

## Appendix:

### Global and National Issues and Opportunities

Positioning VIU to address the future will require the recognition of global issues and opportunities, as they impact regional social, economic, and environmental conditions.

Attracting international students to regional campuses remains a key opportunity. Partnerships with local school districts can help to attract international students to local communities.

The role of education in the replacement of the labour force will be a major challenge. Education must respond proactively to changing demographics, emerging technologies, and evolving industries and services.

In order to compete successfully on the world stage and meet domestic labor demands, Canadian universities will need to attract more adult learners, graduate students, and students from less-advantaged economic backgrounds.

The quality of life and opportunity in Canada's Aboriginal communities is a preeminent concern for VIU. The provision of educational opportunities, the development of educational programs and the planning and delivery of health and human services are chief among issues demanding immediate attention.

Additional prominent global and national challenges of the future are:

- Climate change
- Freshwater shortages
- Global migration
- The health of oceans

Additional global and national Issues directly manifested in the local region include:

- Coastal pollution
- Food security
- Human settlement patterns
- Support for Aboriginal communities
- Sustainable industrial processes

These and other issues are implicitly recognized in the VIU Vision Statement. They present strategic opportunities for ongoing leadership in teaching, learning, research, and knowledge transfer activities relevant, not only to Vancouver Island and Coastal British Columbia, but also to national and international communities facing similar challenges.

## Regional Issues and Opportunities

The following comments were gathered in spring 2010 during six consultations with groups representing the Cowichan, Parksville/Qualicum, Oceanside/Deep Bay, Powell River, Port Alberni and Ucluelet/Tofino communities. Many of the concepts and ideas brought forward in 2010 formed the foundation of the Vancouver Island University Vision Statement.

Comments from the public discussions have been organized into categories by topic. These comments should not be viewed as comprehensive, but they do address general perception, common themes, and regional issues and opportunities.

They are presented here in order to capture a general picture of the public's understanding of the issues facing the delivery of higher education in Vancouver Island and coastal BC communities.

### The Region in Transition

- The population in the catchment area served by VIU is approaching 260,000, with 300,000 or more expected by 2020.
- Communities in the region are socially complex; many communities that were traditionally isolated and insular are experiencing an influx of people of diverse backgrounds and experience, who have chosen to relocate because of the quality of life, the cost of living, and proximity to the natural environment.
- These people bring an awareness of provincial, national and international trends and issues, as well as expectations of progressive economic and community development.
- Increased strength and capacity of First Nations communities in economic and social development creates new possibilities to form educational partnerships.
- Past Island and Coastal culture has depended on conventional resource extraction economies, whereas the future will require redesigned resource economies that include diversified knowledge-intensive industries and services.
- There is growing public awareness of the uniqueness and fragility of Vancouver Island's ecosystems and their limited carrying capacity and a growing need for informed leadership in the public dialogue concerning ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability.
- In anticipation of a gradual transition to regional sustainable prosperity, VIU should provide adaptive thinking and design new approaches, products, and processes; the region needs a hundred year vision of regional sustainability; and

- Major themes involved in the development of environmental, cultural, social and economic sustainability for regional communities include:
  - Aboriginal communities;
  - The Transition Town Initiative;
  - Developing a trained workforce;
  - Creating jobs for young adults;
  - Developing a knowledge-based economy;
  - Integrating emerging technologies;
  - Understanding regional demographic changes;
  - Identifying future health and human services;
  - Understanding the impact of an aging population;
  - Monitoring the impact of global changes on the region;
  - Monitoring the condition of the natural environment;
  - Determining regional effects of climate change;
  - Enabling the transition from fossil fuel dependence;
  - Encouraging terrestrial and aquatic agriculture and food security;
  - Promoting tourism and recreation;
  - Guiding urban and rural development; and
  - Redesigning traditional resource-based industries.

#### **Geographic Realities**

- The complex geography of the region presents serious challenges in terms of physical communication, face to face program delivery and the distribution of services to regional communities.
- Originally, the institutional region responded to School District boundaries, but this definition has evolved over time. The service area must now be reinterpreted as anywhere VIU programs are delivered face to face or accessed virtually; and students are drawn from all over the world.
- Political boundaries have isolated some First Nations, and VIU has provided access to education by delivery on site to the communities.
- Powell River and the central mainland coast have traditionally been closely affiliated with the east coast of central Vancouver Island due the deterrents of topographical barriers on the mainland and the opportunities presented by communications links to Vancouver Island.
- The Nanaimo campus remains the hub of VIU regional operations, VIU faculty and VIU campus services based in Nanaimo must provide support for activities occurring throughout the region.
- Remoteness is a reality of living in the region, but the long-term social and cultural health of coastal communities depends on access to educational programs available to those communities.

- A key challenge in the future will be to let the east (developed) side of the Island support the west (relatively undeveloped) side's numerous education and research opportunities; and
- Notwithstanding geography and isolation, communications and technology now make it possible to connect the region to any location, and any location within the region to any other in the region.

### **Social Realities**

- Public expectations have changed radically; the public expects access to information, to culture, and to educational opportunities regardless of the geographic setting and/or degree of isolation. Communities which were traditionally isolated are now connected. The potential exists for learning to be available to anyone, anywhere.
- The population of the region is aging; many workers are retiring, and there must be strategies to replace the workforce and address the needs of this intellectually active population.
- Without a well-educated workforce, communities are unlikely to develop successful economies.
- The community expects VIU to focus on traditional employment needs and also uncover new opportunities for economic development and employment.
- In order to make returning to the regional communities a viable option for young people, education and training must be relevant to the needs of the regional communities.
- The education infrastructure should provide timely opportunities for people of all ages and all employment situations to take courses that respond to labour market conditions.
- Many communities on Vancouver Island and coastal BC rank very low by most measures of social development.
- Parents frequently cannot afford to send their children out of the community to university, and some students are reluctant to leave the community to access higher education programs.
- Many students may not go on to post-secondary programs, either due to inability to compete, attachment to the community, or lack of ability to navigate the academic, domestic and financial challenges involved with higher education.
- Many students seek advanced vocational training that will equip them to find work in their community.

- Others use the educational process to gain experience beyond the community; however, for many students, moving from a small community to Nanaimo or further afield is a serious challenge that requires transitional strategies, programs, and financial assistance.
- There is an expectation that VIU should act as an intellectual and cultural driver, and provide not only conventional education, but also innovative approaches, provocative ideas, critical thinking, and heightened community awareness and citizenship.
- The goal should be to provide leadership in the development of vibrant communities, ensuring a sustainable economic base and the development of a richer regional culture; and
- Regional communities expect that VIU will:
  - Envision the region in 2030 and define its ongoing role throughout the transitional period;
  - Be unthreatening and accessible to all members of the community;
  - Provide proactive responses to the diverse needs of future students;
  - Keep pace with evolving industrial processes and information and communications technologies;
  - Implement transparent processes that demonstrate publicly funded education is truly beneficial to local communities.
  - Provide leadership in ongoing dialogues on community and regional conditions, services, and development.
  - Address social justice issues through education and community-engaged activities; and
  - Provide a place for discussion of controversial topics of community interest.

### **Aboriginal Communities**

- A significant increase in Aboriginal self-governance and related economic activity will be an ongoing reality in Canadian society. Education is a catalyst for these changes and a priority for Aboriginal communities.
- Aboriginal communities are the traditional founding members of existing regional communities; many regional communities include significant numbers of Aboriginal members.
- Aboriginal communities have the largest proportion of young people and young adults of any demographic group in Canada.
- Aboriginal service agencies involving child protection and social services planning already exist to inform VIU's strategic initiatives. Additional significant opportunities for educational and institutional leadership by VIU

are presented by the Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance by First Nations, that will make BC First Nations the first in Canada to take over health service delivery from the federal government. BC has already created a province-wide Aboriginal Health Authority, which will involve a two-year process of development and implementation.

- Aboriginal communities need special programs with dedicated focus to address community issues including:
  - Employment opportunities;
  - Cultural restoration;
  - Language and governance;
  - Traditional holistic approach to education; and
  - Many types of social disadvantage.
- The concept of an Aboriginal advisory committee is evolving. New structures based on equality and trust are required. Hwulmuxw Mustimuxw Siiem provides a new method for increased collaboration with regional Aboriginal communities.
- Aboriginal communities seek inclusion as full partners in education with formal recognition of their traditional ways of learning and knowing and participation in non-paternal partner relationships.
- Many Aboriginal communities experience double-digit unemployment rates when nearby non-Aboriginal communities experience much higher employment rates.
- Aboriginal students may offer the best way of replenishing the existing workforce; they are willing to be trained, but need access to training.
- Many Aboriginal students do not want to leave their communities to seek higher education as they have families and support networks in place and program funding does not cover relocation costs for education.
- Some existing Aboriginal education program schedules do not match funding allocation processes. For instance, most of Aboriginal bridging programs are 10 months long, but students only receive funding for 8 months.
- Aboriginal students are frequently slotted into categories that do not reflect their educational needs and choices.
- Aboriginal students would benefit from summer introductory programs which teach them which courses to take for which educational and vocational streams.

- Many Aboriginal young people require basic skills and assistance at navigating the education system; orientation processes require qualified instructors; and
- Aboriginal students need access to program descriptions and enrolment information and counseling for personal goal setting.

### Education Delivery Context

- High school completion rates in the catchment area are below the provincial average. In 2011, 29.2% of students in the region failed to graduate, versus the provincial average of 24.4%. The proportion of the population over 20 with a university education is 12.4% vs. a provincial average of 17.6%.
- VIU should define a clear role as a partner in regional educational delivery. Program access and distribution will be paramount, and program delivery options and modalities must be flexible and competitive.
- Public education partners include School Districts, North Island College, Camosun College, Capilano University, Royal Roads University and the University of Victoria.
- In addition, there are numerous Aboriginal education partners, such as the Chemainus Native College, and non-Aboriginal service providers, such as private sector educational services, the Justice Institute of BC, and the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences.
- There is an expectation that educational partners will work collaboratively throughout the region optimizing opportunities for regional students to move easily through elementary and secondary schools into the post-secondary system, avoiding costly duplication of services and creating a defined role for the partners, who could provide specific programs in specific locations; and
- Private schools are also part of the regional educational infrastructure. These schools frequently benefit from extensive market driven research and advertising and are able to provide timely responses to community needs.

**Economic Development and Industry Partnerships**

- The role of a liberal arts education with associated skills in critical thinking, collaborative learning, and community engagement should continue to be a central focus for VIU as it prepares an educated workforce.
- Many openings for skilled workers will occur over the next 10 years due to retirement, attrition and newly created jobs. An estimated 40% of these jobs will be in trades and technology. Post-secondary institutions must be prepared to train and/or retrain an increasing percentage of the population required to fill the skilled job openings requiring workers in the future.
- Although resource industries are the traditional economic drivers of the region, the service sector now employs the largest sector of the labour force, with education and public services employing approximately 25%, business and professional services employing approximately 9%, and wholesale and retail services employing 14%.
- The future of Vancouver Island and coastal BC will include a diversified economy requiring expertise in health and human services, advanced technology, food production, health, energy and resource management, tourism and recreation, knowledge-based services, including innovation in forestry, and expertise in genomic sciences, green energy, biomass technology, and carbon credit initiatives.
- There is an opportunity to utilize regional campuses as business incubators in conjunction with industry partners. There are major opportunities to develop innovative business leaders locally, nationally, and internationally in areas such as aquaculture, resources management, and tourism and recreation.
- VIU should motivate students to enter the local business and retail industry. Students need to know what employers require for entry-level positions and beyond and employers need to know what to look for in prospective students.
- The education system must demonstrate to emerging industries that transferable skills exist in the community. Local contact with VIU should be a stepping stone for entry-level jobs immediately after graduation as well as for continued professional development.
- Regional communities present many opportunities for applied and action research; VIU should collaborate with communities to identify what research would be valuable.
- VIU could develop a network of leading edge Field Stations providing living laboratories for regional research and the development of sustainable

industries and creating opportunities for partnerships with other educational and research organizations.

- Knowledge transfer activities should draw the community together with VIU as the connector. What is needed is an integrated approach to research that addresses core issues and achieves a critical mass that attracts major partners, collaborative operations and funding.
- There is an expectation that VIU should produce leading edge thinkers who can speak in-depth on relevant regional issues such as rural and urban development, forestry, agriculture, aquaculture, watersheds, etc.; and
- Vancouver Island acts as a portal attracting international talent and Investment in SME in the region.

#### **Program Delivery Issues and Opportunities**

- VIU program delivery opportunities are vastly enhanced by evolving technology and communications capacities. These developments logically imply the use of diverse program distribution methodologies, including blended learning models and online engagement via remote access.
- The VIU Academic Plan states that its priorities apply to all VIU locations:
  - Programs in adult basic education, certificates, diplomas, degree programs, trades and applied technologies may be offered wherever viable delivery is possible
  - Programs may be delivered from any location in the region to any location in the region
  - Programs may also be delivered from any location in the region to provincial, national and international locations outside the region
- The public expects multiple opportunities for access to higher education, including programs in developmental education, programs that ladder into credential programs, and transfer opportunities.
- Scheduling and operation of programs would optimally address the actual workplace and social conditions of the student, not be based on rigid schedules that result in inaccessible programs and/or underutilized facilities.
- Many communities present huge challenges in terms of the institutional leadership required to allocate required support resources and to develop and provide educational services.
- Programs must be relevant to community issues; curricula should be woven through with social economic realities as opposed to what is purely

theoretical; community interaction and sustainability is inherently related to interdisciplinary concepts and interdisciplinary program delivery.

- Learning for learning sake offers new possibilities for the development of an extended VIU community.
- Professional certifications are needed by all ages in all areas; lack of local training in specific skills or certification has been a great barrier to high school graduates entering the labour force in regional communities.
- Programs are needed that transition out of the university experience, providing co-operative program experience, exploring career development, and job finding, etc. Practicing journeymen in many communities would benefit from programs that offer incentives to take on apprentices.
- The introduction of new teaching methodologies, program distribution modes, and research initiatives must occur within the framework of institutional Collective Agreements.

#### **Institutional Investment and Social Capital**

- VIU has provided capital funding and operational funding to support regional campus operations. It must develop viable strategic plans for program delivery to optimize, build upon and protect these investments.
- VIU has amassed considerable social capital through its past achievements and has raised public expectations through engagement with local communities. The University must now come forward with responsive and engaging plans describing its future involvement with each community.
- The VIU mandate to make teaching and research accessible and relevant to regional communities implies a greater degree of collaboration internally in the areas of service, instruction and scholarship.

## Specific Local Issues and Opportunities

### Bowser-Deep Bay

- The Deep Bay Marine Field Station has potential to be a significant research facility. It has been constructed with leading edge sustainable building practices. It offers outstanding potential as a research and demonstration facility and academic and community programs that could involve numerous partnerships and showcase VIU knowledge transfer activities relating to regional resources and sustainability issues.
- The current operation is based on a cost recovery operation model which is dependent on:
  - External funding availability; and
  - Recruitment and retention of key personnel.
- The location and setting, including a diverse range of ecological zones and environmental conditions, in combination with teaching and research space and activity, would allow VIU to provide teaching and research programs, promote community interaction, and support programs with a focus on genomics, aquaculture, and marine sciences.
- Academic and community-based research programs with a Marine Science focus, coordinated from this site, could attract other institutional, government and industry partners and play a highly relevant and visible leadership role throughout the entire VIU Region.
- An ambitious strategic initiative is required to secure the Station's future as a base for collaborative partnerships with educational partners, industry, and government; and
- Implementation strategies are described in the Deep Bay Marine Field Station 5-year Business Plan (October 2011).

### Cowichan

- The Cowichan Campus serves the Cowichan Valley, which has a population of approximately 80,000 people; as such, it can be seen as somewhat analogous to North Island College in the Comox Valley, which has a similar population.
- A wider range of program offerings can be justified in such a setting, including university transfer programs, laddering opportunities, and trades and applied technology programs.
- Cowichan is the logical site for VIU teaching and research programs in food production activity due to the history and presence of a developed agriculture industry in the Cowichan valley.

- Unique to the Cowichan region is the significant and growing (10%) Aboriginal population, 50% of which is under 25 years of age; and
- Completion of the new Cowichan Campus in 2011, a highly visible, state of the art teaching facility and prominent community resource has increased institutional capacity and public involvement with the resulting expectation of expanded programs and full facility utilization.

### **GR Paine Horticultural Training Centre**

- Although the Paine Centre is currently the site for VIU horticulture field station facilities, it is not functionally ideal for a long-term, successful horticulture program. It involves a number of encumbrances, chief among them being an Agricultural Land Reserve designation, poor soil quality and a deficiency in the quality of the ground water.
- The site is strategically located adjacent to the City of Nanaimo and may be suitable for a future model sustainable housing development; and
- Such development could contribute significantly to a VIU endowment fund.

### **Milner Gardens and Woodland**

- Supported by approximately 2000 Milner Society members, with thousands of visitors a year and numerous programs for prospective students and their families, Milner Gardens and Woodland is an invaluable community interface and public relations mechanism for VIU.
- With 70 acres, established facilities, and an accompanying endowment, Milner Gardens and Woodland comprises a major capital asset for VIU and forms the largest VIU presence in the Oceanside region.
- The Milner Gardens and Woodland site currently lacks an academic and/or research mandate; it needs to develop academic and applied learning programs to become established as a fully utilized academic and teaching resource for VIU.
- The location and setting, in combination with teaching and research space and activity, would allow VIU to promote regional community interaction and support programs that focus on horticulture, tourism, forestry, agriculture, and rural and urban interfaces.
- A critical financial situation exists for Milner Gardens and Woodland, because endowment capital is being used to supplement operating expenses to the extent that, within 8 years, the endowment could disappear. At the same time, the site requires significant ongoing and deferred maintenance due to its size and age.

### Parksville-Qualicum

- The Parksville-Qualicum area has the highest proportion in Canada of people fifty-five years of age and over, and a general community interest in issues involved with aging.
- The Parksville-Qualicum area has a corresponding proportion of health services, dental clinics and long-term care facilities, all of which provide employment opportunities for suitably trained staff.
- The area also has an employment focus in the hospitality and tourism industry.
- Although the existing VIU facility, (part of the Parksville Civic and Technology Centre) is underutilized, it is not large enough to support a wide range of programs; it is more suitable for specific niche program offerings, such as a Centre for Healthy Aging and related upgrading and research activities.
- Potential partnerships with the Nanoose and Qualicum First Nations should be further explored.
- Since 2002, there have been few Foundation/Development activities in the community. Previously, a campus foundation committee existed and directly fundraised to support learners and activities at the PQ Centre.

### Powell River

- Powell River is a small community in a relatively isolated location; as such it is typical of many communities of Vancouver Island and coastal BC. Typically, such communities have had limited contact with the delivery of higher education. The Powell River campus can be interpreted as a laboratory for integrating higher education and research into a small scale regional community.
- The community has a stable population of approximately 20,000 and its economy is transitioning from a resource base to a diversified service and information-driven model. Technology-enhanced learning with attendant infrastructure and support resources will be critical in this transition.
- The community is adjacent to an extensive hinterland to the east, north and south; the region includes a First Nations community nearing treaty settlement; social conditions, resource development activity, and environmental conditions offer unique opportunities for leadership by VIU.
- While part of the mainland coast of B.C., the Powell River area has always been seen as closely connected to Vancouver Island due to traditional public transportation systems and topographically barriers to the north and south.
- Nevertheless, the community is sufficiently physically isolated to preclude easy and inexpensive commuting to and from Vancouver Island or the Lower Mainland; and
- Nevertheless, North Island College in Courtenay, a critical regional educational partner and community college, offers partnering opportunities depending on operational scheduling of programs and transportation.