

Real World, Real Change

Capilano University Academic Plan 2014 – 2018

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Acknowledgements

[An acknowledgement of those who contributed to this academic plan,
written after the plan is completed.]

Executive Summary

[Brief summary of the plan as a whole encompassing the major themes,
written after the plan is completed.]

Academic Planning

Context

As one of fourteen British Columbia (BC) community colleges created between 1965 and 1975, Capilano College was founded in 1968 to serve two primary purposes: to deliver instruction that led to community-specific certificates and diplomas, and to provide lower-level courses that enabled students to transfer smoothly from institutions in their own communities to the larger provincial universities.

Over time, the university transfer mandate was expanded and Capilano developed its own credential programs, providing preparation for employment and laddering students into other academic opportunities. The college began to carve out an identity in terms of degree offerings and credentials, increasing the local demand for degree completion. The most recent provincial post-secondary re-classification process brought university status to Capilano in 2008. This came in part from a recognition that the evolving college had been successful in developing programs and curriculum that not only reflected local community needs, but also provided graduates with degrees that would contribute to their long-term success. All of this was possible as a result of meaningful and continuous collaboration with internal and external communities.

Capilano University has a long history of consultation and collegiality in the development of programs and strategic initiatives that focus on the student experience. As a teaching-centred and a learner-centred institution we have actively engaged both internal and external communities in our short- and long-range academic planning processes. That process was designed to value and respect all avenues for input, and while we may not be able to fully satisfy the needs of all stakeholders, we can be sure that all voices have been heard.

As Capilano University approaches its fiftieth anniversary, it is appropriate to reflect on our academic history, take stock of our academic trajectory, and look ahead with our first academic plan. This plan provides a roadmap for the next four years, and establishes a basis for the next fifty. It is consistent with Capilano University's mission and vision, learning outcomes and core themes, commitment to excellence in student learning, dedication to student success, and deep respect for the heritage of consultation and collegiality that has made the university what it is today.

Foreground

This academic plan was developed through broad consultation and outreach including a fixed period of input solicitation, a development team of Senate and administration representatives, a rigorous drafting and redrafting process, multiple public forums for ongoing review, *and presentation for approval at the Senate and the Board of Governors. (text in italics is anticipated, this has yet to be completed)* We have gathered input through: direct invitation to various stakeholder groups including the Capilano Alumni Association, Capilano Student Union, Capilano Faculty Association, and COPE; presentation to and solicitation of communication from all five Faculties, as well as other academic units such as the Library, Registrar's Office, Centre for International Experience, Continuing Studies and Executive Education, etc.; grassroots calls for involvement including a university website where individuals submitted materials, documents, links, thoughts, ideas, and more; and, survey instruments sent to members of the wider community. It was gratifying to receive so many submissions from such a variety of sources, as well as many statements of support for this process.

In early 2014 we began an iterative process of plan drafting based on materials received, consultation, redrafting, and more consultation. The Senate Academic Planning and Program Assessment Committee (SAPPAC) created a subcommittee representing students, staff, and faculty that served as the Academic Planning Advisory Committee; this group, along with the five Faculty deans, participated in the development, revision, and rewriting of our Academic Plan. *As the plan was drafted and redrafted it was made available to the university community for review and response. The Vice President Academic and Provost guided and coordinated this process, and submitted the final academic plan to the Capilano University Senate and Board of Governors. (text in italics is anticipated, this has yet to be completed)*

Throughout this process, the framers of the academic plan have kept Capilano University's mission and mandates at the forefront of all considerations (see Appendix A for our vision, values, mission, and institutional goals). Our provincial mandates have also been key to the development of the plan, including our regional commitments and student population targets (see Appendix B for our provincial mandates). Finally, and most significantly, all of the input provided has been taken into account; from the ideas submitted in the fall of 2013 to the feedback received in the spring of 2014, it has been the community's voice that directed the development of this plan (see <http://www.capilanou.ca/about/academic-planning/> for a complete list of submissions).

This plan was crafted initially from the observations provided through the submission process, and developed by the Academic Planning Advisory Committee, the Faculty deans, and the VP Academic. It includes narrative sections about our academic programming, principles, and supports, as well as recommendations for the next four years and specific action items to move the vision forward. At its core, this Academic Plan proposes a direction for the next four years that will, in turn, create a solid foundation as Capilano University moves ahead into its next fifty-years.

From the beginning of this process, it has been our goal to articulate Capilano University's identity, chart our direction, and highlight our distinctiveness. To this end, the Academic Plan proposes that we remain dedicated to the institution's core values, including its commitments to the provincially mandated regions and populations and its status as a teaching focused, learning-centric, special purpose university. We define "special purpose" as meeting and anticipating demand for an academic experience that is supportive of our community's health, consistent with Capilano University's professional orientation, meaningful in the global marketplace of skills and ideas, relevant to the work our students will do, and that provides a solid foundation for the life our students will lead.

What follows is a document in three parts: Academic Principles, Academic Programming, and Academic Support. We begin with those academic principles upon which Capilano University will build its foundations in the next four years; principles that can and should be at the heart of all that we do as an academic institution and all that our students experience during their academic journey. Second is a vision of the programming that will make up the core of our work, including our strengths as an institution, our common commitment to general education, and our opportunity for creating a shared learning experience for our students. Finally, there is the acknowledgement that principles and programming are nothing without strong educational, community and wellness supports underpinning all that we are and do.

Consultation

All of this began with the thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and dreams of our community. It is the result of a great deal of listening, learning, and consideration. It is also an act of faith and a declaration of hope. This Academic Plan proposes to Capilano University the kinds of things we believe we should be doing as an institution, because of what we have been, what we are, and what we want to be. This is not a mirror, but a telescope. Like all plans, it is a place to start. Like all plans, it requires strategic

responses, dedicated resources, and personal commitments. The plan also requires us, as a community, to acknowledge that although we may already be doing some of the things proposed herein, we can always do them better.

This plan is meant to be a living document, existing in dialogue with the community. While it might seem on first reading to be short on specifics and long on aspiration, that is both a necessity and a desired outcome. There needs to be room and space and opportunity for community interpretation of the goals of this plan, the processes used to achieve those goals, and the participation contemplated in approaching those processes. The last thing that anyone wants is an overly prescriptive plan. With that said, some directions have been chosen above others, some paths have been privileged and some have not. This is a requirement of progress, an inevitable consequence of planning. But in all cases, the trajectory proposed is one that came from community input, consultation, and review.

The most important aspect of this plan is not any single element, but the will of the community to embrace change and participate in growth toward a goal that is different from and perhaps loftier than those that came before. It is our plan; Capilano University's plan; and for better or worse it requires the work of our community to make it real. That is what consultation is all about. Not just input and advice, commentary and review, but active participation in the process of creating, driving, and living the goals and processes of the institution. An academic plan is just that, a plan ... and as such it requires the work of many hands to make it a reality over time.

What's Next

After every major section of the plan there is text that indicates the direction or directions that the plan is suggesting. These might be seen as action items or the first steps toward strategic planning. Essentially they are some of the possible implications of our plan, ways that might be available in the four years ahead. Hence the label "what's next" for each. These are neither definitive nor prescriptive, and none of them are fully described. Elaboration and clarification of these avenues and directions, should they be taken, will come later in the process. For now, they are an opportunity to imagine what could be done, realistically, with time and effort.

Academic Principles

Foundations

The purpose of an academic plan is to look forward, chart a course, and prepare for a future to which the entire institution can aspire. But all plans begin with a solid foundation of values and goals, perspectives and positions. For Capilano University, the foundation on which this plan builds is made up of our mission, our core themes, and our institutional student learning outcomes. Without these building blocks, we would be without vision and focus; we would have no compass to guide our plans and our future. The first of those is our mission:

We are a teaching-focused university offering a wide range of programs and services that enable students to succeed in their current studies, in their ongoing education, in their chosen careers, in their lifelong pursuit of knowledge, and in their contribution as responsible citizens in a rapidly changing and diverse global community.

Our **mission** statement begins with the premise that we are a “teaching-intensive university offering a wide range of programs and services.” Like all universities we provide our students with academic programming and services necessary to maintain their safety, security, well-being, and ongoing success. But unlike many universities we are teaching focused, a distinction bestowed by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and worn with much pride. For teaching and learning are at the core of our identity, driving all that we do.

We embrace this teaching and learning focus in an effort to empower our students, to help them prepare for and achieve success. This is where our mission speaks most clearly to the many pathways students choose, the wide variety of futures they encounter, and the ultimate goal of a university education. At Capilano University we of course support our students during their time on one or more of our three campuses, but are also supportive of ongoing education and hope to prepare them for study elsewhere as well. We are clear in our commitment to students pursuing their chosen careers, but also acknowledge that learning is a life-long endeavor. Perhaps most importantly, we are cognizant of our mutable world and society, striving to prepare our students for thoughtful and responsible local and global citizenship. All of this is at our core, and can be seen throughout this plan.

At Capilano University we also have three **core themes** (opportunity, learning, community) supporting this mission and guiding our path.

Opportunity means ensuring access to and engagement with an academic environment that inspires and encourages individuals to explore, in new and productive ways, their own sense of self and their place in a wider society, leading to enhanced learning within and beyond the university. **Learning**, in this context, is about engaging with and contributing to a challenging environment in ways that help all our learners discover new pathways to knowledge and new connections amongst their various communities.

Community is about inspiring, connecting and involving all members of the university family, helping them imagine and explore new connections and new engagements with the publics we all serve, enhancing the mutual support and collaboration of our common cause.

While our mission and core themes guide the work of Capilano University as a whole, we also embrace a set of core **student learning outcomes** that support the specific knowledge, understanding, and skills developed in individual programs. These are: self-directed learning, awareness, and responsibility; up-to-date information gathering and research skills; communication skills; quantitative reasoning ability; group and social interaction skills; creative, critical, and analytical thinking skills, and; community/global consciousness and responsibility. Student achievement at Capilano University is measured against these outcomes, defined within the context of each program and with different emphases at differing levels of expected competence.

In attempting to articulate the academic principles that will guide Capilano University through the next four years, our mission and core themes and learning outcomes stand as benchmarks for all that we do. Whether speaking to the character and composition of our student body, addressing the capacities we hope to foster in our graduates, or describing our own perspective on institutional identity, these foundational elements remain. Truly, this entire academic plan is built on the bedrock of student learning, core values, and mission fulfillment, supporting our students, our graduates, and our story.

Our Students

At Capilano University, students come first; they are the population we serve and the reason we exist. From our guiding principles to our academic programming, from campus culture to community service, we believe as an institution in working toward the greatest good for the greatest number of

students, taking into account the voices of one and all. In the last forty-plus years, Capilano has helped a wide variety of individuals reach and reimagine their academic goals. For those students, the first principle, and primary driver has always been learning. We are committed as an institution to being both teaching-focused and learner-centred; this is our first academic principle and will determine the success or failure of all that comes after.

Learning is the reason our students come to university in the first place, although they are not always consistent about what or how or where or why they want to learn. Many of our students come with a dedication to pursue a clear academic and professional goal, and increasingly Capilano University is their first choice. Others are certain of their desire for advanced learning, but unsure of the ultimate outcome or form that will take; for these students, Capilano offers the opportunity to engage with multiple ways of knowing in an effort to find the right path to success and fulfillment. Historically, Capilano has attracted many students who were in transition to other university contexts, and for them we have always provided clear options and strong preparation. But in the process, we have frequently given many of these students not only a reason to come to Capilano University, but also a reason to stay; to this end we see ourselves increasingly as a receiving rather than a sending institution, where students transfer to rather than from our programs.

One element of Capilano University's identity that has persisted, and will remain strong, is our commitment to access and the support of students who might otherwise "fall through the cracks" of our educational systems. Through specialized programs and adult basic education, community outreach and dedicated pathways, language instruction and cultural immersion and social inclusion, we ensure that Capilano University remains constant in its commitment to, and support of, the goals and aspirations of all our students.

There is no doubt that some students will come to Capilano not fully prepared for further academic studies. Some of these students will need additional preparation because they left the K-12 system before completing their studies, or because they were not as thoughtful as they might have been about their academic choices in high school. They may be adult learners (non-native speakers of English, first generation learners, those with a range of disabilities that affect learning) in need of specific kinds of support to prepare them for life as a university student. Whether these students are at a low state of readiness or a high state of need, Capilano University will continue to be a place of opportunity, a place to succeed in post-secondary studies.

When we speak of the Capilano University **community**, we refer to a broad and diverse population. Certainly we exist as a post-secondary institution thanks to the efforts of the North Shore, the Howe Sound Corridor, and the Sunshine Coast. This has been our traditional catchment area and it will continue to be served by the programs and outreach of the university. But increasingly our students are coming less and less from local high schools, and more and more from the greater Vancouver Metropolitan Area. Thanks to increased transit options and widespread social mobility, our community has grown to include much of the lower mainland, Vancouver Island, and other parts of British Columbia. For this reason, we now see our students as not just local residents, but regional citizens who come to Capilano because it is the best choice for their educational goals and their economic future.

This is also one reason we are seeing an increase in the number of international students choosing Capilano University, for a year abroad, a two-year diploma, a four-year degree, or a multi-year post-bachelor credential. This helps make picking up a coffee, watching a volleyball game, or attending a jazz performance at Capilano something of a transcontinental experience, with students coming from Australia, Chile, France, India, Kenya, the Netherlands, Qatar, the United States, and a myriad of other places. Just as likely is an encounter with students from the Maritimes, the Prairies, or the Territories, for the Capilano University community is nationally as well as internationally diverse.

Nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than in our support for and celebration of aboriginal students from our First Nations. Capilano University is justifiably proud of its outreach to and engagement with students from all bands. We acknowledge that the university and its campuses stand on traditional territories, the home of many different cultures, and we do all we can to encourage and sustain aboriginal student success in the post-secondary system. Each year Capilano University attracts, supports, and graduates more First Nations students, a population which will continue to be important to our identity and our future.

One of the reasons Capilano University has been successful in working with aboriginal students and local communities is our commitment to educating not just for intellectual and professional outcomes, but personal and social goals as well. This “whole-person” approach encompasses everything from a high quality university education to a high quality university experience, acknowledging that students are unique individuals with distinct (if not always clearly defined or understood) hopes and dreams, experiences and attitudes, histories and predispositions. From a pedagogical perspective, **whole-person education** means understanding and addressing the different ways of seeing, learning, knowing, and being found in our student

community. It includes facilitating students' integration of academic and non-academic material and experience, including the application of learning from one context into another. Above all it means taking into account the wide variety of human nature and existence, as expressed in the aesthetic, cultural, ethnic, geographical, and theological diversity of our backgrounds, including the emotional and spiritual components that make up who we are.

It is impossible to characterize the typical Capilano University student, but it is important for an academic plan to address the characteristics that we as an institution hope to foster. All of these follow quite naturally from the categories presented above. At Capilano University we will always put learning first, and we expect our students to take their learning seriously, to be intentional in their choices and thoughtful in their goals. We expect our students to experience, recognize, and celebrate the diversity of our community, our province, and our world, and in return we promise to view our students as individuals, whole people with complex lives, histories, and motivations. When we look at our students today we see the future leaders and change-makers of tomorrow, and we are dedicated to helping them build the education they want, to provide the directions they choose.

Our Graduates

All students leave post-secondary education different than when they arrived, and it is that period between entrance and graduation that often serves to define the composition and outlook of an individual. Because our students are our first and most important responsibility, our graduates figure prominently in the growth and success of Capilano University as an institution and as a community. In a very real sense we are judged more by our graduates than anything else. This is especially true for students who spend four years as undergraduates, but can also be seen in shorter time frames. What matters most is not the duration of a Capilano education, but rather the impact that education has on our students and our society.

This is the premise behind our institutional student learning outcomes, and one of the reasons such attributes as awareness and local/global consciousness figure so prominently. Our goals include the proposition that students graduating from Capilano University will have achieved a level of **mindfulness** that is particularly important within a twenty-first century post-secondary system. While the term has become overused in recent years, mindfulness for Capilano graduates means a deeper awareness of themselves and their surroundings, a contextualization of the personal within the social and the physical worlds, and an honest attempt to be observant without judgment. Linked to this is a sense of **stewardship**; a

realization that we as individuals are accountable for the care of our surroundings (physical, intellectual, emotional, and more), and hold within our hands the ability to shape and determine the future. Capilano graduates understand the integrated nature of their relationships, the ultimate inter-connectedness of their worlds and the worlds of others.

For this reason, Capilano graduates also leave our institution with a clear sense of the benefits, commitments, and challenges of working and living in a community. This sense of belonging and connectedness ranges from student to student, from program to program. Community can be variously defined geographically such as the Sunshine Coast, professionally a' la a discipline or program, or socially within the context of campus life. Indeed, one of the main features of community, as understood by Capilano graduates, is that it is never singular, always compound, fluid and flexible. Furthermore, our graduates understand that while community may seem natural and unmediated, this is almost never the case; for our relationships require tending, effort, commitment, and above all openness to others. These characteristics also serve for **collaboration**, which is another attribute of our graduates. Capilano University thrives on collaboration and common effort, and that ethic has become a strong feature of our graduates' skill set and their professional practice. Whether in pedagogical pursuits or co-curricular activities, collaboration is reinforced, supported, and rewarded, resulting in a graduate population well suited to the collective activities of an interdependent and ever-more-connected society.

That connection and collective understanding forms the basis for another key capacity of the Capilano graduate: **responsibility**. Woven through all of the previously mentioned attributes, explicitly and implicitly, is the sense that our graduates understand that personal interaction and professional conduct, active awareness and civic participation, social change and cultural impact, all begin with individual and shared responsibility. Capilano University graduates understand and embrace the realization that they are persons, not merely future employees and taxpayers. At one level this is a way of being as well as a way of knowing, both a predisposition and a considered choice. It is also intimately connected to what we see at Capilano as a greater purpose, a social commitment we embrace as an institution.

We see Capilano University as the place where students prepare to become agents of change, variously defined and broadly realized. Our graduates are the inventors and entrepreneurs, explorers and innovators, makers and pioneers and architects of productive and positive transformation. We might call them advocates or **change-makers**, developers or revolutionaries, especially when their impact is profound and widespread. But we might also call them our neighbors, co-workers, colleagues, and friends, especially

when the innovations and ideas they provide are felt in more personal and grass-roots environments. They are individuals with the skills, knowledge, and capabilities to see differently, think creatively, and act with impact, influence, and insight all at the same time. At Capilano University we believe in the power of education as an engine for change, and our graduates are prepared for the challenge of contributing to the cultural, intellectual, and perhaps even spiritual transformations of tomorrow. Our graduates understand the value of social capital, embrace the responsibilities of social innovation, and define for a new generation the idea of social engagement; they are real people creating real change.

At Capilano University we are confident that our graduates will be successful along their chosen path, in part because we know that they are ready for the work they have chosen and the world in which they will operate. We know this because, perhaps above all else, our graduates leave Capilano secure in the **relevance** of their preparation. Relevance has become the coin of the realm for post-secondary education, and in this regard our graduates are some of the best prepared in British Columbia. Coming to Capilano means engaging with a professional environment that is current, connected, and carefully orchestrated to meet the needs of today's classroom and tomorrow's marketplace. It also means encountering the complex ideas and the challenging viewpoints of a changing planet; relevance for Capilano is about information and knowledge, but also attentiveness and responsiveness, critical perception and practical choice, nimbleness and creativity and persistence. These are the skills, the predispositions, the cultivated attitudes of a Capilano graduate.

Our students come to Capilano University with aspirations and dreams, dedication and drive. They leave with **experience** that is foundational and formative, broad-based and work-related. We strive to graduate students who have read, written, and thought deeply about their chosen field or career, but always in the context of what they will do next. Our graduates know what to expect and what to do when they leave Capilano, because they have gained through study and tenacity and sometimes failure, the practical experience that leads to professional **expertise**. Because they have learned by doing, prepared their minds by getting their hands dirty, our graduates have **confidence** in their abilities, their training, and their future success. This is a value we embrace and will perpetuate.

Our Story

For almost fifty years, Capilano has been a destination college, although the reason for that distinction has changed over time. And while we still embrace many of the programs and principles of our earlier years as a college, Capilano presents quite a different profile as a university. As we approach our second half-century of post-secondary education, Capilano University maintains its commitment to limited class sizes, a personal connection between students and faculty, and quality teaching and learning. We remain dedicated to students transitioning between secondary and tertiary education, as well as those seeking to study at Capilano on their way to other universities better suited to their academic needs. But unlike most colleges and many universities, Capilano has chosen to delineate credential paths in terms of work and career readiness. Indeed, Capilano defines itself as a **destination university** that recognizes all credentials require planning for the labour market, and every degree should prepare students to live and work and succeed after graduation.

At Capilano University, we are committed to our students experiencing extraordinary **learning through community and opportunity**, in all of the credential pathways available. One of the key features of our story has been the development of programming in concert with our region, in collaboration with our commercial and industry partners, and above all within the context of the most current and effective academic practices available. These key elements, working together throughout the curriculum, through students and faculty fully engaged with external partners, creates an integrative approach to professional education. Such an approach is not easy to orchestrate, let alone achieve. It requires a robust and ongoing relationship between Capilano University and the various industries, organizations, and public's programming supports. This approach is supported through local connections and commitments, linking experience in the field with expertise developed in the classroom, lab, studio, and rehearsal space. It thrives within a pedagogical environment of risk and innovation, challenge and review, ever vigilant and ever changing to keep pace with our thriving community and expanding sphere of opportunity and influence. For Capilano University, this braiding of the personal, professional, and pedagogical, is what sets us apart from many other institutions, and helps prepare our students for their chosen careers.

What makes this approach possible is that Capilano University is committed, in all its programs, to **evidence-informed and integrated practices**. Credential courses, pathways, and programs are designed to address the needs of our students and the expectations of our workplace, determined through thoughtful analysis of available data and constant connection to

industry standards. Additionally, as an institution committed to helping our students achieve clearly stated outcomes, we incorporate a wide variety of tools and processes to assess student learning and determine student success. Outside credential pathways, this commitment to measurable outcomes is maintained through an equally robust process. Because we believe that evidence should be the basis of all curricular decision-making, and the source of continuous review and revision, we are constantly striving to integrate a of observation, investigation, analysis, and improvement into all of our practices.

Capilano's commitment to outcomes and evidence is not the result of external pressure, but serves rather as a natural corollary to our applied history and practical orientation. As a university that prides itself on preparing students for "the next step" in their growth and development, Capilano is dedicated to understanding the extent to which our institution provides an education that is applicable to our students' futures. That is one reason why **accountability** is at the heart of Capilano University's identity. As an institution, we have a responsibility to be clear about our vision, transparent in our operations, and collaborative in our responses to short and long term circumstances; at Capilano University we are committed to cultivating a culture of accountability that is based on our core values and pervasive throughout the institution. What we mean by a culture of accountability is a dedication to evidence-informed decisions and subsequent actions, reflection as well as response, leading to real appraisal, stocktaking, change, and ultimately a commitment to a cycle of assessment in all areas of the institution.

In a very real way, accountability is at the heart of Capilano University's future success, the key to our ability to remain relevant in a changing and changeable world. It forms the basis for our understanding of ourselves, how we as an institution learn through community and opportunity, and is central to re-visioning and understanding what we hope to be. More than a series of numbers and measures, accountability is a conceptual and a practical stance that will insure responsible assessment, coordinated decision-making, shared understanding, and collective awareness. It is the thread that runs throughout our story, and the bedrock that will allow us to maintain our identity as a destination university.

What's Next

As we look to the next four years, Capilano University is committed to maintaining our commitment to the core academic principles mentioned above. In order to do that, however, we must be intentional about our choices, including where we will put our emphasis as we grow and mature as a university. Some things will remain: our mission, core themes, and student learning outcomes have been developed through years of consultation and conversation, and they continue to be at the heart of our academic enterprise. In order to guarantee that we are indeed heading in the right direction, that we are living the outcomes and intentions we claim, Capilano University will immediately embark on a process to **review and if necessary revise our value statements** on a four-year cycle. All institutions grow; that is why it is important for even our foundational principles to keep pace with our own institutional development.

Our students will always be our greatest commitment and our greatest source of pride. But it would be foolish to assume we know all we need to know about their academic backgrounds, their levels of achievement, the details of their post-secondary experience, or how they plan to use their education in the future. For this reason, and many others, we will need to think more broadly and strategically about Capilano University's data needs for understanding and addressing the circumstances of being a student. This is especially important with regard to indigenous and international students, but no less valuable for students who are first-generation learners or those with special needs. Finally, there is a geographical aspect to understanding who we are as an institution, and that can come through better attention to where our local and regional students call home. Put together, these and other measures have the potential to improve learning and services for all students at Capilano University. For this reason we will immediately begin **development of a Strategic Data Plan** that will examine our current approaches, determine immediate and long-term needs, and articulate first steps toward a clearer understanding of our students and our institution.

There is also much work to be done in terms of accountability to our own principles, our aspirations, and our institutional outcomes. Capilano University is already making great strides in the arena of course, program, and institutional assessment, and as we redouble our efforts to understand and improve student learning at all levels we will make real our commitment to continuous improvement by instituting a **formal cycle of review for all credentials** that will embed accountability into the fabric of our programming. This involves not only the planning and implementation of a progressive accountability strategy on campus, but also extending our responsibility beyond completion into the placement and success of our

students after they leave Capilano. This requires an ongoing focus on labour markets and economic trends, insuring that we are secure in our planning and programming. Through the support of a robust alumni association, we will link the knowledge gathered through research with that accrued by our students as they move through the workplace. In the end, all of this can be brought together to provide a clearer picture of what we do, why we do it, and to what extent we (and our students) are successful. Although this is in support of our academic principles, it is also the point where principles and programming meet.

Academic Programming

Destinations

Our academic principles are at the core of our identity, but it is the academic programming we offer, our courses and credentials, that define us for our stakeholders and audiences, internal and external. It is all well and good to say we are a learning centred institution, with excellent teaching and an extraordinary student experience; for most students, parents, partners, and politicians the larger issue is what kinds of degrees are offered, what defines Capilano University as an institution of higher education. This is the core issue, for we have grown from Capilano College to Capilano University, with the associated expansion of degrees and structures, but we have not yet sufficiently articulated or demonstrated how that change translates into programming. Such is the central challenge of this academic plan.

Because our programming has grown, for the most part, out of regional need and local expertise, it seems on first examination as overly random, insufficiently intentional. In fact, our courses and programs are exceedingly purposeful, consciously responsive and directly linked to the needs and opportunities of a growing geographic and economic region. Within each and every one of our credential programs can be found an extremely high level of **intentional preparation**, a coherence borne of attention to the needs of our students as they move through a variety of important transitions: from secondary to post-secondary education, from preparatory coursework to degree preparation, from engaged preparation for professional practice to active participation in the workforce. This kind of intentionality, this commitment to preparation in sync with future success, is one of the most important features of a Capilano education, and it stands as a distinctive feature of our university identity.

Likewise, Capilano has learned an important lesson from its attention to professional readiness and labour market alignment; specifically, that the best education for any student, regardless of their level of preparation or ultimate academic goals, will always be based in **responsible practices** that are subject to ongoing review and revision. The process of regular assessment, not only of students but also of curriculum and teaching practices, is necessary to keep professional programs current, nimble, and pertinent to the needs of stakeholders. The same approach is important for all programs, from diplomas and associate degrees to four-year degrees and post-bachelor credentialing. At Capilano University, we are committed to learning that leads to understanding and change, teaching that addresses

the needs of the student and the field, and a curriculum that is rigorous in its expectations as well as vigorous in its experiential relevance.

These attributes are central to the developing identity of Capilano University, for they represent the best of what has been as well as the most promising of what our thinking suggests will be. In addition to intentional preparation and responsible practice (or perhaps an integral part of both), Capilano is committed as an institution to providing our students with the kind of educational experiences that will stand them in good stead whatever their ultimate academic or professional goals. We are a teaching university, a learning university, and as such we are dedicated to meaningful educational experiences that have a lasting impact on our students, academic programming that provides the kind and level of preparation they need to survive and thrive, and pedagogical practices that address the particulars of ever-more-specialized professions operating within the generalities of an ever-expanding and changing world.

We believe that being a special purpose teaching university means providing training and preparation for distinctive professions, and support for appropriate terminal credentials in those areas appropriate to our mission and mandate. Our focus is on the labour force of the future, the industries and enterprises that persist, the sustainable professions, the work that will not go away. Furthermore, in an era of competition and comparison, it is important that we as an institution focus on students who are “**Capilano Bound**” with regard to their educational goals. This means providing specific and dedicated student support to programs that are distinctive, celebrated, and successful (in terms of traditional and Capilano-specific measures); focusing on degrees and other credentials, programs and dedicated pathways, unique opportunities and options that distinguish Capilano University from other post-secondary institutions. We want our students to have a clear reason to come to Capilano University, but even more important we want them to have compelling and intentional reasons to stay.

The Capilano Difference

There are many ways to distinguish a Capilano education, from class size to student-faculty interaction to engagement with the natural world. But all of these things can be said of many universities, and none of them represent a ubiquitous commitment, a true distinctiveness. What then is our difference? Not a single attribute or even a singular perspective, but a combination of features that speak to our identity as a university. It’s not so much that we are different, but we do things differently. At Capilano University, we are committed to **access, preparation, readiness, and success**, not just for

one student but for all students. Capilano College was a point of access into the post-secondary system in British Columbia; it prepared many students for university, helped others become ready for the workplace, and provided all that was needed to succeed in a variety of professions. Capilano University does all of this, but in a more integrative manner. We continue to offer access to high school students, adult learners and everything in between, but our commitments to post-secondary entrance have merged with our dedication to preparation, completion, and future success.

This shift in expectations and intentions has brought with it the need for Capilano University to re-think what we have always done in the past, exploring ways of supporting students through a seamless progression from fundamental level to university level studies. No more waiting in the anteroom of preparatory education—learners want and need to see themselves on the road to their chosen endpoint. As soon as they come to the university, students are encouraged to begin mapping out a pathway for their studies including what they believe will be their ultimate goal, and how that goal will allow them to live the life they desire. Then they take the courses they need, in whatever disciplines or professional programs they can find, to be well prepared in the areas and arenas in which they wish to succeed. To this end, Capilano University provides our learners with the specific skills, content and strategies for success based on their own intentionally chosen and designed pathways, which may include further studies, entry to employment, or personal development. Articulating these **intentional pathways** to success will be the responsibility of our students, but making that possible is up to us.

We will accomplish this goal through a commitment to pedagogical practices that are demonstrably successful, those teaching and learning methods that lead most effectively to engagement, understanding, and success. These **high impact practices** (<https://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm>) have been studied and tested, and they represent not an exhaustive list of sure-fire strategies but ways that Capilano University has chosen to approach our commitment to our students. These practices include the creation of first-year experiences that provide students with an opportunity to share the early stages of their academic journey with a small group of like-minded individuals. This approach is already present in our cohort programs, but at Capilano we are dedicated to expanding this practice and making it an option for all. Likewise, many of our degree programs make use of a capstone experience to help students integrate their previous coursework with the expectations they have of work or study or life beyond university. Capilano University will make this practice available for all degree students.

Some approaches, like a common core and learning communities, exist to a greater or lesser extent in many of our programs, and others, such as collaborative assignments and global learning, are infused across the curriculum. The same can be said for service learning, community based learning, and cooperative learning, which are widely available in degree programs but could certainly be expanded to reach all Capilano students regardless of their discipline or profession. What makes all of these high impact practices particularly relevant for Capilano University is that they support the core attributes we hope to cultivate in our students.

The Capilano Capacities

Those core attributes, or Capilano Capacities, begin with the principle stated above: integration. Education at Capilano is an **integrative** and **trans-disciplinary** experience, from the first course to the final project. At Capilano University, we accept the fact that our world has become more complicated than any of our parents or their parents could have dreamed, and we embrace the idea that students need a plethora of skills and abilities to survive and thrive in an ever-changing environment. Because of this, we expect our students to learn broadly, experience widely, explore deeply—to chart their own academic courses, but to do so with attention to the avenues and alleys as well as the boulevards and thoroughfares. While not all courses at Capilano University are truly trans-disciplinary (crossing multiple disciplinary boundaries in order to create a more complete picture, a more unified and holistic understanding), many of them are; and all of the purposeful pathways described above embrace the integrative nature of a contemporary education.

One of the great challenges in higher education is to foster students' abilities to integrate their learning across contexts and over time. Learning that helps develop integrative capacities is important because it builds habits of mind that prepare students to make informed judgments in the conduct of personal, professional, and civic life; such learning is, we believe, at the very heart of liberal education. (Huber and Hutchings, 2004)

For integrative and trans-disciplinary education to succeed, however, it must do so from the perspective of the student as well as the teacher. In this regard, Capilano University is distinctive, for even in our most narrowly defined credential programs there is a living core of connection, overlap, and multi-dimensionality, not always prominently displayed, but unquestionably present in our actions and our outcomes.

But such a capacity for understanding across disciplines requires a commitment to learning within the disciplines as well, for something must be known before it can be combined with something else. At Capilano University this constitutes another aspect of our academic programming, the merging of the **general** and the **practical**. The political and economic climate of the early part of the 21st Century has caused many to conclude that a university education should lead to immediate and successful employment. Though many draw a distinction between education and training, there is a broadly accepted expectation that career advancement and achievement should be a central goal of university education. However, even within this goal, many remain unclear about what is required for success. Employers point out that they need well educated and appropriately trained graduates, but they recognize, and often emphasize, that they also need interpersonally, environmentally and socially aware people, with broad-based knowledge and understanding, who are creative and critical thinkers, and effective communicators and problem solvers. Further, because the world in which we live changes at a seemingly ever-increasing pace, people need to be adaptable and so become equipped, through their education, with a broad range of transferable skills and knowledge. Building general education into the university curriculum is Capilano University's response to understanding these mixed roles and responsibilities of 21st Century universities. For our purposes, general education is a specific set of abilities and skills, literacies and understandings, perspectives and positions, that cross disciplines and prepare students for meaningful engagement with their communities, broadly defined.

Capilano University remains, however, committed to more than a general approach to education. Indeed our strength has always been our ability, as an institution, to provide students with an academic experience that is both **relevant** to one's chosen life path and **recognizable** to those with whom that path will be shared. Relevance can be a contested idea in advanced education, but it is a capacity that is vital to our students' success. Our programming focuses on what is current and developing in the field, building on the knowledge that came before but always with an eye to the next trend, the next innovation, and the next job. But relevance is only valuable to the extent that it can be recognized through the demonstration of skills, aptitudes, and the confidence that comes with authentic understanding. These are perhaps the most vital of the Capilano Capacities, and why they inform virtually all of our pedagogical practices.

The Capilano Practices

In order to thrive as a special purpose teaching university, Capilano identifies and builds on its institutional strengths as we acquire and develop new capacities for the future. But through all of the changes and despite all of the competing goods, one aspect remains constant throughout our various practices, and that is a commitment to **academic rigour**. Whether students are attending Capilano University for a single class or a four-year degree, they will encounter the best knowledge, pedagogy, and practice we have to offer. For at Capilano we believe that there is no substitute for deep understanding, no shortcut to mastery, and no work-around in the intellectual pursuit of excellence. This is our first, and our strongest institutional practice—one that is constantly revitalized through assessment and peer review.

From our outset as a college, we have taken what might be considered an exceptional path—creating and encouraging programming that at the time seemed unconventional but has later proven to be innovative, exemplary, and necessary. Our forte as an institution has always been found in our understanding of student and community demand, our commitment to practical experience and impact, and above all our ability to address the needs of both our graduates and the twenty-first century professions to which they aspire. To this end, Capilano University focuses on **real-world proficiencies** in the practice of learning and teaching.

But in order to perform in the world of work and practice our students first need direct experience of that world both within and beyond the university environment. For this reason, Capilano University supports and encourages **experiential learning** as a particularly fruitful educational practice.

The objective of experiential learning (EL) is to provide an education that attends in some balanced manner to the student's need to advance both knowledge acquisition and critical judgement (sic); both thinking and acting; reflection and engagement; career development and informed citizenship; growth as an individual and greater connectivity with the larger community. The ideal of experiential education is to help students achieve these balances in a manner sensitive to the characteristics and needs of their individual disciplines, fields, and professions. (<http://www.ryerson.ca/experiential/>)

At Capilano University experiential learning takes many forms, and is found in virtually all of our credential programs. It occurs in individual courses and

programs, as well as throughout our co-curricular offerings. In a very real way, experiential learning is the cornerstone of a Capilano education.

These practices, and the capabilities that came before, produce what Capilano University believes to be both **formative and transformative learning experiences** for our students and our institution. Formative in the sense of formation, which, in a professional context, is the intentional development of an identity that merges the personal, the social, and the practical. It is a process that builds both responsibility and accountability into the actions of the individual. Transformative is a word overused in academic circles, but at Capilano it refers to the changes that occur in students with regard to their beliefs, their behaviours, and their sense of self. Both of these outcomes are vigorously pursued through our educational practices, with results that are often astounding. We believe that Capilano University is a place where students actively participate in the formation of their professional selves, while engaging in a transformative learning process that places them within a larger social context. In this way, our students come full circle, gaining knowledge through real-world experience, and taking responsibility for making conscious choices that will ultimately change the world.

What's Next

One of the strongest indicators of success and satisfaction for a university education comes from the opportunity to share first year experiences with a wide group of students. While Capilano University's structure and demographics might sometimes work against a universal common first year experience, we do have the opportunity to create something that is different from other universities in the region: **The Cap Year Experience**. This would be a year one curriculum that serves three purposes: provide students who are interested in participating with a shared first year including a common curriculum and extra-curricular support appropriate to our population, showcase what makes Capilano University distinctive in terms of program offerings and educational experiences, and offer an attractive and purposeful alternative to the "gap year" many students seek before embarking on their chosen academic trajectory. The Cap Year Experience would not be required, it would not take the place of a more broad-based educational agenda, but it would provide a venue (writ small) for much of the programming that we at Capilano University value. The Cap Year might focus on social action and draw from a wide variety of courses throughout the university. It might have an international focus and include a study abroad experience. Such a curricular innovation might also be imagined as a foundation year focusing on students who would benefit from preparatory

studies in order to increase their likelihood of success in future years at Capilano University. There could even be an international student Cap Year designed to help the transition into Canadian advanced education.

Regardless of a student's ultimate educational goals, all those who come to Capilano University should have available to them clear and established pathways to success. **Purposeful pathways should be central to all students' experience as they enter Capilano University**, whether in the form of a guided curriculum leading to traditional cohort programs or intentionally self-designed trajectories suited to unique career goals, transition routes from two-year colleges or transfer options to another university, work-related credentialing for the short term or multiple possibilities for degree completion. Part intentional learning strategy and part commitment to success upon completion, purposeful pathways provide Capilano University students with a clear roadmap from where they begin to where they want to end. One of the most successful strategies for following purposeful pathways can be found in the **student portfolio**, which can serve as a guide throughout the undergraduate years and a springboard into thoughtful career choices. Capilano University has already established a potential approach to the implementation of portfolio learning in all programs and across all Faculties. But there are many ways to provide our students with the guidance they need, and the clarity they deserve.

One of the most successful high impact practices, and one that is particularly well suited to Capilano University, is the capstone course (already present in many of our programs). In these courses, students are provided with a culminating experience at the end of their degree path. Capstones are designed to give students the opportunity to synthesize prior coursework and integrate their learning experiences within and beyond the academy. Often capstones are intentionally interdisciplinary, providing a venue for stepping out of individual programs in an effort to achieve deeper meaning. In another sense, these courses are useful in bridging theory and practice, sometimes in support of a more narrowly defined career path. In all of its incarnations, the capstone course is a key learning opportunity and often becomes a defining feature of a student's education. For these and other reasons, **Capilano University will commit to providing a capstone experience in all its degree programs within the next two years**. Additionally, these capstones will be explicitly focused on each student's next step after university. For the student aiming at graduate school or other forms of post-graduate education, the capstone can be a preparation for the rigors of academic inquiry; for those looking to enter the workforce after graduation a capstone will be the opportunity to explore options and clarify opportunities.

In the next year we look to develop an understanding of the specific set of skills and abilities that encompass general education at Capilano University, where that understanding captures the unique aspects of our faculties and the unique needs of our students. There are a wide variety of models for the delivery of general education that could be used, ranging from dedicated courses to embedding concepts in other curriculum. It should be clearly understood that we are very much in the formative stages of developing our general education strategy. Nevertheless, Capilano University is committed to providing all students with general education learning outcomes that integrate with discipline related skills such that students are prepared for citizenship and a capacity for life-long learning. We believe, particularly at the undergraduate degree level, that **all graduating students should demonstrate achievement of measured general education outcomes** that express those students' level of understanding of discipline related skills and abilities, as well as skill and abilities that will enable students to have a meaningful, passionate and reflective engagement with the world and people that surround them.

In keeping with our ongoing and long-standing commitment to practical student success beyond completion, Capilano University will continue to offer **meaningful credentials** that reflect the applicability, relevance, and above all rigour of our academic enterprise. These are not likely to be certificates, diplomas, and degrees commonly found at other BC institutions; rather, our distinctiveness as an institution will be demonstrated through the distinctiveness of our credentials and the accomplishments of our graduates. This is especially true of our degree pathways, which will incorporate all of the principles of a Capilano University education, both general and field specific knowledge, and a genuine commitment to career development in all credentials. This combination cannot be stressed enough, for we are committed to students entering Capilano University on a road to completion and success. We can only provide this if our credentials are demonstrated through consistent metrics and ongoing assessment, to be rigorous, current, relevant, valued, and in demand.

Academic Support

Commitments

The next four years will see a number of changes at Capilano University, but nowhere will that be more evident than in our approach to academic support services and the scaffolding of student success. Our commitments stem from our core themes, and range from opportunities for access and engagement, to learning as an essential value, to community as both a venue and a vehicle for accomplishment. We approach this as an institution from the perspective of the student experience, the academic enterprise, and the collective expression of social significance. But we also come with a recognition that all of our goals, outcomes, principles, and practices require the underpinning of support structures that keep the university, and the student experience, operating on a day to day basis.

In considering this wide variety of service and support mechanisms we begin first and foremost with a **whole-person approach** to integrated and integrative services. All this means is that no one aspect of a student's experience at Capilano is taken in isolation. We acknowledge that each of our students comes to Capilano University with their own history and their own special circumstances, that education is about more than academic subjects and instruction, and that we all have lives beyond the boundaries of our campuses. This is especially pertinent to our academic supports and represents a commitment by Capilano University to view student success as a collective responsibility, a communal good.

Equally as strong is our commitment to insuring that every student at Capilano University has the **opportunity to succeed**, regardless of their level of preparation, previous experience in post-secondary education, or ultimate academic goals. If a student comes to Capilano University and is accepted into our community, they are part of our community. As such it is our responsibility to do everything we can to help every student succeed. The first part of that process, of course, involves helping our students decide what success means for them. Some come to us looking for a year at a small university and others are in search of specific industry certification, some want to prepare for transfer while others are degree and workforce bound, some want only a course and sit in the same class as others looking for a lifetime passion. We can and should accommodate all of them, providing the support they need through the services we offer. For while Capilano University will never be all things to all people, it will always be a place where students come first, learning is at the centre, and success is a common commitment across the entire institution.

Wellness Services

Campus wellness and the support we provide students beyond educational programming is no less important to our future as a university than any other aspect of the student experience. In fact, a case could be made for wellness being the most important foundation for all academic activity, a necessary component of a complete and positive post-secondary experience. To that end, Capilano University is committed to a dedicated wellness agenda that focuses on the physical, mental, and social health of our community. But as with our academic programming agenda, support for these activities must be seen holistically, as an integral part of our larger and more complex ecosystem, a dedicated feature of our identity rather than an add-on to academics.

Capilano University has the benefit of a beautiful natural setting, and students are frequently drawn to our campuses in part because of their proximity to recreational activities. This provides a useful entrée into the area of **recreation and physical health**. From rock climbing in Squamish to sea kayaking in Sechelt to hiking, biking, running and riding in North Vancouver, Capilano University has the opportunity to become synonymous with recreational opportunity and physical activity. While certainly supported through various health services, it is on-site recreation that figures most prominently in any ongoing commitment to physical wellness, and it is that co-curricular area that provides the natural venue for promoting an active and healthful lifestyle for all our students, staff, and faculty. Already there are community opportunities and small-scale offerings, including yoga classes, mountain biking, and the like. The next step is for Capilano to expand our coordinated efforts, and support additional recreational activities, leading to deeper engagement with campus communities as well as academic progress and success.

Physical health is certainly a key feature of engagement and student success, but so too is emotional security and the availability of services supporting students' psychological and spiritual growth and safety. Students who pursue post-secondary education are often faced with extraordinary challenges, and in our ever-changing and ever-more-demanding academic context it is vital that there be a place and a process on our campuses to help students manage all they encounter. The **counseling and mental health** services at Capilano provide a wealth of opportunities, individual and collective, for students in need of support. These services are also key to promoting greater awareness of and attention to the importance of psychological well-being. Increasingly, the encouragement of healthy minds and healthy bodies includes attention to the spiritual and religious aspects of wellness, and for this reason Capilano is committed to supporting respectful

community dialogue and understanding, providing dedicated prayer spaces and other services to students of faith, and promoting a vigorous diversity of belief amongst all members of our university family.

As a growing community with varied interests, Capilano University is also a hub of activity for creativity, performance, discussion, and debate. Initiated in part by our academic programming, and certainly cultivated through student, staff, and faculty involvement, Capilano has a deep-seated commitment to **cultural engagement and social health**, another key feature of general wellness. This is made visible through a number of traditional venues from music and theatre performances to public speakers and special events. It manifests in drumming circles and paper airplane tosses, Sportsplex dances and springtime egg hunts. It is also a feature of our student life activities, including formal student governance organizations and more informal international student gatherings and excursions. As Capilano University moves toward a clearer vision of its academic future, we continue to celebrate the social growth of our community on our campuses and around our region.

Of course, wellness is a far more complicated issue than can be adequately addressed in a plan of this sort. Nevertheless it is important that we acknowledge well-being as the foundation for all our academic support systems, and endorse it as a common good across all our campuses and throughout all our practices. This can be accomplished formally, through the expansion of student services, and informally through rhetoric and visible participation. It can also be integrated pedagogically in our approach to learning, teaching, curriculum design, and assessment. However we choose to commit to wellness, it is important for us to remember that balance and variety, engagement and activity, responsiveness and responsibility will always be important for students at Capilano University.

Educational Services

Education sits foursquare at the centre of Capilano University's mission and mandate, and through our educational services we most vigorously support our students, our faculty, and our academic enterprise. As we have grown from college to university, our services have not always been able to keep pace due to technical, fiscal, and organizational constraints. But in moving forward into our second half-century, Capilano University recognizes that these areas are what makes everything else possible; through robust and responsive educational services we establish ourselves as a fully-functioning member of the BC university community. To that end we will grow this area of support, as is fitting for a university dedicated to learning and teaching.

At the base of our educational support systems are structural academic areas that truly keep the university operating on an even keel. These components of our **institutional infrastructure** include the services students need the most. First among equals is admissions and records, the backbone of students' access and the engine of their academic progress. Closely connected in terms of student support is Capilano University's dedicated financial assistance unit, and our advising and guidance areas. Highly trained and dedicated individuals sit at the helm of all these functional units, these vital areas of responsibility; it is their efforts that make possible the classes and programs offered by Capilano University. But these areas are faced with a difficult circumstance: although they serve and support a growing international university community, they are resourced at the level of a small-scale regional college. This puts immense strain on the system and requires constant attention; going forward Capilano University will need to approach all of these services collectively, and develop a unified strategic direction for all enrollment services.

Equally important and just as under-resourced is our student affairs arena that is responsible for academic conduct, intellectual integrity, and the quality of the Capilano student experience. Often unseen and unheralded, student affairs has traditionally been the conduit between student life, academic and otherwise, and the administrative aspects of the university. This area is the first point of contact for students who are troubled in some way, whose academic performance has suffered for any of a myriad reasons, or who have encountered some significant disconnect between their life and their academic goals. Additionally, this area is the home of student activities and their interaction with university operations; it is the go-to place for staging an event, coordinating student governance, and facilitating collaboration between diverse parts of the university community. In many ways, student affairs personnel serve a **student advocacy** role; they are the conduit between the students and the university, the official voice of and for students within the university infrastructure, and as such they play a vital role in both student and university success.

But for some students there would be no success without academic support in the form of educational services. These are the areas that help students enter, experience, understand, and eventually move beyond university life. They are the key avenues to **academic success and support**, and as such they require special attention here in the academic plan. They include the access services responsible for facilitating successful transition into and within the university; these services support success for students who are in need of additional assistance. Also in this category, and growing in significance every year, are our accessibility services designed to assist

students with physical, psychological, or learning disabilities; accommodation of these students' learning needs is an increasingly demanding, varied, and rewarding endeavor requiring support institutionally, provincially, and nationally.

The most ubiquitous and in some ways the most challenging areas of educational support can be found in **learning and foundation services**. These areas, found throughout the university, support the basic learning needs of our students through a variety of activities ranging from courses and workshops to tutorials and drop-in centres. Learning services address university preparation, academic skills development, coping and self-regulated learning strategies, and more. Foundation services refers to more specific foundational skills that are often based in a disciplinary or trans-disciplinary framework; these include writing and composition support in various forms, quantitative literacy and mathematical skills development, citation protocols and appropriate use of scholarly resources, even research methods and procedures. They are available to all students, useful to all students, and necessary for the support of all students attending Capilano University.

Just as necessary, although not always as integrated within the educational service sector, are **readiness and career services**. These are the academic areas that help students move from the university to the so-called "real world" beyond. Readiness services address issues of transition, the extent to which our students are indeed job-ready, work-ready, life-ready, next-step-ready. This area supports transition to graduate school, assessment of work-related skill sets, and life skills ranging from balancing a checkbook to navigating the path to permanent residency. Career services has both an instrumental and an aspirational identity; this is where students come to look at job listings, attend interview workshops, learn about potential career paths, and generally prepare for their entry into the labor force. Obviously these two areas operate in tandem, and they are intimately connected with other service areas on our campuses.

Of course, at heart Capilano University is a learner-centred institution, a teaching university. As such it is vital for our future that we put our students' learning ahead of all other considerations. Likewise, we would be remiss if we did not approach that challenge from an integrative point of view. We are justifiably proud of our learner/teacher relationship, and a closer connection between the learning process and the teaching process can only strengthen this distinctive feature of our academic identity. This can best be accomplished through a dedicated focus on **learning excellence and innovation**. But such a focus is fraught with competing goods, complicated negotiations, and above all the desire to assess,

improve, and innovate responsibly. Nevertheless, there are a number of broad areas where learning excellence can be addressed and achieved, where innovation can be nurtured and given a chance to grow.

Learning excellence begins with knowledge and experience. Teachers at Capilano University need access to the best that has been thought and done in the fields of education (all levels), learning science (all disciplines), and of course the individual disciplines and professions that contribute to our understanding of learning in diverse and often overlapping fields. Likewise, there is a pervasive need for instruction in and experience with pedagogical research; for Capilano University to be a truly teaching and learning centred institution it must support the scholarship of teaching and learning that turns observation and anecdote into evidence and innovation. But innovation requires space and time, and to this end an experimental laboratory dedicated to learning all that we can about learning, teaching, and inquiry would best serve faculty members and students alike. Part of this approach to innovation also takes into account the growing world of global information sharing, new media, and technology-assisted teaching and learning; given Capilano University's commitment to the professions of tomorrow, we have a clear responsibility to make use of the most advanced pedagogical technologies of today. What all this suggests is that faculty growth and development is at the heart of learning excellence, knowledge-driven opportunity for change is the most valuable component of innovation, and evidence-based practices are path of choice.

But in addressing the needs and opportunities of learning excellence and innovation we cannot forget that the role of the student is changing in the modern university. Once considered the recipient of knowledge transfer, we now know that students are fully involved and complicit in the practices and outcomes of their own education. For that reason, Capilano University embraces the student as an active and experiential learner, informed and insightful assessor, well-placed and committed peer teacher, and dedicated mentor. Our students are in many ways our greatest resources, and as such are full partners in our educational endeavors. This role is one Capilano University celebrates and we look forward to a deeper and more productive collaboration between students and teachers, academic developers and educational technologists, as we work together to understand and achieve a transformative learning experience.

Community Services

No less important to our stature as a teaching-focused, learning-centred university is a robust, visible, and forward-looking approach to community services. This includes a formal commitment to service learning and the infrastructure that such an undertaking entails. It also includes greater attention to the cultivation and maintenance of community partnerships that will support our students' learning and improve their real-world prospects for employment and engagement. Such a commitment requires whole-heartedly embracing a close connection between Capilano University and its academic colleagues in the regional K-12 systems and the greater post-secondary world. Finally, it means making Capilano University a community destination, a crossroads for ideas and activities, a place and an idea integral to the life and work of the north shore, the metropolitan region, the lower mainland, and the entire province.

Nowhere is this more important than in our approach to **service learning**. Whether in the form of volunteerism, advocacy, entrepreneurship or everything in between, it is vital to the success of our students and the integrity of our institution that service learning be carefully managed in terms of student safety, learning outcomes, and community sustainability.

Service-learning is a teaching and learning methodology which fosters civic responsibility and applies classroom learning through meaningful service to the community. The strongest service-learning experiences occur when the service is meaningfully immersed in ongoing learning and is a natural part of the curriculum that extends into the community. Service-learning is an essential strategy in providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum which will prepare students to succeed in the 21st century. (http://sl.dpi.wi.gov/sl_sldppage)

This is experiential learning at its most active, its most applicable, and it serves to promote not only a deeper appreciation of academic subject matter, but also a clear connection between knowledge and application. In promoting service learning the key is to insure that our students are achieving the desired academic outcomes, while those organizations to which we provide service are consistently receiving the help they need. It is a truly symbiotic relationship with benefits gained by all individuals and both sides of the collaboration.

Sometimes similar in structure but usually different in outcomes, **community partnerships** are a key feature of student success in many professional fields. Capilano University has already developed a robust relationship with many business, service, and educational entities in the

region, and in that way is ahead of many other regional universities. Whether these involve shared activities or donated resources, sponsorships or capital contributions, short or long term affiliations, robust community connections will continue to figure prominently in our identity and our future. To this end, Capilano University cultivates partnerships at the course, program, and institutional levels, forging connections with business, government, and the service sector, as well as the other schools and universities in the region.

Indeed, **primary, secondary, and post-secondary collaboration** has always been an important feature of our identity as an institution and within our various professional programs. Now, as we move into our next half-century, Capilano University has the opportunity to increase its connections to and work with the K-12 sector in BC, Canada, the United States, and beyond. The so called K-16 initiative that has been a part of academic parlance for decades has more potential for growth, innovation, and success than any other collaborative endeavor. This plan already mentions the opportunities presented by a coordinated and cooperative portfolio process, whereby students move seamlessly from academic e-portfolios begun in secondary school to similar tools at Capilano University, from curricular and co-curricular uses on our campuses to career and employment applications in the labour market, from social groups to professional networks to alumni systems. But portfolios are only one option for school-university alignment. Opportunities exist for shared resource management between individual high schools and Capilano University, teacher-to-teacher collaborations to assist student transitions, university peer mentorships that would benefit students in both systems, parent involvement supports that bridge what can often be a difficult and confusing threshold shift, and much more.

Likewise, Capilano University shares many attributes and aspirations with its university and college peers, and has already established long-standing, strong connections through program alignment, articulation, and natural collaboration. There is little question that the future will involve greater connections between post-secondary institutions, including shared services and joint programming. This is a natural outcome of student mobility and the tendency to “swirl” in and out of multiple colleges and universities. Rather than push against this trend, Capilano University is well placed to support and assist our students in better understanding the opportunities of post-secondary education, through more intentional and integrative multi-institutional collaboration. As the sector becomes more polarized, Capilano University can define more clearly the features that distinguish our educational experience from that of our peers, putting us not in competition with others but in juxtaposition. In so doing, we open the door to

collaborative endeavors with other institutions not so well placed to support the kind of learning, teaching, and engagement that we champion.

Also of note in terms of community is the fact that we are not one but **three campuses**. As a regional university, we are committed to serving the needs of students from Howe Sound, the Sunshine Coast, and Vancouver's North Shore. To continue this regional approach to local learning, Capilano University looks to a more strategic vision of the multi-campus model that capitalizes on the strengths of each geographic and cultural area, and acknowledges that we are a unified educational community. Becoming more intentional about the roles and responsibilities of all campuses, more coordinated and creative in our planning, is in the best interests of our students and our broad base of community supporters.

Distinguishing what makes a Capilano experience different is an important step toward the kind of recognition that has been lacking in recent years. Our growth from college to university was much heralded but not well understood, and as a result there has been a need for self-definition among local and provincial audiences. Differentiation and definition will help Capilano University build **social capital**, and increase its already substantial identity as a **community destination**. During almost fifty years of post-secondary engagement, Capilano has developed a well-defined network of relationships that range from the international and professional to the local and personal; this is, in part, our social capital, what makes us recognizable to our peers and our community, establishes the value of our contributions.

As we approach our next fifty years, now as a university, we find ourselves faced with the need to adjust, augment, and ultimately expand our social capital. This can be accomplished structurally, as has been done by other institutions, by changing our identity to be better aligned to common expectations (becoming like other universities), or it can be achieved through differentiation (becoming unlike other universities). In this regard, Capilano University has already made its choice; we are not like other universities. Now it is necessary to build on our "unlike qualities" to create our own definition of ourselves. In doing so, we will make it clear to our stakeholders and our community that we have become a destination for ideas, innovation, and resources, as well as students, faculty, and staff, that is likely to yield something different, and by association, something better. But in order to be seen as something better, we will have to make clear to our community what it is that we are doing differently, especially for our students.

What's Next

Given the centrality of learning at Capilano University, and our own identification as a teaching-centred, learning-centred institution, the cause of educational support takes a prominent role in our next steps. While there are many approaches to building capacity in learning and teaching, the first and most logical would be to establish a coordinating entity responsible for the centralization of services and opportunities. One of the best approaches to this end would be for Capilano University to create a **Centre for Integrative Learning** that gathers together the inter-related aspects of academic success support and learning theory, best practices in the field and a professional approach to improvement.

Similarly, given our move toward differentiation based on an experiential, real world learning model, and our established strengths in the areas of community connection, industry collaboration, and job readiness, there is both a need and an appetite for a more centralized and coordinated approach to engagement. Establishing a **Centre for Community Learning** would make this an even more prominent feature of Capilano University's identity, providing a common space and focus to our initiatives and dreams. Such a centre would serve as a clearinghouse for the already significant work being done in all quarters of our institution, while also making connections to the broader world available to a wider student population. This could be the home of volunteerism and service learning, community based research and civic engagement. By linking pedagogical practices and social action, this centre might forge new relationships and outcomes for capstone courses, community programming, and co-curricular engagement. It would be one way for Capilano University to bring together a whole-community approach to whole-person education.

Promoting a broad-based health-oriented agenda on all our campuses will be a challenge, but an important first step would be for Capilano University to develop a **Strategic Wellness Plan** to galvanize support for our community and identify achievable milestones for improvement. Through the thoughtful and collaborative efforts of stakeholders across campus and in the community, Capilano University could approach wellness not via a single centre, initiative, or program, but as a pervasive perspective that manifests across all of our campuses. If wellness is important to us all, then it should be an integral part of all that we do, all that we are, and all that we expect.

Just as important will be an **Integrated Campuses Strategic Enrollment Plan** that coordinates our approach to the assessment and expansion of all enrolment services. Such a plan would set realistic local, regional, domestic,

and international enrollment targets. It would examine educational services on all campuses to evaluate how best to serve students now and in the future. Most important, it would set the stage for a unified approach to services and support, one that could be implemented over the next four years. Included in this plan will also be the student affairs functions of our educational services, and a potential redesign more closely aligned with student advocacy.

Moving Forward

Defining A Learning University

coming soon

Beyond Business as Usual

coming soon

Appendix A

Vision

Students are drawn to our dynamic and unique programs, passionate faculty, welcoming staff, and close-knit learning environment; graduates are independent learners, thinkers, and doers actively contributing to their communities.

Values

We value:

- Diversity, and the individuality of learners;
- A culture of inquiry and evidence-based decision making;
- Academic integrity;
- Open engagement with ideas and respectful engagement with each other;
- Personal accountability for the integrity and success of the University;
- Commitment to our communities, and;
- Transparency and an ethic of fairness.

Mission

We are a teaching-focused university offering a wide range of programs and services that enable students to succeed in their current studies, in their ongoing education, in their chosen careers, in their lifelong pursuit of knowledge, and in their contribution as responsible citizens in a rapidly changing and diverse global community.

Institutional Goals

Arising from the Mission statement, the Institutional Goals are broadly defined as the general areas of success that are desired for all students. From the Mission, the Institutional Goals are:

- Student success in ongoing education
- Student success in chosen career
- Student success in lifelong pursuit of knowledge
- Student success in contributing as responsible citizens in a rapidly changing and diverse global community

In support of the specific knowledge, understanding, and skills developed in individual programs, the institution has identified seven broad learning outcomes for all students. These institutional student-learning outcomes are:

- Self-directed learning, awareness, and responsibility
- Up-to-date information gathering and research skills
- Communication skills
- Quantitative reasoning ability
- Group and social interaction skills
- Creative, critical, and analytical thinking skills
- Community/global consciousness and responsibility

Student achievement of these outcomes will be defined within the context of each program. While different programs of study will have a different emphasis on each of these outcomes and differing levels of expected competence, all programs are expected to address every outcome. These general student outcomes, along with the program specific outcomes, are the basis for measuring the success of the institution.

Appendix B

Targets and Timelines

Works Consulted