



UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA EVENT SUMMARY

Jan. 28, 2015

Speakers inspire ideas about the future of UVic's campus

The large lecture hall in Bob Wright Centre has been a site where countless academic ideas have been exchanged, but on the evening of January 28th 2015 everyone was thinking about the future of UVic's physical campus.

Approximately 50 faculty members, students, staff, alumni, and members of the broader community attended this inaugural public event for UVic's 2015 Campus Plan Update process.

Dr. Valerie Kuehne, Professor and Acting Vice-President Academic and Provost kicked off the evening by emphasizing that the Campus Plan Update process only happens once every ten or so years. The ideas that everyone contributes through this process "will have a real and lasting impact on this campus going forward," she said. For that reason, UVic is seeking to engage with as broad an audience as possible, as described in the [Engagement Plan](#) that has been established for the Campus Plan Update.

For those in the audience that weren't familiar with what the Campus Plan Update is about, Dr. Kuehne offered some context. She explained that "the plan guides the physical development of the campus as new and renovated spaces are created for students, and changes in our teaching and research programs and related campus services are accommodated."

Ultimately, the purpose of the Campus Plan is to provide direction on which areas of campus are reserved for new buildings, parking, travel, open spaces, natural areas, and other land uses. While it doesn't address the specific details of new building projects (these are handled as part of separate site planning and approval processes), it will capture the guiding principles and preferred elements that people voice through this update process.

Development at UVic is currently guided by the [2003 Campus Plan](#). When the update process completes in early 2016, UVic will have a new Campus Plan that offers a refreshed vision for campus development over the next decade. This speakers event "is intended to get you thinking about the possibilities for the UVic campus", said Dr. Kuehne.

The moderator for the event, Dr. Andrew Rowe, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering, introduced the two main speakers for the evening: Dr. Eric Higgs, Professor of Environmental Studies and former Campus Plan Committee member and also Antonio Gomez-Palacio, Principal at Dialog BC, the architectural consulting firm that is assisting with UVic's Campus Plan Update.

Highlights from Dr. Eric Higgs' Presentation:

Imagining a tree-frog peeking out at a vast forest is how Eric related his challenge in assembling his perspectives and lessons learned about campus planning. Eric was intimately involved as a Campus Plan Committee member in the early 2000's and has experienced first-hand some of the debates that can arise.

He re-capped experiences navigating the feral rabbit population debates and even one "Save UVic Rabbits Bake Sale." He recalled discussions about building "inside the ring" versus "outside the ring", terms that have become common vocabulary for referencing the pedestrian portion of the UVic campus encircled by Ring Road. The closure of parking lot

“D” was another source of spirited debate, and across all of these experiences, it highlighted the “need for a plan with guiding directions,” said Higgs.

Eric remarked that the current Campus Plan Update process, with its year-long window of opportunity for people to contribute ideas, reflects a certain level of maturity that it has developed out of these past experiences. “It’s easy to forget that there are legacies that have left an imprint” when it comes to campus planning, and Eric emphasized that the 2015 Campus Plan Update is building on progressive planning practices.

Looking ahead, Eric defined three key themes for his presentation: 1) Learning Matters, 2) Ecology Matters, and 3) Planning Matters.

1) Learning Matters

Looking around at the modern lecture hall in the Bob Wright Centre, Eric noted that it is the kind of space that typically comes to mind when we think about universities. Yet, so much of what happens in universities, occurs outside of the lecture hall.

Universities are spaces of learning, and this includes both course-based learning and research.

Students learn through coursework and interaction with others. Both the curriculum and the campus population have become internationalized and there is increasing use of experimental learning occurring through a variety of formats—Eric gave the example of a restaurateur that visited his class to do a chocolate tasting, bringing awareness to the ecological dimension of food.

Field-based learning can happen both on campus and beyond, with many instructors using natural areas on campus such as Mystic Vale, or natural areas further afield in places like Galiano Island where Eric has taken his Environmental Studies students. Indigenous learning also occurs both on and off-campus. Dr. Nancy Turner and a few students from UVic, for instance helped Saanich Elder Sellemah (Joan Morris) with a pit cook on Chatham Island.

Graduate students and academics learn through research, and much of it can happen “away” from campus in the sites where research data is collected. However, students and academics involved in research typically return to campus to analyze their data and synthesize their findings.

For students that live on campus, living and learning are infused into one space, giving expanded meaning to the idea of “Residence Life”.

Members of the surrounding communities also regularly frequent the University grounds to engage in learning through Continuing Education, live performances, film, and even basic on-campus discovery. Recently, David Suzuki did a talk at the Farquhar Auditorium. Likely the vast majority of the audience was composed of interested community members. Life-long learning is important to many campus stakeholders.

E-Learning and technology are now also fully embedded into the learning process, and so IT systems like CourseSpaces play an important role in the overall learning environment.

The Campus Planning process needs to take into account all of the types of learning. It also needs to take into account predicted changes in the student population over time, even though this can be uncertain. What does zero or limited growth in student enrollments look like? Even if we don’t grow, we will still be developing and re-developing. How will evolution in our programs align with the evolution in our physical campus?

2) Ecology Matters

As a self-professed “eco-geek”, Eric said that he wishes everyone would love natural places and natural things in their own right. He hopes that for instance, the sight of gleaming moss on a rock could be appreciated for what it is, earning him some warm but appreciative laughter from the audience.

“Mystic Vale and other natural areas on campus do different things for us,” Eric explained. “They are places of learning, calm, and beauty. UVic is a tremendously beautiful campus, and this is something many universities don’t have.” Not everything has to be designed, engineered, and used in high frequency to be measured as a high-value asset. There are many important ways of valuing the features of our physical campus.

People connect with the campus in many ways. They walk their dogs, meander the pathways, and sit outside to relax, chat, or read. Some might notice the many art installations and dedications dotted throughout the campus. These physical attributes not only impact our experience as we move through the campus, but they can also help to establish warm memories that might enable alumni, for instance, to feel connected to UVic long after they have left. In short, ecology matters.

3. *Planning Matters*

Citing J.B. Harley, Eric invoked the symbolic power of maps. “The fact that we have the spatial arrangements that we do matters – it impacts what we see and how we feel,” said Eric.

While good planning is hard to define, we have an easy time pointing out what’s bad. Eric mentioned that UVic has lots of “failed” courtyards—Cornett, Clearihue, and Maclaurin are prominent examples of underused spaces, yet they would have seemed like a good idea when they were first being designed.

The courtyard at the David Turpin Building was designed to avoid these design failures. Its design recognized that when people move through spaces, they can be much more engaging.

Petch Fountain in front of the McPherson Library is a popular spot, although the Quad directly adjacent to it tends to be bare when the weather isn’t ideal. The West Quad on the other hand, tends to be empty even when the weather is beautiful, and the reasons for this would be interesting to explore.

In Eric’s opinion, the First Peoples’ House has distinctive architectural qualities and a good sensibility. He pointed to the ways that the Campus Planning engagement process played a role in its good design.

Good spatial arrangements come about through careful reflection and careful planning. Eric noted two documents for further reading that exemplify this kind of careful thought:

- [UVision](#), a document developed by the student-run University of Victoria Sustainability Project that outlines their vision for the Campus Plan.
- The Capital Regional District’s (CRD) [Regional Sustainability Strategy](#) (RSS).

Eric concluded his talk with a reminder that campus flows create drift patterns—what we do now as part of the Campus Plan Update process will shape what we see on campus in ten years, twenty years, and beyond.

Highlights from Antonio Gomez-Palacio’s Presentation:

“A plan is useless unless there are people who are passionate about it,” said Antonio at the beginning of his talk. It was clear that he embodied the very passion that he was describing.

He encouraged UVic to think big, to be bold, and to share ideas through this Campus Plan Update process. “Campuses are the physical manifestation of the aspirations of our time,” he said. We need to articulate what we aspire to and determine how to reflect that in our campus.

Future generations of students will be looking at a UVic that “we” (the people participating in the Campus Plan Update) shaped. To ground everyone in what this means in real terms, Antonio shared a series of images of campuses across Canada from the 1900’s through to today. Showing the physical evolution of these campuses over time was a powerful way to demonstrate how the choices we make now, will truly impact the future course for UVic’s campus.

Antonio shared images of classical campuses in the early 1900’s, with regal buildings, courtyards and gardens. From the post-World War II era, we saw campuses removed from cities, oriented around expectations of a car-dependent community.

More recently, many campuses’ are focusing on integration with cities, to invigorate vibrancy and create a sense of liveliness within spaces of learning.

Antonio explained that “the moment of reinvention is exciting today, and we stand at a crossroads.” We need to understand the drivers that will inspire UVic in the coming decade. He lists ten sources of inspiration that might help us get the gears turning in our minds so that we can contribute ideas to the Campus Plan update process:

1. Indigenous response: acknowledging the history and identity of who we are in our physical form is important.
2. New ways of learning, and a shift toward the social: The nature of learning is changing. Learning happens everywhere. Years ago libraries were places of silence, no food, no drink...today they are vibrant spaces where students want to spend many hours engaged in all kinds of activities. We are seeing universities around the world building large hallways with many electrical outlets, so that these spaces can be used for much more than traveling from point A to point B.
3. The pursuit of vibrancy: Today there is an expressed preference for bustling, busy, hubs of activity. How can we achieve an animated character? There are two ways to do this: move the campus to a place that is vibrant, or figure out how to create density and critical mass for multiple uses and users around the clock, on campus. What will make a person linger in a place, decide to grab a coffee, and engage a conversation? Spaces that can inspire this are spaces where learning happens and ideas flow.
4. Resurgence of placemaking: Brick and mortar campuses have as important a role as ever, even in our internet age. People used to pick a university based on access to programs, good professors, etc. Now they can get this online. Today, people choose to spend 4-6 or more years of their life in a place for reasons that go beyond accessing these things. The physical campus is a place of engagement, inspiration, and community. UVic has some of the most gorgeous open spaces and natural areas of any campus in Canada. As we develop ideas for the Campus Plan, we should consider how these spaces might be best used.
5. Mobility: In the 60's and 70's, campuses were designed with cars in mind. However, 16-34 year olds are driving 23% less than 16-34 year olds ten years ago. Looking into the future, it is possible that only those campuses that are walkable will thrive, and UVic is very walkable. Also, if increasing vibrancy is a priority, we need to consider access for round-the-clock visits.
6. Showcasing leadership: It can be hard for outsiders to engage and feel a part of a learning environment where much of the teaching and research happens out-of-sight. How can our physical campus make these activities visible from the exterior of buildings? Also, how can it demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and other values?
7. Active living: The entire campus is a learning environment that can be the central site for many aspects of its users' lives. How can the campus be designed to accommodate as many uses and users as possible, within the scope of UVic's mission?
8. Future proofing, flexible framework: The Campus Plan is not a blueprint for construction. It is a framework for decision making and understanding how we create a vision. What are our priorities? How do we guide decisions? These are all questions that need to be captured in the Campus Plan Update process.
9. Leveraging endowments: What legacy has UVic built over time to support the university's mandate? How can enhancing the quality and character of the campus better enable UVic to support that mandate?
10. Stakeholder engagement: The era of a planning firm going away, drawing something up in its office, and then coming back with a finished product is over. Campus Planning is about a conversation. UVic stakeholders have a tremendous amount of knowledge about the campus that needs to be shared. Spread the word, invite others to participate, and get excited. The broader the participation across students, faculty, staff, community members, alumni, municipalities, and transit providers, the greater the potential for UVic's campus.

In closing, Antonio encouraged the audience to consider that even the “small stuff matters.” It's not only about the big shiny new building. It's about the details that make you want to stay in a place to think, interact, read, and have a conversation. He also noted that there should be no concerns about figuring out the “how” type answers. At this stage, share the ideas. Focus on the “why” questions. Think broad, think bold, think unconstrained.

Question and Answer Period

Following the two presentations, Andrew Rowe moderated a question and answer period. Questions from the audience included:

1. How is this process really going to happen? I've looked at the website, but who is really going to write this plan?

Response: 9-month process with three stages. We are in stage one, where we ask lots of questions and write down everything we hear. In stage two, we draft the emergent themes and key ideas based on these many conversations and inputs to create a Concept Plan that will be shared with everyone. We collect feedback on the draft and revise, revise and revise. A draft will be shared in the fall, and additional input will be collected. It's an iterative process that will complete in early 2016. Dialog BC, the consulting firm, will be guiding the process, in conjunction with the Campus Planning Committee direction, but the content will always come from UVic's stakeholders. Visit www.uvic.ca/campusplanning for more information.

2. Lifelong learning is so important, but UVic is built for young people. How does the Campus Plan consider the 55+ population when it plans its facilities and programs?

Response: Universities have a huge role to play in all stages of life. Designing facilities and programs that bring older adults and community members onto campus isn't just about attracting revenue – it's about intergenerational learning and vibrancy on campus. The Campus Plan Update process seeks ideas from everyone. We have reached out to the broader communities for input. We hope that the 55+ population will participate and share their ideas about the future of the campus.

3. I am a non-resident of the university and a non-academic that lives in the community. I am also 55+. I sense that this process is about the university community and not the broader community. I've taken courses here, used the library, walked around the campus, and I find this is not a friendly place. How does the Campus Plan update address the question of integration with the community?

Response: The engagement process for the Campus Plan Update is about engaging both the on-campus and off-campus community – we'd like to hear from everyone that has an interest in this campus, for any use. And definitely, there are ways that physical design can impact a sense of integration and flow on campus. First we need to hear from everyone about what works well and what doesn't, so we can then consider ways to improve.

4. What are the University's thoughts on future residence development?

Response: There is awareness of a need for more residence spaces. As part of the Campus Plan Update, we need to debate whether it's better to disperse future residences across campus or concentrate them. We also need to consider things like walkability, vibrancy, and community. Some people have already noticed a lack of community feel within the residence spaces, so it will be important to consider how this can be improved upon. With so many students currently living off campus, it can be hard to get high levels of engagement. Increasing numbers of students living on campus can increase the community feel here.

Closing Remarks

As the time drew to a close, Dr. Rowe thanked everyone for attending, and encouraged that they bring their ideas to the **February 4th Ideas Forum**, the largest engagement event in this first phase of the Campus Plan Update process.

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CAMPUS PLAN UPDATE

Jan 28 | Speakers Event 4:30-6:00 p.m. Bob Wright Centre, B150



Dr. Eric Higgs, Professor, School of Environmental Studies

Learning matters. Ecology matters. Planning matters. Dr. Higgs will draw on his fascination with ecological design and expertise in the restoration of ecosystems to inspire ideas about campus planning at the University of Victoria. He was a member of the appointed task force in 2003 that led to a change in campus planning, and a former member of the UVic Campus Planning Committee.



Antonio Gomez-Palacio, Principal, Dialog Design

Discover how Canadian universities have reinvented their campuses every couple of generations to adapt to an evolving social context. This is happening now—some universities will seize the moment and thrive; while others will languish. The difference will be in how they recognize and capitalize upon shifts in how we learn, and how we define the places where we choose to live, work, play, and study.

Feb 4 | Ideas Forum Drop-in between 12:00-2:00 p.m. or 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Michèle Pujol Room, Student Union Building

Contribute your ideas and shape the future Campus Plan! Your ideas and insights regarding land use, open spaces, natural areas, transportation, parking and future building siting are needed.



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