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Introduction

As part of the process to develop a new strategic plan for the University of Victoria, UVic community members were invited to engage in a conversation about the future direction of the university. This exchange of ideas took place between September 18 and October 9.

Participants were then invited to review and prioritize the thoughts of others by placing stars next to the ideas that were most important to them. This report highlights those priorities and considers areas where the thoughts expressed could inform UVic’s strategic planning process for the next five years.

The Thoughtexchange Process

Thoughtexchange provides software solutions that bring people together, build trust and make progress on important topics. People can confidentially and independently share their thoughts, appreciate other points of view and understand how their perspectives are connected to decisions.

The process ensures everyone is heard, everyone learns and important ideas emerge. The diagram on the right shows the three steps of the Thoughtexchange process. On the following pages, you will find the details of the questions asked and a summary of the findings.

For more details, please visit the Thoughtexchange: https://my.thoughtexchange.com/#194138182
Exchange Overview

Participation

1,607  3,324  87,041

Questions

Q1 Our goals: What current strengths, directions and capabilities can we build on to distinguish UVic in Canada and globally?

Q2 Our strategies: What are some key strategies and initiatives that we should pursue to achieve the goals you described in question 1?

Q3 Our challenges and opportunities: What key issues should our plan address over the next five to ten years?

Respondent Profile

Years worked at UVic

Relationship to UVic
Insights Overview

An analysis was conducted on the starring patterns of participants, which surfaced areas of priority for the UVic community. The thoughts shared by participants have been arranged into major themes across all three questions. Where required, the thoughts have been further arranged into sub-themes that highlight specific areas of interest shared by participants.

Major Themes

Seven major themes emerged in the top thoughts of participants. The following report summarizes the themes’ content, highlighting the thoughts that were highly starred by participants.

Most of the major themes contain sub-themes, and some of the top thoughts that represent the sub-themes have been cited below to illustrate the important issues that were prioritized by participants during the engagement process. The question to which that thought corresponds is also noted in brackets.

Major Themes
- Learning and Teaching
- University Environment
- Research Focus and Excellence
- Partnerships
- Facilities and Resources
- Internationalization
- Administration and People
Learning and Teaching

Participants discussed the benefits of UVic’s strong focus on experiential learning, including the co-op program. They appreciate that students are able to develop a wide range of skills through high-quality education and hands-on learning opportunities.

Participants also suggested that it would be beneficial to continue to focus on the co-op program and expand opportunities for student involvement.

Sub-Themes

**Experiential learning and co-op programs**

- “Ensure that all graduate and undergraduate students have an opportunity to participate in an experiential learning opportunity. With a competitive job market and changing workplace requirements, it’s vital that students can gain hands-on experience early.” (Question 1)

**Quality of education**

- “Further support for innovative, dynamic instruction inside and outside the classroom. This could include funding to redevelop courses, funding for upgrading classroom spaces, and opportunities to take classes into the community.” (Question 2)

**Researched-based learning and instruction**

- “Research and education are integrated in a collaborative learning community. As a research-intensive university that is not too large, we have an opportunity to balance, and integrate, research and teaching.” (Question 1)
University Environment

Participants value the diverse and inclusive culture of UVic and the university’s commitment to being a leader in environmental sustainability. Additionally, the size of the university is appreciated as it allows for close community and the ability to pursue excellence.

To continue to improve UVic’s culture, participants suggested that the university could help to facilitate collaboration between departments and disciplines. The benefits of this could include creating opportunities for innovative research and classes.

Sub-Themes

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<th>Interdisciplinary Collaboration</th>
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<tr>
<td>“UVic is well-sized to develop strong, effective and successful cross-discipline collaborations, research, and teaching efforts. Increasingly, good approaches and solutions to important open problems span a multiplicity of disciplines and perspectives.” (Question 1)</td>
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<table>
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<th>Environmental Sustainability</th>
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<td>“Students could be engaged in actually making UVic more environmentally positive/green/engaged with the local community in so many faculties. Designing buildings using solar panels, creating greenhouses for food, herb gardens, exchanges with local schools.” (Question 2)</td>
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<td>“UVic values diversity and inclusivity for students, faculty, staff and visitors, and that makes me proud to work here. An open, welcoming inclusive environment helps to attract and retain great people.” (Question 1)</td>
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<th>University Culture and Atmosphere</th>
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<td>“Maintaining academic integrity, free speech, and critical thinking. These should be at the foundation of a university existing in a complex world.” (Question 3)</td>
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Research Focus and Excellence

Participants appreciate that UVic has a strong background in research and provides research opportunities for students in both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Participants recommended that the university continue to invest in research to ensure that necessary resources and funding are available to support innovation in new and existing subject areas.

By pursuing research excellence and focus (eg. environment and climate), participants hope the university will increase its reputation in Canada and internationally which could help to attract talented faculty and graduate students.

- **Continue to make bringing in funding for research a top priority.** Without stable and sufficient funding, we will not be able to properly contribute to pushing out the edge of human understanding. (Question 1)
- **Actively foster awareness of UVic’s research productivity and impact (at UVic, in BC, at Tri-Councils, in Canada, internationally).** This is as important as advertising the UVic Edge. (Question 3)

Partnerships

This theme contains two distinct conversations. Participants recognize UVic’s efforts to prioritize its relationship with Indigenous peoples and suggested that the university could continue to build on this and become a leader in partnering with Indigenous peoples. In regard to strategic partnerships and engagement, participants urged the university to strengthen its relationships with local and international industry partners to create employment and research opportunities for students and faculty.

Sub-Themes

- **Community Engagement and Industry Partnerships**
  - “Actively develop strategic partnerships and connections with universities and companies across Canada to ensure that UVic stays ranked in the top 15 among Canadian universities and improves in the world ranking.” (Question 2)

- **Indigenous Themes**
  - “The commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation call to action is significant and I hope it results in more effective support for Indigenous students.” (Question 1)
Facilities and Resources

Participants advocated for more student housing to help mitigate the increasing rental costs in surrounding areas. Participants discussed a variety of topics related to ensuring that the university’s plans are financially sustainable, including diversifying funding sources and embarking on a major fundraising campaign.

Sub-Themes

**Student Housing**

- “Expand residences for upper-year students to allow them more housing stability in an increasingly expensive market. Upper-year students who want to live on campus would benefit hugely from more housing and housing specific to upper-year students.” (Question 1)

**Financial Stability**

- “Recognize, encourage, track and reward innovation. Innovation is critical at all levels to mitigate UVic’s risk of financial sustainability.” (Question 2)

Internationalization

Participants discussed the ways that internationalization could advance the university’s reputation and ability to attract outstanding faculty and graduate students from around the world. UVic could potentially increase internationalization by expanding opportunities for international students to attend the university and offering current students the opportunity to study internationally.

To increase its international presence, UVic could pursue international partnerships and collaborative research opportunities, and recruit internationally for faculty positions.

**Internationalization**

- “UVic should embrace internationalization more. This means taking in students from around the world, but also sending our own students out. Such activities can only enhance UVic's reputation. Cultural acumen should be a priority for our students.” (Question 1)

- “Strongly encourage, facilitate and reward collaboration with other researchers internationally. To be at the forefront of research in any field, we need to be present and shine in the international limelight.” (Question 2)
Administration and People

Participants emphasized that it is important for the university to recruit and retain high-quality faculty, graduate students and staff.

To retain talent, participants suggested that the university increase financial support for faculty and students through increased funding, compensation, and scholarships. Other types of support that were suggested include offering professional development opportunities and encouraging a healthy work-life balance for faculty.

Participants shared different ways that leadership could become more accessible and responsive in order to facilitate stronger engagement with other departments and stakeholders in the university.

Sub-Themes

Supporting Student Success

- “Supporting graduate students. We need realistic funding, meaningful support of applying for federal fundings (e.g. SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR, Vanier), PD beyond the classroom." (Question 2)

Recruitment and Admissions

- “Focus on excellence - aspire to be the best mid-sized university in Canada. ‘Good’ universities are available across the country. We need a reputation for being the best to attract the best students, faculty and staff.” (Question 1)

Employee Support

- “Recruitment and retention. We are going to lose our best people if we don't pay, promote, and reward them properly. This doesn't mean everyone; it has to be based on a plan.” (Question 3)

Leadership

- “Ensure that the full university is focused on maximizing our ability to pursue and advance UVic’s research and teaching impacts and end goals. Offloading administrative work onto faculty and support staff to simplify administrative efforts does not aid improving UVic global rankings.” (Question 3)