COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP UNIT
OPERATIONAL PLAN

MAY 13, 2014

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This document represents an operational or tactical approach toward building an institutional culture of Community Engagement (CE) at UBC. This is not the CE strategy, rather an initial approach on how to get to a long-term, evolving strategy for CE at UBC. While the contents of this document are based on numerous conversations, they are limited in that they reflect a largely internal view from UBC communities. The process of co-creating a CE strategy with both external and internal communities is a critical component of this plan.

INTRODUCTION

The Operational Plan will guide the work of the Community Partnership (CP) Unit over the next year. It is based on a CE Concept Paper that presents a tone and approach for the development of a strategy to support UBC's commitment to CE. The Concept Paper outlines the need for a CE strategy, the role of the CP Unit, terminology and scope and considerations when developing a strategy. The paper presents the imperative for CE as a core commitment at UBC.

The Operational Plan takes these early concepts and moves them into action. The "Plan on a Page" (page 5) visualizes the logic behind this approach.

The Operational Plan connects with the Community Engagement office (UBC Okanagan) so that an evolving CE approach is system-wide while respecting the unique nature of each campus.

> *From the Community Engagement Concept Paper*
>
> **Community** refers to external communities including but not limited to non-governmental organizations and other community groups, marginalized communities, governments at all levels, Aboriginal communities, schools and educational institutions, neighbourhoods, campus residents, alumni, local and global companies, and individual community members. UBC also has special relationships with the provincial government, local cities, and with the Aboriginal communities upon whose traditional territories the Vancouver and the Okanagan campuses are located.
>
> **Engagement** refers to a continuum of valuable activities, from outreach to partnership, that occur in community-university engagement. The scope of engagement remains broad to respect many forms of engaging, and recognizes that within and across disciplines there will be differences in defining effective scholarly CE.

At UBC, many people and units understand and embrace the value of CE as an approach to enrich research, student learning and UBC's other commitment areas. The CP Unit is not working in isolation. The activities herein complement, enable and build upon CE work already occurring across both campuses, including the other commitment areas and CE portfolio actions in *Place and Promise*.

In addition to building on and complementing current and innovative CE work, the intent behind the Operational Plan is to be proactive and strategically influential so that UBC both continues what is done well but is also challenged to do better.

> *CP Unit VISION:* An institutional culture of CE at UBC where CE is supported, purposeful, understood and recognized; engaging with communities is authentic and respectful of the contributions and expertise of all.

CONTEXT FOR THE CP UNIT OPERATIONAL PLAN

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

As suggested in the [Concept Paper,](#) the longer-term aim of a CE strategic plan will be to not only celebrate, share and support CE activities, but also to ingrain CE into the culture, policies, and priorities of the institution. Two strategic objectives, both larger than the mandate of the CP Unit alone, are identified as critical to move toward this longer-term aim. The strategic objectives are based on analysis of experiences from other universities, literature and conversations to date. While they may be revisited or expanded upon, objectives are used here as a foundation for the CP Unit Operational Plan. They are not objectives for the CE strategy (to be developed collaboratively).

1. UBC generates and sustains principled CE. As an institution that values excellence, having 'more' connections with communities is not enough. UBC and local, national and international partners will benefit from CE work that is highly principled, rigorous and thoughtful. A commitment to CE can hold all of UBC accountable to a principled approach to *how* we engage.

2. CE is valued and supported. That value is clearly communicated / substantiated by leaders. Executive, Deans, Directors, Department Heads, etc. who value CE will find ways to support community-engaged work through, for example, allocation of time, course credit, funding, and recognition. When CE is valued and supported by campus leaders, it will spur the growth of programs, courses and engagement opportunities for faculty, staff and students. Leadership is especially critical for recruitment and retention of faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students that value CE.

LEVERAGE POINTS

There are ways that the CP Unit can influence or contribute to the above strategic objectives, defined as leverage points below (Figure 1). These are areas the CP Unit can work on to influence institutional change, further the curation of the CE strategy and complement existing initiatives. Leverage points will be revisited as the work progresses.

Figure 1 Leverage points and strategic objectives that guide the CP Unit's Operational Plan
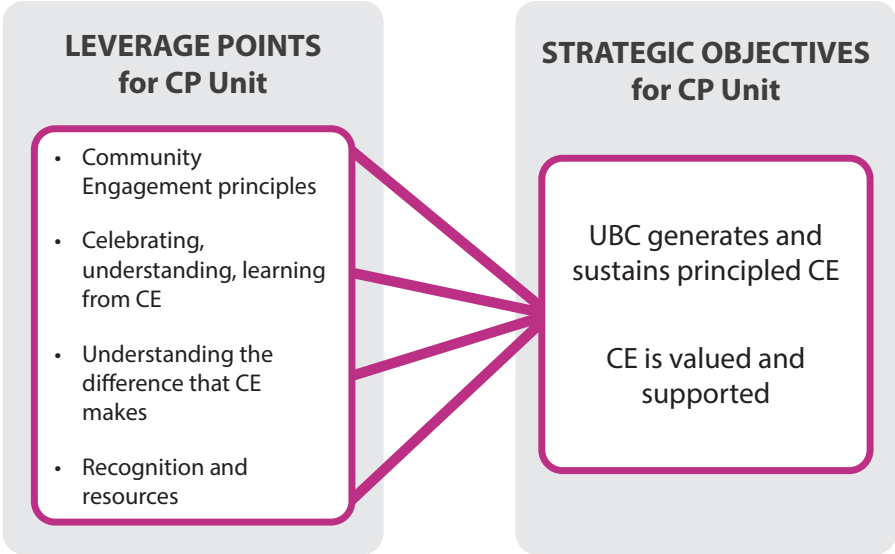
Community engagement principles

As a part of curating an overall CE strategy, beginning with principles can create connections between initiatives of disparate backgrounds. They bring people together and provide a shared conversation topic. Beyond the utility of principles as a topic for engagement, principles and related processes for understanding CE can increase the rigor and quality of community engagement. They are decision-making tools. Principles act as a foundation for the development of CE vision, goals, objectives, and activities; articulated principles begin to shape metrics, story-sharing, and recognition of CE work. Principles will be developed collaboratively with internal and external communities.

Celebrating, understanding and learning from CE

The idea of doing an "inventory" of CE comes up a lot, but doing this in a thoughtful and purposeful way is important. Enabling the sharing of community engagement examples begins to build a culture of CE at UBC in several ways. Examples of CE serve as both communication devices and learning tools. Content shared in examples can demonstrate the value of CE, show community impact, boost recognition for this type of work and help connect people with overlapping interests. This is more than sharing of stories; it can lead to assessing what works, learning from mistakes, sharing of resources and networking.

Understanding the difference that CE makes

To know and communicate the value of CE, it is desirable to develop an evidence-base that substantiates impacts for both communities and universities through measurable outcomes. This is complicated in an area where attribution and measuring outcomes can be challenging. Currently, CE practitioners and programs are collecting metrics and grant-funded researchers are tracking relevant data. There is no framework or plan for tracking CE activities across UBC. Determining how to do this in a meaningful way is a priority. One of the most significant voices of evaluation around CE work comes from communities themselves; finding ways to assess community experience will be an important part of this process.

Recognition and Resources

Awards and funding come up frequently as an area where the University might influence/affect change. CE funding and awards for community-engaged work are currently limited and allocated unevenly across the university. Examples to learn from include past work to increase the value of quality teaching and learning experiences such as the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund and the Killam Teaching Award.
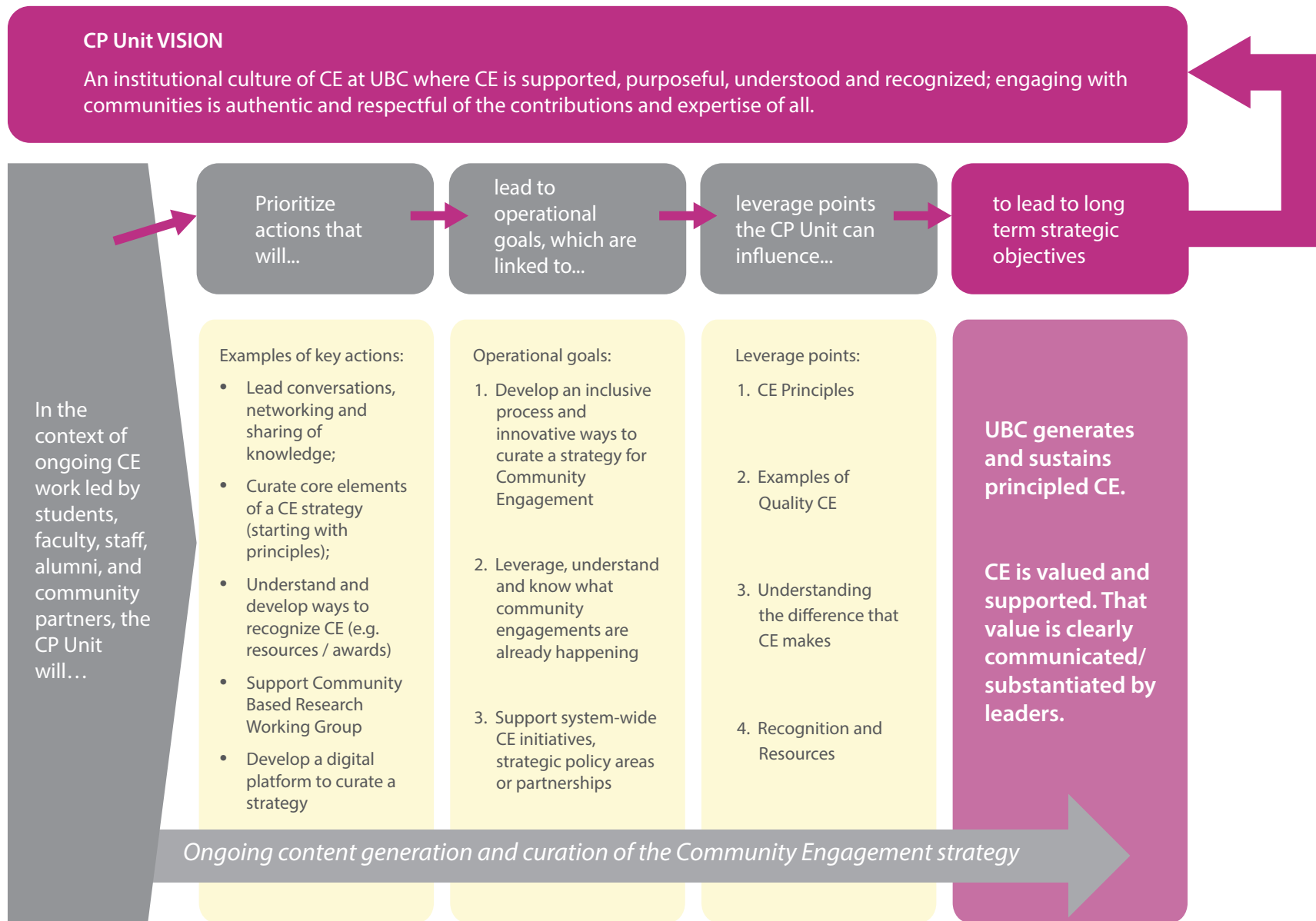
Tenure and promotion is raised in almost every conversation about CE at UBC. While this is not within the mandate of the CP Unit, increased understanding and awareness of CE as a part of scholarly work can contribute to the tenure and promotion dialogue.

OPERATIONAL GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Keeping in mind the "leverage points" identified above, three operational goals will guide key short-term activities of the CP Unit. Figure 2 brings together operational goals and key actions to support goals over the next year. See the Plan on a Page for the full picture.

Figure 2: CP Unit Operational Goals, Activity Areas and Examples of Key Priority Actions

Operational Goals *Action areas*	1. **Develop an inclusive process and innovative ways to curate a strategy for Community Engagement** 2. **Leverage, understand and know what community engagements are already happening** 3. **Support system-wide CE initiatives, strategic policy areas or partnerships**
Strategic Analysis and Planning	(Ongoing) Actively participate on and support CBR Working Group initiatives (i.e., ethics, promotion & tenure); Asian Canadian Community Engagement initiative; others as raised (Aug 2014) Identify proposed core elements of a CE strategy (Sept 2014) Strategic partnership and/or policy analysis (e.g., UBC and K-12, GenSqueeze) (Jan 2015) Develop metrics for the annual report (Jan 2015) Propose approach to CE award / recognition (May 2015) Develop an approach to measure the difference that CE can make (Ongoing) Input and analyze feedback from meetings/engagement activities to inform plan
Collaboration and Engagement	(Jun 2014) Finalize an external engagement plan (Ongoing) Lead sessions to engage students, faculty, staff and community partners and collect ideas about core elements of a CE strategy (starting with principles) (Apr 2014 and ongoing) Collaboratively begin to identify examples of 'principled CE work' (Aug 2014) Confirm an external steering committee to contribute to CE strategy curation (Sep 2014) Coordinate networking/knowledge sharing events (e.g., brown bag lunches)
Technology Digital Engagement	(Ongoing) Collaborate on a digital solution to share stories and examples of CE (Ongoing) Maintain the online timeline of CP Unit work to transparently share process (May 2014) Develop and test approaches for curating components of a CE strategy online (May 2014) Soft launch interim web site and newsletter (Jul 2014) Finalize research and analysis on digital engagement (Nov 2014) Launch of comprehensive CE website (including resources, networking tools, and space to curate a CE strategy) (Jan 2015) Promote CE through social media, digital signage and event promotion

PLAN ON A PAGE

CP Unit VISION

An institutional culture of CE at UBC where CE is supported, purposeful, understood and recognized; engaging with communities is authentic and respectful of the contributions and expertise of all.

In the context of ongoing CE work led by students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners, the CP Unit will…

Prioritize actions that will…	lead to operational goals, which are linked to…	leverage points the CP Unit can influence…	to lead to long term strategic objectives
Examples of key actions:	**Operational goals:**	**Leverage points:**	**UBC generates and sustains principled CE.**
• Lead conversations, networking and sharing of knowledge;	1. Develop an inclusive process and innovative ways to curate a strategy for Community Engagement	1. CE Principles	
• Curate core elements of a CE strategy (starting with principles);		2. Examples of Quality CE	**CE is valued and supported. That value is clearly communicated/ substantiated by leaders.**
• Understand and develop ways to recognize CE (e.g. resources / awards)	2. Leverage, understand and know what community engagements are already happening	3. Understanding the difference that CE makes	
• Support Community Based Research Working Group	3. Support system-wide CE initiatives, strategic policy areas or partnerships	4. Recognition and Resources	
• Develop a digital platform to curate a strategy			

Ongoing content generation and curation of the Community Engagement strategy

CONCLUSION

UBC's commitment to Community Engagement is both a reflection of the University's intent to work with communities to contribute to a civil and sustainable society and a strategic way forward for a top tier research university in challenging times. Over time, as an institutional culture of engagement grows, community engagement will be increasingly valued and recognized for its contributions to both society and scholarship.

CE is extremely diverse and viewed or positioned differently across faculties. A university-level strategic plan for CE has the opportunity to build connections, support existing work, and establish common ground and a shared horizon for CE. For a strategic plan to have any impact at all, it will be collectively created in a way that reflects the values of CE by including faculty, students and staff and external communities. Such a process can build trust, respect, legitimacy and support. The process of building a strategy is a core component of the strategy itself.

This CP Unit Operational Plan represents part of continued work to build a CE strategy for UBC. Because of the complexity of this area and the fact that CE is led and shaped organically by community partners, faculty, students, staff, alumni, etc. and *not* by the central unit mandated to develop a strategy for CE, presenting an account of the CP Unit's activities is the next best step in building a strategy based on trust and transparency.

The Operational Plan helps to move to action, but is still flexible and open to change. Community Engagement involves significant time, listening, learning and building relationships, while leaving space for feedback/change throughout – especially for innovative/uncharted directions. In this way, the Operational Plan is shaped and shared in the spirit of transparency, realism, modesty, collaboration and responsiveness. We invite [conversation](#) about any of the concepts or activities shared in the plan.