconsistent, not specific to individual needs, and leave members of the community feeling like they don't belong.
- Mature students and students with children are not adequately supported and their responsibilities beyond academia are not respected or acknowledged.
- UVic's lack of commitment to providing hybrid learning and flexible work opportunities on a consistent basis creates an educational environment that is inaccessible to some, and exclusionary.
- The availability of mental health supports for students/staff/faculty is inconsistent, inaccessible, and unreliable.
- The availability of gender-neutral washrooms is inconsistent and/or poorly advertised. As a result, some members of the UVic community are forced to plan their day around accessing these facilities.
- The accessibility of supports for students participating in experienced based learning (i.e., co-ops or placements) is inconsistent due to limited office hours or an inability to access campus services remotely.

Institutional accountability and evaluation
- The collection, management, and use of equity data (e.g., data on racialization, gender, or sexual orientation) lacks organization and consistency. As a result, the data is not necessarily being used in an effective or efficient manner.
- A lack of clarity and transparency concerning the outcomes of reporting procedures/processes (e.g., reporting instances of discrimination) contributes to a potentially unsafe environment lacking accountability.
- Past evaluation of equity initiatives efforts have been perceived as performative and not sincere. As a result, there isn't the required mutual trust from across the community, especially within equity deserving populations.
- Institutional plans being housed and controlled within individual units presents a potential conflict of interest surrounding responsibility, transparency, and accountability.
- The hierarchical and integrated nature of the institution makes true accountability difficult to achieve.

Relationality and belonging
- UVic's lack of engagement and connection with the wider off-campus community means that students, staff, and faculty recruitment efforts are narrow, repetitive and reinforce inequitable ideas about who is included and welcomed within the campus environment.
- The strict and narrow measures of academic knowledge and/or success creates spaces suppress creativity and alternative, non-colonial knowledge.
- By prioritizing colonial academic knowledge in our assessments and evaluations of students and employees, we are reproducing the dominant structures of power and limiting the accessibility and meaningful involvement of equity-deserving groups in higher education.
- The siloed and divided nature of campus – not only across students, staff, faculty, and leadership populations but also across positions, units, offices, and faculties – is contradictory of what is commonly spoken about as the UVic community.
- Increasing tuition prices in combination with the housing crisis prevents the inclusion of people with lower socioeconomic status.