

# Capilano University Academic Plan 2014 – 2018

*“Capilano is a place where a student really has the chance to discover who they are and what they can become and what they can do—for themselves for the community, for the world.” Comment from the Alumni Town Hall*

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## Executive Summary

This plan began with a great deal of listening, learning, and consideration; it was crafted collectively and collaboratively, taking into account the ideas, thoughts, suggestions, and dreams of our community. It is a declaration of hope; not a mirror, but a telescope that looks ahead so we can move forward. Because it is a living document, this plan must be made real on a daily basis through hard work and good faith effort. Indeed, the most important aspect is not any single element, but the collective will of our community to embrace change and participate in growth toward a goal that is different from and perhaps more challenging than any experienced.

*Academic principles* open this plan, articulating that as a teaching-focused university, Capilano will always put student learning first, and as a learning institution we will foster a culture of accountability. We are committed to attracting and retaining students who will complete Capilano credentials; in so doing, we will help them realize their place in a local and global context, and treat them as unique individuals with distinct histories and identities. Upon graduation our students will be leaders and change-makers, aware of and accountable for the environments in which we all live, approaching work and life with a sense of responsibility and a commitment to collaboration. Our graduates will be secure in their experience and expertise, confident that Capilano has prepared them to apply and adapt their talents to a changing world through evidence-informed academic methods and state-of-the-art commercial, industrial, and community practices.

*Academic programming* begins with intentional preparation for success in professional and community life, responsible practices that keep Capilano curriculum current and relevant through ongoing review and improvement, and a commitment to distinctive and successful programs. A Capilano education will be an integrative experience that embraces many fields, emphasizes broad learning, provides relevant practical preparation and diverse intellectual engagement; it will help students be knowledgeable enough for today, and nimble enough for tomorrow. Our programs favour experiential learning and real-world proficiencies, with credentials that are rigorous, current, relevant, valued, and in demand. Capilano students participate in the formation of their professional selves in a transformational context.

*Academic support* refers to addressing Capilano student needs through wellness, educational, and community services. Coordinated efforts support campus recreation, promote awareness of and attention to psychological well-being, and enhance our support of creativity, performance, discussion, and debate. Capilano University will take an integrated approach to

improving institutional infrastructure, expand and consolidate academic services focused on learning success and foundational skills, and invigorate our attention to readiness and career services. Students are full partners in this educational enterprise, so we will focus more attention on advocacy and peer learning. We will promote pedagogical excellence and innovation in our Learning Commons and by re-visioning learning support for students, staff, faculty, and the institution as a whole. Our community will be enhanced through a dedicated focus on service learning, local partnerships, and collaboration with academic institutions throughout the regions we serve.

The plan ends with suggestions for moving forward and appendixes pointing toward strategic planning, possible timelines, and foundational values. Potential directions include new possibilities for student access and preparation, pathways to completion, and the nature of a Capilano University degree. Also included are indications of what it means to be a learning university, and a promise to move beyond what is expected, to what can be imagined; two ideas that are inseparable. Learning universities are dedicated not only to student learning, but also to an ongoing process of review that requires staff, faculty, and administrative areas to learn and grow according to measured outcomes. For these things to happen Capilano University will need to make choices, commit resources, and move beyond what is currently considered to be the status quo. No program will remain untouched, and the next four years will yield a different academic profile than those that came before.

This academic plan serves as a starting point for Capilano University's strategic plan, which will help guide decision-making and lead to more opportunities. The first appendix delineates some possibilities that might be addressed by a strategic plan, ranging from specific development processes to the creation of new centres and units, each with a speculative target date. The second appendix collects these strategic suggestions and puts them in a four-year time frame. The plan closes with an articulation of the institutional value statements that have informed this plan, and will continue to be discussed and debated over the next four years. All of this is to indicate that this academic plan is only the first in a long line of steps Capilano will be taking to re-imagine itself and its future. As with this document, the process of moving forward will be both collaborative and consultative, leading to the collective transformation of learning, teaching, and academic work at Capilano University.

## Academic Planning

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 to the larger provincial universities. Over time, 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 in 2008; this came in part from a recognition that the college had been successful in developing programs and curriculum that provided graduates with degrees that would contribute to their long-term success.

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 was guided by the Vice President Academic, and Provost, and developed through broad consultation and outreach including a period of input solicitation, a development team of Senate and administration representatives, a rigorous drafting process, multiple public forums, and presentation for approval at the Senate and the Board of Governors. It is based on input gathered from: direct invitation to stakeholder groups including the Alumni Association, Student Union, Faculty Association, and Canadian Office and Professional Employees union; presentation to and solicitation of communication from all Faculties and academic units; grassroots calls for involvement through a university website; and, surveys sent to members of the wider community.

In early 2014, there began an iterative drafting process based on materials received, consultation, redrafting, and more consultation. Throughout the entire process, we have kept at the forefront Capilano University's mission and goals, learning outcomes and core themes, our dedication to student learning and student success as well as our commitment to dialogue and collegiality. Our provincial mandates have also been key to the development of the plan, including our regional obligations and student population targets. Finally, and most significantly, all the input provided has been taken into account; from the early conversations surrounding university status and preparation for accreditation, to ideas submitted in the fall of 2013, to feedback received in the spring of 2014, it has been the community's voice that directed the development of this plan and its vision.

## Academic Principles

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. All plans begin with a solid foundation of values and goals, perspectives and positions. For Capilano University's foundation is made up of our mission, institutional student learning outcomes, and core themes (see Appendix C). Our mission statement states that we are a "teaching-intensive university offering a wide range of programs and services." We provide our students with academic programming and services necessary to maintain their safety, security, well-being, and success, like all universities, but we are also teaching focused, a distinction bestowed by the province and worn with much pride. For teaching and learning sit at the core of our identity, driving all that we do and all that we are. We also embrace a set of student learning outcomes that support specific knowledge, understanding, and skills developed in individual programs. 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. They inspire other outcomes within courses and programs.

At Capilano, we also embrace three core themes (opportunity, learning, community) supporting our mission and outcomes, 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 inspiration, connection, and the involvement of all members of the university family, helping them imagine and explore new correlations and new engagements with the public we all serve, enhancing the mutual support and collaboration of our common cause. These are the foundations upon which our principles are built.

### **Our Students**

At Capilano University, students come first; they are the population we serve and the reason we exist. In the last forty-plus years, Capilano has helped a wide variety of individuals reach and re-imagine their academic goals. For those students the first principle, and primary driver has always been learning; it is the reason our students come to university. Many come with a dedication to pursue specific university credentials; others seek the right path to success and fulfillment in a variety of courses. Capilano University has always provided clear options and preparation for students in

transition to other academic contexts, but has frequently given these students **a reason to come and a reason to stay**; students now transfer to as well as from our programs, and we intend to continue this trend.

The Capilano University community is broad and diverse. We exist as a post-secondary institution thanks to the efforts of the North Shore, Howe Sound Corridor, and Sunshine Coast, and our university programs will always serve this traditional catchment area. We acknowledge that our campuses stand on traditional territories of the Squamish, Sechelt, Lil'wat, Tsleil Waututh, and Musqueam Nations and we will continue to work closely with the Nations, building on our long history. We are committed to providing all Aboriginal students with programming and services that support their culture and their university learning. The First Nations Student Centre, Kéxwusm-áyakn, continues to be a hub for learning and sharing of knowledge. Increasingly, our community includes much of the lower mainland, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and beyond. We see our students as **local citizens in a global world** who come to Capilano because it is the best choice for their educational goals and economic future. They come from every province and many nations, bringing diverse beliefs and different experiences, varying levels of preparation and ever-changing expectations. They come in part because Capilano University has been and continues to be a community of opportunity, a place to succeed in post-secondary studies, and an institution committed to supporting the goals and aspirations of all our students.

Capilano is committed to educating not just for intellectual and professional outcomes, but for personal and social goals as well. Our approach includes everything from a high quality university education to a high quality university experience, acknowledging that students are unique individuals with distinct hopes and dreams, experiences and attitudes, histories and predispositions. This **whole-person education** means understanding and addressing the different ways of seeing, learning, knowing, and being found in our student community. It includes facilitating the 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 variety of human nature and existence, expressed in aesthetic, cultural, ethnic, geographical, and theological diversity, including the emotional and spiritual components that make up who we are.

### **Our Graduates**

At Capilano we put learning first and expect our students to take learning seriously, to be intentional in their choices and thoughtful in their goals. We view students as complex individuals, and encourage them to experience, recognize, and celebrate the diversity of our community and our world.

When we look at our students today we see the leaders and change-makers of tomorrow, and we are dedicated to helping them build the education they want, to provide the directions they choose. For what matters most is not the one, two, four or more years of a Capilano education, but the impact that education has on our students and our society. It is in our graduates that we most accurately see the meaning and value of Capilano University.

This is the premise behind our institutional student learning outcomes, and one of the reasons awareness and local/global consciousness figure so prominently. Our goals also include the proposition that students graduating from Capilano will have achieved some level of **mindfulness**, 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 and to judge without passing judgment. Linked to this is a sense of **stewardship**, a realization that we as individuals are accountable for the care of our physical, intellectual, social, and cultural surroundings, 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 aware of the benefits, commitments, and challenges that come with working and living in a community. They also understand that community is always shared, that relationships require tending, effort, commitment, and openness to others, and that accomplishment comes through **collaboration**. Capilano University thrives on common effort, and that ethic is central to our graduates' skill set and professional practice. Whether in academic 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 connected society. That connection and collective understanding forms the basis of **responsibility**. Our graduates know that personal interaction and professional conduct, active awareness and civic participation, social change and cultural impact, all begin with individual and shared responsibility. They understand and embrace the realization that they are persons, not merely future employees and taxpayers. This is a way of being as well as a way of knowing, both a predisposition and a considered choice. It is also connected to what Capilano University sees as a greater purpose, a commitment to social justice and sustainability that we embrace as an institution.

We see Capilano as a place where graduates learn to be **agents of change**, variously defined and broadly realized. They are inventors and explorers, entrepreneurs and innovators, makers and pioneers, 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 they are also our neighbours, co-workers, colleagues, and friends, especially when the 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. At Capilano, our graduates know the value of social capital, embrace the responsibilities of social innovation, and define for a new generation the idea of social engagement.

Our students come 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 within the context of a wider world. 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, training, and future success.

Yet what brings all of our graduates' attributes together and makes them function effectively is an understanding that regardless of their chosen course of study or career path, the one constant of the future will be change. For that reason, our students leave Capilano with the ability to respond creatively, thoughtfully, and knowledgeably to industry shifts, marketplace adjustments, cultural trends, and social pressures. This **adaptability** comes in part from our institutional commitment to educating beyond the narrow parameters of an individual discipline or profession. Our students learn beyond the textbook, outside the margins, and as a result are better able to think on their feet, make unexpected connections, and respond to the demands of today and tomorrow. We ask our students to know more than content, think past the test, and strive to embody the definition of a well-rounded citizen, a broadly educated university graduate.

We are confident that our graduates will be successful, because we know they are ready for the work they have chosen, the world in which they will operate. Because perhaps above all else, graduates leave Capilano secure in the **applicability** of their preparation. Our graduates are some of the best prepared in Canada. Coming to Capilano University means engaging with a professional environment that is current, connected, and carefully orchestrated to meet the needs of today's classroom, tomorrow's marketplace. It also means encountering the complex ideas and challenging viewpoints of a changing planet; relevance at Capilano is about information and knowledge, attentiveness and responsiveness, critical perception and

practical choice, nimbleness and creativity and persistence. These are the skills, predispositions, and cultivated attitudes of a Capilano graduate.

## Our Story

One of Capilano University's key features continues to be 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 elements, working together throughout the curriculum, through students and faculty fully engaged with external partners, creates an integrative approach to professional education. At Capilano University, we are committed to our students experiencing **extraordinary learning through community and opportunity**. But such an approach is not easy to orchestrate, let alone achieve. It requires a robust and ongoing relationship between Capilano and the industries, organizations, and public its programming supports. This approach is reinforced through local connections and commitments, linking experience in the field with expertise fostered in the classroom, lab, studio, and rehearsal space. It thrives within a pedagogical environment of risk and innovation, challenge and review, ever changing to keep pace with our thriving community and expanding sphere of opportunity and influence.

What makes this possible is Capilano's commitment to **evidence-informed innovation and integrated practices**. Credential courses, pathways, and programs address the needs of students and the expectations of the workplace, determined through analysis of available data and constant connection to industry standards. We are committed to helping students achieve clearly stated outcomes, and utilize a variety of tools and processes to assess learning and determine success. Evidence should be the basis of all curricular decision-making, the source of continuous review and revision, so we strive to integrate observation, investigation, analysis, and improvement into all of our practices.

Capilano provides an education that is applicable to students' futures, preparing them for growth and success. A **culture of accountability** is at the heart of our university identity; we are dedicated to evidence-informed decisions and actions, reflection as well as real stocktaking and thoughtful response. Accountability is how we remain relevant in a changing and changeable world, it is the basis for understanding ourselves, determines how we learn, and is central to re-visioning and building what we hope to be. We acknowledge that the best decisions are made with complete information and through shared understanding. But more than a series of numbers and measures, our approach to accountability is a conceptual and practical way to insure responsible appraisal, coordinated decision-making, shared knowledge, and collective awareness. It is the thread that runs throughout our story and allows us to maintain our identity as a university.

## Academic Programming

The academic programming we offer, our courses and credentials, defines us for our stakeholders and audiences, internal and external. Our credential programs offer a high level of intentional preparation, a coherence borne of attention to the needs of our students as they move through a variety of 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 and the community. Likewise, Capilano has learned an important lesson from its attention to professional readiness—the best education for any student, regardless of their level of preparation or ultimate academic goals, will always be based in responsible practices subject to ongoing review and revision. The regular assessment process, of student work but also curriculum and teaching practice, keeps programs current, agile, and pertinent. At Capilano, we are committed to learning for understanding and change, teaching that addresses the needs of the student and the field, a curriculum both rigorous in its expectations and vigorous in its experiential relevance. A special purpose teaching university must provide training and preparation for distinctive professions, and support for terminal credentials in those areas appropriate to our mission and mandate. Capilano’s focus is on the labour force of the future—industries and enterprises that persist, and sustainable professions. In an era of competition and comparison, it is important that we focus primarily on students who are “Capilano Bound” with regard to their educational goals. This means providing programs that are distinctive, celebrated, and successful—unique opportunities and options that distinguish Capilano from other post-secondary institutions.

### The Capilano Difference

At Capilano University, we are committed to access, preparation, readiness, and success for all students. Capilano College was a point of entry 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. We continue to offer access to high school students, adult learners and everyone in between, but our commitments to post-secondary entrance have merged with our dedication to **preparation, completion, and future success**, resulting in a renewed and redefined focus on retention and completion.

This shift in expectations and intentions has brought new ways of supporting students through a seamless progression from fundamental to university level studies. Learners want and need to be on the road to a chosen endpoint. When they come to university, students are encouraged to map out a pathway for their studies, including their ultimate goal, and how that

will allow them to live the life they desire; then they take courses to be well prepared in the areas and arenas in which they wish to succeed. We are committed to meeting students where they are and helping them progress to meeting their chosen goals. Articulating these **intentional pathways** to success will be the responsibility of our students, but making them possible is up to us. 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.

We will accomplish this through pedagogical practices that are demonstrably successful, teaching and learning approaches that lead most effectively to engagement, understanding, and success. These **high impact practices** have been studied and tested, they represent not an exhaustive list of sure-fire strategies but ways that Capilano University has chosen to approach our commitment to students. These include 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 is happening in many programs, but at Capilano we hope to expand this practice and make it an option for all. Likewise, many of our degree programs employ capstone experiences 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 in many of our programs while 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 and will ultimately expand 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 capacities we hope to cultivate in our students.

### **The Capilano Capacities**

Our world has become more complicated than anyone could have dreamed, and students need a plethora of skills and abilities to survive and thrive in an ever-changing environment. For this reason, we expect students to learn broadly, experience widely, explore deeply—to chart their own academic paths, but 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 to create a more complete picture, a more unified understanding, many are; and all our purposeful pathways embrace the integrative nature of

contemporary life. Education at Capilano is an **integrative** and **trans-disciplinary** experience, from the first course to the final project.

Such a capacity for understanding across disciplines requires commitment to learning within disciplines as well, for something must be known before it can be combined. At Capilano this means merging the **general** and the **practical**. Our current political and economic climate has led many to conclude that university education should lead to immediate, successful employment and that career advancement and achievement should be the goal of post-secondary studies. Employers do need educated and trained graduates—they also need socially, interpersonally, environmentally aware individuals, with broad-based knowledge and understanding, who are critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators and problem solvers. Our world changes quickly, so we need to be adaptable and equipped, academically, with transferable skills and knowledge. This is the goal of Capilano's general education: fostering abilities and skills, literacies and understandings, perspectives and positions that cross disciplines and prepare students for meaningful engagement with their world. But our commitment to general education is in integral part of, not separate from, the practical education that draws many students to our university.

One of Capilano's strengths has always been our ability to provide students with an academic experience 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, but it is a capacity 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; a Capilano University education will always be relevant to the practices of the past, present, and future. But relevance only has value if it is recognized through the demonstration of skills, aptitudes, and the confidence that comes with understanding. This is why Capilano emphasizes the combination of practical relevance exhibited through recognizable achievements.

### **The Capilano Practices**

In order to thrive as a 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, our commitment to **academic rigour** remains constant. Whether students are attending for a single class or a four-year degree, they will encounter the best knowledge, pedagogy, and practice on offer. For at Capilano University, 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 promise—one that is constantly revitalized through evaluation 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. To this end, Capilano University focuses on **real-world proficiencies** in the practice of learning and teaching. Capilano's forté has always been our understanding of student and community demand, our commitment to practical experience and impact, and above all our ability to address the needs of graduates and the professions to which they aspire.

To perform in the world of work and practice our students first need direct experience of that world within and beyond the university environment. For this reason, Capilano supports and encourages **experiential learning** in our curriculum, enabling students to combine theoretical knowledge and in-class instruction with practical activities and real-world impact. Experiential learning takes many forms, is found in virtually all of our programs, and represents a cornerstone of our pedagogy and our planning for the future.

Our practices produce both **formative and transformative learning experiences** for our students and our institution. Formative in the sense of intentional identity development that merges the personal, the social, and the practical. It is a process that builds responsibility and accountability into the actions of the individual. Transformative refers to the changes that occur in students with regard to their beliefs, behaviours, and sense of self. We believe Capilano University is a place where students can actively participate in the creation of their personal and professional selves while engaging in a transformative learning process that places them in a larger context.

Capilano will continue to offer credentials that reflect the rigour, relevance, and applicability of our curriculum. We will demonstrate distinctiveness through the individuality of our credentials and the accomplishments of our graduates. This is especially true of our degree pathways, which incorporate the principles of a Capilano education, both general and field specific, and a commitment to career development in all programs. We are committed to students entering Capilano University on a road to completion and success, and must therefore demonstrate, through consistent metrics and ongoing appraisal, that we offer **meaningful credentials that are rigorous, current, relevant, valued, and in demand.**

## Academic Support

Student success is a collective responsibility, a communal good. 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. We recognize all goals, outcomes, principles, and practices require support structures that keep the university, and the student experience, operating on a daily basis. In terms of academic support, Capilano begins with a whole-person approach to integrated and integrative services that accepts: no single aspect of a student's experience can be taken in isolation; students come to us with their own special circumstances; we all have lives beyond the boundaries of our campuses; and, education is about more than academic subjects and instruction. Students learn and live best when connected to a greater good, working in the world, and we strive to provide all students with a fruitful and fulfilling community experience that begins on our campuses and expands into the rest of our region. Capilano University 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 is vitally important to our future as a university; it is the bedrock for all academic activity, a necessary component of a complete and positive post-secondary experience. Capilano University is committed to a dedicated wellness agenda focusing on the physical, mental, and social health of our community, but as with other programming agendas, support must be viewed holistically as an integral part of our larger and more complex ecosystem, a dedicated feature of our identity. Capilano has the benefit of beautiful natural settings, and students are drawn to our campuses in part because of their proximity to recreational activities, providing an entrée into **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 recreation and physical activity. Balance figures prominently in any ongoing commitment to wellness, and Capilano provides the natural venue for promoting healthful lifestyles for students, staff, and faculty. Already there are community opportunities and small-scale offerings such as yoga classes, mountain biking, and the like. The next step is for Capilano to expand coordinated efforts and support additional recreational activities, leading to deeper engagement with campus communities as well as academic success.

Physical health is one 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. Post-secondary students 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 **counselling and mental health** services at Capilano provide a wealth of opportunities, individual and collective, for students in need of support; they are also key to promoting greater awareness of and attention to the importance of psychological well-being. Encouraging healthy minds and healthy bodies includes attending 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 throughout our university.

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 cultivated through student, staff, and faculty involvement, Capilano has a deep-seated commitment to **cultural engagement and social health**, another feature of general wellness. This is made visible through music and theatre performances, public speakers and special events, drumming circles and paper airplane tosses, Sportsplex dances and springtime egg hunts. It is also a feature of student life activities, including formal student governance organizations and informal international student gatherings and excursions. But there is still much more to do. As Capilano University moves toward a clearer vision of its academic future, we must redouble our efforts to promote and foster the social growth of our community on our campuses and around our region.

### **Educational Services**

As we have grown from college to university, our services have not always been able to keep pace, but moving into our second half-century Capilano recognizes that these areas make everything else possible. Robust and responsive educational services help establish Capilano as a full member of the BC university community. At the base of our educational support systems are structural areas that keep us operating on an even keel and provide students with the information and assistance they need. These components of **institutional infrastructure** range from recruitment and admissions to financial assistance and advising to instructional technology and support. Going forward, Capilano University will need to approach all institutional infrastructure areas from an integrated, unified strategic direction, to support students on their path to success.

Equally important is our student affairs area, 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 the administrative aspects of the university and student life. This is often the point of contact for students whose academic performance has suffered, or who have some significant disconnect between their life and their academic goals. But this is also the home of student activities, the go-to place for staging an event, coordinating student governance, and facilitating campus collaboration. This area serves a **student advocacy** role; it is a conduit between students and the university infrastructure, playing a vital role in student and university success.

For some students there would be no success without the areas that help students enter, experience, understand, and move beyond university life. They are the avenues to **academic success and support**, and include: access services facilitating successful transition into and within the university; accessibility services for students with physical, psychological, or learning disabilities; and, **learning and foundation services**. These last support basic learning needs through a variety of activities ranging from courses and workshops to tutorials and drop-in centres. Learning services address coping and self-regulation strategies, university preparation, academic skills development and more. Foundation services refer to more specific foundational skills often based in a disciplinary or trans-disciplinary framework; these include writing and composition support, 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 areas that help students successfully move to university and 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, evaluation of work-related skill sets, and life skills ranging from balancing a cheque book to navigating the path to permanent residency. Career services has both an instrumental and an aspirational identity; this is where students come for job listings, interview workshops, potential career paths, and general labour force readiness. These 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, and as such it is vital that we put our students' learning ahead of all other considerations. We are 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 **learning excellence and innovation**. But such a focus is fraught with competing goods, complicated negotiations, and the desire to assess, improve, and innovate responsibly. Nevertheless, there are ways learning excellence can be addressed and achieved, and innovation can be nurtured and given a chance to grow.

Central to this growth is the Capilano University Library, which serves as the conduit for knowledge and information in support of meaning making, and the organizational core of our intellectual community. The Library works closely with faculty on the integration of information literacy skills into our curriculum, providing “innovative, holistic options for library instruction.” As we build towards the planned **Learning Commons**, the Library will become more integrated with key student academic services, serving as a crossroads for research, creativity, and practice focused on learning scholarship.

In addressing the needs and opportunities of learning excellence, we cannot forget that the student role is changing. Once considered the recipient of knowledge transfer, we know that students are fully involved and complicit in the practices and outcomes of their own education. We see **students as full partners** in the academic enterprise. 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 our greatest resources, and full partners in our educational endeavours. 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 a teaching-focused, learning-centred university are robust, visible, and forward-looking approaches to community services. This includes a commitment to community based learning and the infrastructure that entails, as well as greater attention to the cultivation and maintenance of partnerships to support student learning and improve prospects for employment and engagement. Such a commitment requires embracing a connection between Capilano University and its academic colleagues, in the K-12 systems and the greater post-secondary world. It also means making Capilano 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.

This commitment is also evident 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. This is experiential learning at its most active, its most applicable, and it promotes not only a deeper appreciation of academic subject matter, but also a clear connection between knowledge and application. In championing service learning we must insure that students are achieving desired outcomes, while organizations are receiving the help they need. It is a symbiotic relationship that benefits both sides of the collaboration.

Likewise, **community partnerships** are central to student success. Capilano University has already developed a robust relationship with many business, community, educational, not-for-profit, and service organizations in the region; whether these involve shared activities or donated resources, sponsorships or capital contributions, short or long term affiliations, reciprocal community enterprise figures prominently in our identity and our future. Capilano forges meaningful connections, and cultivates mutually beneficial partnerships at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Indeed, **primary, secondary, and post-secondary collaboration** has always been an important feature of our identity. 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. K-16 initiatives have more potential for growth, innovation, and success than many other collaborative endeavours. One opportunity can be found in 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 school-university alignment can also occur through shared resource management, teacher-to-teacher collaborations, peer mentorships, parent involvement supports, and much more. Capilano University shares many attributes and aspirations with university and college peers, and has already established long-standing, strong connections through program alignment, articulation, and natural collaboration. As the sector becomes more polarized, Capilano can define more clearly the features that distinguish our educational experience from that of our peers, putting us not in competition but in juxtaposition, and opening the door to collaborative endeavours around the kind of learning, teaching, and engagement that we champion.

Also of note 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 the North Shore. To continue this regional approach to local learning, Capilano looks to a more strategic vision of the multi-campus model that capitalizes on the strengths of each geographic and cultural area, and celebrates our unified educational community. Becoming more intentional about the roles and responsibilities of all campuses, more coordinated and creative in our planning process, is in the best interests of students and our broad base of community supporters.

Distinguishing what makes a Capilano University experience different is an important goal; 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 build **social capital**, and increase its already substantial identity as a community destination. 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 becoming like other universities, or it can be achieved through differentiation by becoming unlike other universities. Capilano University has already made its choice; we are not like other universities. Now we must build on our “unlike qualities” to create a definition of ourselves. In doing so, we will make it clear that we have become a destination for ideas, innovation, and resources, as well as students, faculty, and staff, that will yield something different, something better. But first we will have to make clear to our community what it is that we are doing differently, especially for our students.

## Moving Forward

**Defining a learning university** has been part of this academic plan from its beginning almost a year ago, and has continued throughout the process. For Capilano University that means smaller classes taught by dedicated teachers and industry professionals, relevant courses offering experiential learning through engagement with real-world problems, meaningful credentials that lead all of our students into rewarding careers and global citizenship, and student success as a universal goal both during and beyond university. It also means grounding all credentials in practical, experiential learning, building a framework of transferable skills, making all learning visible via institutional accountability and ongoing program assessment, and keeping learning and improvement at the center of all we do.

As we move toward **our goal** over the next four years, we will continue to strengthen our core programming and define the learning that is most clearly our own, expanding in some areas and contracting in others. To achieve our new goals we must move beyond the model that stood us in good stead as a college, and create a new approach to learning, teaching, intellectual engagement, and community collaboration. During the next four years, Capilano University will do this through a number of specific initiatives. We will improve retention and completion for all students, especially those from Aboriginal, international, and at-risk populations. By expanding and enhancing program assessment and institutional accountability practices we will promote ongoing improvement of learning, teaching, and service. Capilano will create an integrated general education experience for all degree students that is interdisciplinary and intentional, drawing on the best that we have to offer and the brightest ideas available from around the world. We will change the campus conversation about learning, service, wellness, and enrolment through consultation, dialogue, experimentation, and structural reorganization. And within the next four years we will review and revise all Capilano credentials to align with university directions and commitments to preparation, pathways, and experiential learning.

For almost fifty years Capilano has done an extraordinary job of meeting students where they are, serving the needs of those who might not otherwise have access to post-secondary education, and providing exemplary support for non-traditional learners. Capilano University is no less committed to this mission, but we realize that a new century and a new identity require a new approach to addressing the needs and abilities of a new kind of learner. It is no longer enough to get students into university; we must dedicate ourselves to helping them move through, intentionally and successfully. To that end Capilano University will offer:

- A **supportive place** where students learn how to succeed in post-secondary education. This will include a focus on
  - University preparation coursework,
  - Coordinated skills assessment and development,
  - Dedicated learning communities, and
  - Creation of a first year “Cap Year Experience.”

Many students come to Capilano University with a particular program in mind, but for others the university experience is filled with potential and possibilities, as well as trepidation and uncertainty. For these students, and all of those in between, Capilano will provide not just a myriad of opportunities, but also a series of well-defined options that will lead them from the beginning to the end of their university journey. Capilano University will offer for one and all:

- A **clear path** that students can follow to post-secondary success and completion. This will include many possibilities including
  - First-year and inbound transfer support,
  - Aboriginal student transition programming,
  - Structured international student pathways,
  - Student learning portfolio assistance.

Woven through this plan is the message that Capilano University is dedicated to experiential learning, strong connections with tomorrow's career opportunities, and practical preparation for life and work and much more. This can be seen in all of our programs but is particularly clear in degree and other credential programs. Moving forward, Capilano University will commit to offering:

- **Real-world preparation** for all students in all credential programs. This will involve a combination of
  - Broad interdisciplinary coursework in years three and four,
  - Experiential learning opportunities in all degree programs,
  - Milestone opportunities for self-directed learning,
  - Capstone courses for career and life readiness.

We are a teaching university, a learning university. We are dedicated to meaningful educational experiences that have a lasting impact on students, academic programming that provides the preparation necessary to survive and thrive, and pedagogical practices that address the particulars of ever-more-specialized careers operating within an ever-expanding, increasingly-complex, and constantly-changing world. We are the first choice for students seeking extraordinary learning and meaningful opportunities within a supportive and dedicated community. We are Capilano University.

## Appendix A – Strategic Directions

As a result of the academic planning process, a number of action items have come to the fore. These represent possible strategic directions the university might take during the next four years. They are not definitive or exhaustive, but they do provide a place to begin thinking about how Capilano University might be different in four years than it is today.

- Capilano University has a mechanism for annual review of learning and pursues a robust program of assessment, but to better understand and improve learning and to be more in alignment with the attributes, outcomes, and values that constitute a Capilano education, we commit to **revisiting our assessment processes from Summer 2014 onward in order to foster continuous ongoing improvement.**
- To promote Aboriginal student learning and success, Capilano has committed resources toward a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities. The university is dedicated to increasing Aboriginal student enrolment and improving graduation rates, expanding collaboration with partners, and raising awareness of indigenous peoples and their histories. We will **craft an Aboriginal Student Success Strategy before the end of Fall 2014.**
- International students are a vital part of our community, and it is important that they continue to find in Capilano a welcoming, supportive, engaging, and encouraging environment. In order to maintain our commitment to these students, we must be intentional in our programming across the university community. We will create an **International Student Recruitment and Retention Strategy before the end of Fall 2014.**
- It is imperative that we understand our students' academic backgrounds, levels of achievement, and post-secondary experience, as well as how they plan to use their education to succeed. To determine immediate and long-term needs, and articulate a clearer understanding of our students, Capilano will **complete a Strategic Data Plan before Spring 2015.**
- As we redouble efforts to understand and improve student learning Capilano will make real our commitment to ongoing accountability through a formal cycle of program review. All credential programs will begin planning and implementation of accountability strategies, extending our responsibility from completion into placement and success after graduation. **Accountability strategies will be reviewed Spring 2015, formal program reviews begin Fall 2015.**

- We are committed to fostering and supporting integrative, intentional, and interdisciplinary work in the areas of pedagogy, scholarship, and practice. Capilano University continues to break down barriers between areas of study, fields of research, disciplines and professions. One step in this direction will be a working group dedicated to collaboration and cooperation between academic units across the campuses, making public the good work already underway and promoting still more. This **committee on campus collaboration will be organized in Fall 2014, with recommendations presented before Spring 2015.**
- To demonstrate our commitment to practical education and meaningful credentials, all programs will collect and make public compelling data regarding the reputation, rigour, currency, relevance, and value of their curriculum. These data may draw from students, graduates, employers, government, etc. Capilano will **collect program results and produce a Credentials Summary Report each year beginning Summer 2015.**
- One of the strongest indicators of success and satisfaction for a university education comes from the opportunity to share early experiences with a wide group of students. While Capilano's structure and demographics work against a common first year experience, we can 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 interested students with a shared first year including a common curriculum and extra-curricular support; showcase what makes Capilano University distinctive in terms of program offerings and educational experiences; and, offer an attractive, purposeful alternative to the "gap year" many students seek before embarking on their chosen academic trajectory. The Cap Year might focus on social action and community engagement, global affairs or study abroad, or be a foundation year of preparatory studies to increase the likelihood of success. There could even be a Cap Year designed to help students transition into Canadian advanced education. It would not be required, would not take the place of general education, but the Cap Year could provide a venue for much of the programming Capilano values. Working together, the Capilano University community will therefore **create the first Cap Year Experience to begin as a pilot in Fall 2015.**
- In capstone courses, students are provided with a culminating experience at the end of their degree path, to synthesize prior coursework and integrate learning experiences within and beyond the academy. Often capstones are intentionally interdisciplinary, providing a venue for stepping out of individual programs to achieve deeper meaning, or specifically focused on bridging theory and practice in support of a

defined career path. Capstones can also be focused on each student's next step after university. Students aiming at graduate school can use capstones to prepare for the rigors of academic inquiry, while those looking to enter the workforce will explore career options and clarify opportunities. In all of its incarnations, the capstone is often a defining feature of a student's education. For these and other reasons, **Capilano University will guarantee a capstone experience for all degree students graduating after Fall 2015.**

- 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. Part intentional learning strategy and part commitment to success on completion, purposeful pathways provide Capilano students with a roadmap from where they begin to where they want to end. Whether in the form of a guided cohort curriculum or self-designed trajectories for unique career goals, transition routes into university from two-year colleges or transfer options to other universities, work-related credentialing for the short term or multiple possibilities for degree completion, **purposeful pathways will become central to all students' experience at Capilano University before Fall 2016.**
- Although still in the formative stages, we are committed to providing all Capilano University students with general education learning outcomes that integrate with discipline-related skills so students are prepared for career success, professional practice, active citizenship, and a capacity for life-long learning. We will work to define general education at Capilano, creating opportunities for students to have a meaningful, passionate and reflective engagement with the world and people that surround them. The process begins now, so that **all degree students can demonstrate achievement of measured general education outcomes before graduating in Spring 2016 and thereafter.**
- Because learning is at our core, and success is our goal for all students, we commit to improving retention and working with all students to help them achieve their academic and career goals. We dedicate ourselves to improving the student experience, making the application-to-graduating process more efficient and transparent, promoting a culture of support and success, and building a system of peer assistance. This includes building a portal for students to access university information and services, an early warning system to identify and assist students at risk, and a mechanism for student-to-student mentoring, tutoring, and support. Review and possible implementation of these and other **strategies to promote student success will begin Summer 2014.**

- Given the centrality of learning at Capilano, and our own identification as a teaching and learning centered institution, educational support takes a prominent role in our next steps. While there are many approaches to building capacity in learning and teaching, the most logical would be to establish a coordinating entity, responsible for centralizing services and opportunities, to gather inter-related aspects of academic support and learning theory, best practices in the field, and a professional approach to improvement. More than a teaching and learning centre, this would be a nexus for inquiry, understanding, and improvement. Therefore, Capilano commits to taking the first steps toward a **Centre for Integrative Learning by Fall 2014 with full operation by Fall 2018.**
- Promoting a broad-based health-oriented agenda on all our campuses will be a challenge, but through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders on campus and in the community Capilano University could approach wellness as a pervasive perspective that manifests across all our campuses. If wellness is important, then it should be an integral part of all that we do, all that we are, and all that we expect. An important first step would be to galvanize support for and identify achievable milestones for improvement through a **Strategic Wellness Plan, collaboratively developed during Fall 2014 and completed by Spring 2015.**
- Just as important will be coordination of our approach to evaluation and expansion of all enrolment services. In order to set realistic local, regional, domestic, and international targets we would need to examine educational services on all campuses to evaluate how best to serve students now and in the future. Beginning immediately, Capilano University commits to creating a unified system for services and support over the next four years. Included in this approach would also be the student affairs functions of our educational services, a potential redesign more closely aligned with student advocacy, and the creation of an **Integrated Campuses Strategic Enrolment Plan completed by Spring 2015 with early steps taken for Fall 2015.**
- Given our move toward differentiation based on experiential, real world learning, and our established strengths in the areas of community connection, industry collaboration, and job readiness, there is a need and an appetite for more centralized and coordinated approaches to engagement. To make this an even more prominent feature of Capilano's identity, providing a common space and focus to our initiatives and dreams, we commit to establishing a **Centre for Community Learning by Fall 2015 with full operation by Fall 2018.**

## Appendix B – Anticipated Milestones

**2014**

Spring:

- Adoption of the Capilano University 2014-2018 Academic Plan
- Initial development of Capilano University 2015-2018 Strategic Plan

Summer:

- Begin to revisit assessment processes in order to foster continuous ongoing improvement
- Review and initiate institutional strategies to promote student success
- Begin review and development of capstone experiences for all degree students graduating after Fall 2015
- Begin work on Integrated Campuses Strategic Enrolment Plan
- Begin Centre for Integrative Learning development process
- Begin Centre for Community Learning development process
- Begin development of a Capilano approach to general education

Fall:

- Aboriginal Student Success Strategy developed
- International Student Recruitment and Retention Strategy developed
- Strategic Data Plan developed
- Strategic Wellness Plan developed
- Committee on campus collaboration organized
- Begin consultation for Capilano University 2015-2018 Strategic Plan
- Begin development of the Cap Year Experience pilot
- Development of measurable general education learning outcomes
- Purposeful pathways development
- Development of program accountability strategies

**2015**

Spring:

- Committee on campus collaboration presents recommendations
- Strategic Wellness Plan completed
- Accountability strategies reviewed
- Begin review of Capilano University 2014-2018 Academic Plan
- Formal adoption of Capilano University 2015-2018 Strategic Plan
- Begin measurement of general education learning outcomes
- Development of Capilano general education curriculum
- Program Credentials Reports completed

Summer:

- Credentials Summary Report completed
- Apply to the Ministry of Advanced Education for exempt status

Fall:

- Pilot the Cap Year Experience
- Capstone experience available to all graduating degree students
- Integrated Campuses Strategic Enrolment Plan completed
- Program accountability strategies reviews
- Implementation of Capilano general education curriculum
- Purposeful pathways pilot

**2016**

Spring:

- Measured general education outcomes demonstrable for all degree students

Fall:

- Purposeful pathways become central to all students' experience
- Capilano University 2018-2023 Academic Plan formal consultation begins

**2017**

Summer:

- Capilano University 2018-2023 Academic Plan process begins
- Application for Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada membership and Tri-Council recognition

**2018**

Summer:

- Capilano University 2018-2023 Academic Plan adopted

Fall:

- Centre for Community Learning fully operational
- Centre for Integrative Learning fully operational
- Capilano University 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration

## Appendix C – Guiding Statements

### 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

- 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.

### **Core Themes**

**Opportunity:** This core theme is about ensuring access to opportunities for engagement with an academic environment that inspires and encourages them to explore themselves and their communities in new and productive ways, leading to enhanced learning within and beyond the university.

**Learning:** This core theme 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:** This core theme is about inspiring, connecting and engaging all members of the University community, helping them imagine and explore new connections and new engagements with the public we all serve, enhancing the mutual support and collaboration of our communities.