

UVic Elder Academy Proposal

“Better Mental and Physical Health for Seniors Through Stimulating Educational Experiences”

Submitted by;
The UVic Retirees Association (UVRA)
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Committee:
Beverly Timmons (Chair)
Peter Liddell
David Docherty
Isobel Dawson
Victor Neufeldt
Trevor Matthews
Lois Edgar

UVic Elder Academy: Executive Summary

Mission

“Better Mental and Physical Health for Seniors Through Stimulating Educational Experiences”

Purpose

According to recent population projections, the 55+age cohort represents the most significant growth segment of the population within B. C. The 65+age group is expected to account for 68% of the population increase in Greater Victoria from now until 2038. Research into improving the quality of the life of the elder population indicates that stimulating learning activities within group settings produce both mental and physical health benefits. Engaging this segment of the population in University programs, initiatives and research would strengthen the bonds between the University and the community and engender over time both donor and government support.

This Proposal presents a plan for consideration by the University to establish, in cooperation with the UVic Retirees Association (UVRA), an Academy to focus some of its programs, research, and other initiatives on the expanding 55+age cohort. Under the auspices of the University, seniors could participate and engage in programs offering life-long learning opportunities to enhance intellectual stimulation, health and general well being.

Governance

The Academy should be administered in the context of existing on-campus Centres, using the best practices of the successful Centres. Accordingly, the suggested governance structure is a Director, an advisory board, and a management board. The Advisory Board should include members outside the University community who are engaged in organizations involved with the 55+ cohort. The Management Board would typically include University stakeholders committed to, and with a potential role in realizing the mission of the Academy. Representatives from among organizations with similar focus are also recommended here.

UVic Elder Academy : Proposal

"Better Mental and Physical Health for Seniors Through Stimulating Educational Experiences"

Purpose

The University of Victoria Retirees' Association submits this proposal, [in the spirit of the University's 2012 Strategic Plan](#), to create an Academy enabling those aged 55+ to enhance their quality of life and contribute to the University and their society.

Mission

To provide an opportunity under the auspices of the University [for those aged 55+ to participate in life-long learning opportunities](#) to enhance intellectual stimulation, health, and general well-being and to provide related research and teaching opportunities for the University.

To [engage community partners](#) by incorporating some of their course offerings. This will strengthen UVic's community ties while broadening public participation and Academy membership.

To provide research opportunities for students and faculty. New research would provide a resource for project development, knowledge mobilization, and curriculum development.

To [increase access to current ongoing research](#) in the community and on campus.

Implementation

That the University establish, in cooperation with the UVRA, an Elder Academy to focus some of its programs, research and other initiatives on the expanding 55+ age cohort. Following initial implementation, the Academy's base could then be broadened at the University's discretion to include other groups and organizations, in order to [effect the mission at the Local, Provincial and National level](#).

Rationale

As the fastest growing segment of the population, not only in the Greater Victoria Regional District but also within B.C., the 55+ age cohort represents a challenge in some respects, but a great opportunity for the University of Victoria. Current population projections show the 65+ age cohort in Greater Victoria at approximately 25% of the total population. By 2038, this age group is expected to account for 68% of the population increase in this area. Perhaps the most obvious impact would be on the health care system (42% of the 2010 Provincial Budget in 2010, it is expected soon to be driven to 50%.) The net effect will be to squeeze other segments of the Provincial Budget, notably education, since it accounts for the next largest Provincial budget allocation at 27%. Focusing more overtly on this nexus through a combination of

research and teaching is fundamental to this proposal, and we believe will significantly strengthen the University's already growing reputation in the field.

Given the [University's renewed commitment to the community](#), a further objective of the Academy proposal aims to counter negative societal implications of the anticipated rapid growth of the 55+ age group. There are clearly both mental and physical health benefits for seniors who engage in stimulating learning activities within groups with like interests (Docherty, Masterminds 2011, April 6, 2011). These are not trivial benefits. They have significant societal worth. Such a focus on this population cohort is consistent with Section 10(e) of the University Act: A university must so far and to the full extent of its resources from time to time, (e) provide a program of continuing education in all academic and cultural fields throughout British Columbia.

The Academy, with its unique focus, and the sheer range of interdisciplinary research and broader societal benefits it entails, adds a new component to the University of Victoria – well beyond the limitations of 'program[s] of continuing education'. It is not available in any single academic unit, nor, to the best of our knowledge, in any similar national institution.

Finally, the UVRA is convinced that engaging the community in University-based programs, initiatives and research would strengthen longer-term bonds and enhance both donor and Government support.

Governance

Based on proven best practices at UVic, the UVRA suggests the following model: the Academy should be administered on campus, in similar form to existing Centres, with a Director, a Management Board, and an Advisory Board.

The Director should be a member of the University community with relevant experience.

The Management Board: initially, membership might include representatives from among the following University stakeholders: Centre on Aging, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, School of Nursing, Division of Continuing Studies, School of Public Administration, Faculty of Social Science, Faculty of Business, Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Human and Social Development, Faculty of Humanities, External Relations, CanAssist, etc. Some representation from organizations whose activities and interests are focused on the 55+ age cohort is also recommended. Initially, the University of Victoria Retirees Association could serve as such a resource and then be augmented by other appropriate organization representatives, as programs and research initiatives evolve.

The Advisory Board: members of the 55+ age cohort from outside the University Community, who are involved in related organizations.

Membership: On payment of an annual fee, members of the Academy would receive up-to-date information on programs, initiatives and research projects in which they could participate. The longer-term objective of membership incentives would be to create a large cadre of effective and loyal supporters of the Academy and hence the University's academic and social mandate. Other loyalty-inducing options might be explored.

Location

For many participants and potential partner organizations, the association of the Elder Academy with the University adds unique 'cachet'. Locating most or many of the projected activities on campus is, therefore, not just a matter of central, accessible convenience, but a strong, physical reminder of the University's commitment to this demographic group. It also encourages interest in the University's other offerings and options, and would be close to units that are presently engaged in programs and research related to seniors.

A further encouragement for members of this cohort to participate is likely to be ease of access by public transit and adequate parking for private and shared transport. A highly desirable solution to these needs would be the Queenswood Property, which offers both ready access and historical ambience, and is close to the like-minded activities of Goward House, a potentially significant partner for the Academy.

Lifestyle and Instructional Formats

To be effective, educational experiences for those aged 55+ must recognize not only accessibility needs (above), but lifestyles. Different modes of presentation and scheduling will need to be considered. A recent BC report by Seniors Colleges suggested that lengthy time commitments to courses, or to those which disrupt travel plans and activity preferences are serious obstacles to enrollment by retirees. For that reason, this proposal includes offering highly informative, stimulating courses in a variety of different formats and settings: e.g. short, exploratory courses and activities, intensive workshops, institutes, interdisciplinary and joint 'town & gown' offerings by the University and community organizations, as well as lectures, tours and focused demonstrations, etc. These offerings would be designed to engage participants who may not currently wish to commit to longer sessions, such as those of Continuing Studies, but may be drawn to those programs as a result of their Academy experience.

Daytime scheduling is a likely preference, too.

Because many of the projected participants will be on fixed incomes, costs of enrollment will need to be kept as low as possible. In this spirit, indications are that many retirees themselves, and others, are interested in volunteering their services as instructors or organizers of individual events for the Elder Academy.

Community Appeal

Based on feedback from members of organizations that offer (mainly entry-level) educational opportunities and general interest programs for adults 55+ in the Victoria region, the UVic Elder Academy would be a welcome and important step up, in terms of the anticipated range and focus of single and graduated, more program-oriented short course offerings. The University's undoubted cachet is seen as an attractive 'bonus' for participants. By engaging community partners, the University can develop more in-depth offerings on popular topics which appeal to this existing audience. Introductory workshops, such as those offered during the Greater Victoria Eldercare Foundation's Embrace Aging Month, have the potential to pique interest in a particular topic and could be used to steer retirees to the University's more in-depth course offerings. The same can be said about many other potential community partners who offer a wide array of topics from health to lifestyle. [See [Appendix C](#)]

There is also the potential for the Academy to [create a 'clearing-house' for information on relevant offerings by community partners](#) that are directed towards the 55+ cohort. Currently, this information is only available piecemeal, through individual publicity sources. A further use of the "clearing house" model would be to communicate results of research on the 55+ demographic with other researchers, instructors, and the public.

Research

At UVic, not only do "teaching, research and learning intersect", but research is an integral part of student training at all levels. The membership of the Elder Academy would present opportunities for research into issues involving an older population, including [research by members of that population themselves](#).

With good reason, the UVRA anticipates that such a broad focus on community-based research would encourage a wide range of UVic Retirees (in collaboration with current faculty and students) to continue to use their own extensive knowledge, research skills and abilities beyond retirement. Intergenerational research of this calibre would, we are convinced, benefit students, faculty, Retirees and the research community at all levels.

For more examples of potential research opportunities, see [Appendix D](#).

Budget

Clearly, any innovation of this kind has budget implications beyond part-time administrative assistance, possible release-time for the director, office space, supplies and equipment, publicity, and implications for further support, particularly during startup. These are costs that we, as retirees, cannot calculate with great accuracy, but would be happy to discuss with the appropriate university personnel.

At this time we would see some significant cost benefits to the University. The intent of the Academy is to be revenue neutral with the exception of the University committing to a half time administrator and in-kind support as noted above. All members of the Academy will be charged a nominal fee in order to receive the information and be eligible to enroll in courses and programs offered by the Academy. The Academy, will be eligible to apply for government grants to support some of the programs, such as VIHA and the Eldercare Foundation. There will also be a small fee for participants to cover essential costs of courses and other initiatives of the Academy. The potential financial benefit to the University will primarily be in the form of donations and bequests generated by providing this demographic with a rich and rewarding experience they associate with the University. Some discussion has already taken place with the Development Office who see great potential in the Academy for future scholarships and donations. Any surplus funding could be directed to the establishment of bursaries and scholarships.

The UVRA recognizes the severe constraints under which the University is now operating, but is encouraged by the VP Academic's recent creation of an office tasked with oversight of interdisciplinary initiatives, by the clear indications of support from key community partners, and by the investment of time and advice provided by members of academic units on campus such as the Centre on Aging.

List of Appendices

Appendix A : Objectives from the UVic Strategic Plan 2012 with Relevance to the Elder Academy Proposal

Appendix B : Examples of Suggested Types of Educational Offerings

Appendix C : Potential Community Partners

Appendix D : Additional Potential Research Opportunities

Appendix A :

Objectives from the UVic Strategic Plan 2012 with Relevance to the Elder Academy Proposal

Objective 1: To be a diverse, welcoming learning community, with a demonstrated commitment to equity and fairness.
1d: actively promote and communicate practices of inclusion, respect, wellness, accessibility, safety and accommodation as the foundations of a healthy university community. [back to [Community](#)]

Objective 7: To recruit outstanding sessional instructors and adjuncts and recognize the integral role they play in supporting a high-quality learning environment.

Objective 9: To engage the University of Victoria Retirees Association and UVic retirees who are willing and able to make significant contributions in research, teaching and other important aspects of the life of the university and the community.

9a: engage retirees in programs and activities that meet the mandate of the university and incorporate their knowledge, skills and abilities in research, teaching, student recruitment and mentoring, learning, university development and university service.

9b: develop a program or programs that engage(s) older adults to promote the value of being mentally and physically active in retirement and to engage retirees in program delivery and outreach.

9c: provide support to retirees and the UVRA in their efforts to contribute to the mission of the university, where there is capacity within existing UVic resources. [back to [Purpose](#) | [Research](#)]

Objective 17: To enhance the sense of campus community among UVic students, staff and faculty.

17a: increase opportunities for the engagement of students, faculty and staff in intellectual, social, cultural and recreational activities both virtually and on campus.

17b: facilitate on-campus opportunities for informal gatherings of both UVic and local community members.

Objective 19: To increase opportunities for civic engagement in teaching and learning activities for all students.

19b: create opportunities for UVic students to have some significant engagement with diverse communities, locally, nationally and globally, and where academically relevant, explore the possibility of developing community activities for which students can receive credit.

Objective 21: to nurture our culture of excellence in research, scholarship and creative endeavours, enhancing UVic's local, national, and international impact and reputation as a leading, innovative, research-intensive university.

Objective 23: To enhance the societal benefit derived through mobilization of research knowledge and creative endeavours from across the disciplines.

Objective 24: To support lifelong learning by increasing continuing education opportunities for on-campus and on-line adult and part-time learners.

24b: develop expanded opportunities to deliver new and existing academic programs for lifelong learners.

24d: increase the continuing education courses, programs, and events offered by faculties and departments in collaboration with the Division of Continuing Studies. [back to: [Mission](#)]

Objective 28: To develop a framework and organizational mechanisms to support and advance civic engagement at UVic.

28c: enhance civic literacy and promote the value of civic engagement among our students, faculty and staff through our academic programs, community outreach and other activities.

Objective 29: To engage the community through programs and activities that meet the mandate of the university and the needs of the community.

29a: establish a single university entry point for community members and organizations to access UVic and for UVic faculty, staff, and students to link effectively and efficiently with the community to facilitate enhanced collaboration.

29b: engage community representatives in providing input on university-, faculty- and program-based civic engagement initiatives.

29c: promote opportunities for community engagement in UVic research and teaching activities and in programs in academic units, and build active research partnerships with individuals and groups in the community. [back to: [Mission](#) | [Rationale](#)]

Objective 30: To strengthen community access to university programs, activities, facilities, and knowledge.

30a: actively market and promote public lectures, workshops, fine and performing arts performances, and athletic programs and events to the local community.

30b: develop new means of enhancing community members' ability to participate in UVic activities via the Welcome Centre, way finding and other initiatives.

30c: encourage and support activities on campus that provide venues for community involvement and the exploration of community issues.

30d: actively promote the outreach activities of Faculties and the Division of Continuing Studies.

30e: continue to provide programming downtown and look for opportunities to increase our presence through community partnership. [back to: [Mission](#)]

Objective 31: To develop effective relationships with the diverse constituencies that makeup our regional, national or international communities.

31d: enhance the strategic use of community sponsorships to support shared goals with local and regional not-for-profit agencies in social, cultural, economic, environmental and educational fields. [back to: [Implementation](#)]

Appendix B :

Examples of Suggested Types of Educational Offerings

Short Courses (various lengths)

Travelers' language & culture/information courses; various levels. (5 weeks)
Music appreciation, incl. visits to local rehearsals or performances. (1 wk.)
Health and Aging - series of individual topics led by professionals (UVic & local), e.g. on: exercise physiology, psychology, nursing, nutrition. (2 wks.)
Care-giving - legal, medical, physical, psychological issues) (1-2 wks.)
Wines of B. C. – history, new developments, visits to local wineries. (2+ wks.)

Workshops (intensive, day-long, hands-on)

Nutrition
Food Safety
Wills and Estates
Emergency Preparedness
Easy-care gardening, planning vegetable gardens
Various topics related to computers and social media
Digital photography and editing software

Educational Trips and Tours (full, or half-day)

Heritage buildings of Victoria, presentation & walking tour, downtown Victoria
Behind the scenes visits (Phoenix Theatre, Royal B.C. Museum etc.)
Guided visits to historically or culturally important local sites and attractions
Tours and talks on gardens and gardening
Guided tours of UVic labs, w.talks on on-going projects
Bamfield Marine Station (2-3 day tour)
School of Music visit, w. a presentation on ancient musical instruments
“What’s Happening at UVic?” A day of 3-4 presentations about research in various departments
On-site intro to safe use of gym equipment
Local art gallery tours with talks by curators or docents
Birds and birding, guided observations, w. experts

Institutes (More intensive; daily classes & activities, over a 2 week period)

[Note: these topics may attract out-of-town participants]

Topic Example 1: Comparative Religions - beliefs, cultural contexts, traditions, w. lectures by UVic experts (e.g. from the Centre on Religion and Society), and discussions with representatives of various faiths, visits to places of worship.

Topic Example 2: Natural Hazards - earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunami, extreme weather, flooding, esp. as related to climate change. (Topics similar to EOS 170.) Instructors: local geographers, climatologists and meteorologists from UVic and the community (retirees or current faculty).

Topic Example 3: Introduction to Astronomy. On-campus daytime, off-campus evening instruction and observation (Physics Dept & Centre of the Universe) (to be held during Intersession?)

Appendix C :

Potential Community Partners

(This list provided by Lori McLeod, Executive Director of the Eldercare Foundation, VIHA.)

Greater Victoria Eldercare Foundation (Embrace Aging Month)
Vancouver Island Health Authority (Yakimovich Wellness Centre)
Alzheimer Society
Arthritis Society
Parkinsons & Epilepsy Association
Heart & Stroke Foundation
Multiple Sclerosis Society
Canadian Diabetes Centre
Patient Voices Network
Community Recreation Centres
Inter Cultural Association
Seniors Serving Seniors
Silver Threads
Peninsula Elder College
Vancouver Island University Elder College
North Island Elder College
Elder Hostel
Oceanside Healthy Aging Initiative
BC Healthy Communities
Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO)
Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP)

[back to : [Community](#)]

Appendix D :

Additional Potential Research Opportunities

Themes with a record of local interest and expertise might include:

Aboriginal Health
Aging
Caregiving
Chronic Disease
Classics
Cognitive Function
Communication
Cross Cultural Studies
Curriculum Development
Disability
Earth and Ocean Sciences
Economic
Education – including health education
Globalization
Health – including environmental, service, end-of-life
Informatics
Innovation
Intergenerational Relationships
Knowledge, Reasoning and Logic
Physical Activity
Quality of Life
Religion

[back to [Research](#)]