

# SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

## Summer 2020

The UBC Sustainability Initiative (USI) is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the [application guide](#) to confirm your eligibility before applying.
- **Applications close at midnight on Sunday February 2, 2020.**

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### **Research project title: What does “Access to Nature” mean to Vancouverites, and can we map it?**

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#### **Research supports the following policies:**

- Greenest City Action Plan/ Climate Emergency Response Plan  
Specific goal area/ big move(s): Access to Nature
- Healthy City Strategy  
Specific goal area (s): Active Living and Getting outside, Environments to Thrive In
- Other: VanPlay, Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan

#### **Outline scope of project and why it is of value to the City of Vancouver and describe how and when the scholar’s work will be actionable**

Through its Greenest City Action Plan, the City of Vancouver aims to provide better access to nature for its residents; however, access to nature is a subjective experience and is therefore difficult to plan for. This work will provide an understanding of the kinds of spaces, landscapes and activities that are likely to provide these experiences to residents.

Scope of work:

- Undertake a literature review of different definitions of “access to nature” and how this definition is used by approximately 10 different municipalities in planning for provision of natural areas for community health and wellbeing benefit.
- Conduct engagement with Vancouverites to understand what they believe constitutes a “nature experience”, where and when these experiences can be found in their day-to-day lives. (engagement tactics and analysis plan to be discussed and could include either a series of interviews or an online survey, for example)
- Develop a Vancouver-specific working definition of “access to nature” that can be mapped spatially (i.e., quantitatively) and briefly describe the current state of “access to nature” in Vancouver, perhaps along a spectrum which considers equity, culture, barriers to access, and quality of experience.

- Create a set of indicators/decision making criteria for types of spaces which are likely to contribute to a sense of access to nature
- Describe the geographic data sets required to map current or potential distribution of these spaces throughout the city.

**Why this work is of value:**

- Access to nature is a very personal, qualitative experience and is therefore difficult to plan for. While this work will not answer all questions it will allow for a better understanding of the kinds of spaces, landscapes and activities that are likely to provide these experiences to residents.
- This builds on the Greenest City Action Plan 2020 Goal of providing a park or greenspace within a 5-minute walk of all residents. With this new mapping, we can understand the geographic distribution of access to natural experiences and therefore find patterns and opportunities for future provision.
- This geographic understanding of opportunities to access nature will form the basis of future Greenest City Action Plan goals and will be used in conjunction with VanPlay Equity Initiative Zones to plan and prioritise projects to enhance these opportunities.
- Reaching a definition of “access to nature” will help with Park Board communication and education on the value of the difference nature makes to people’s daily health and wellbeing and support advocacy for various types of small and large interventions. Such interventions could work to increase birds, pollinators and other fauna, improve water quality, stewardship events/programming, access to beaches and other natural swimming experiences amongst many others.

**Deliverables**

- A literature review report outlining international municipal approaches to defining “access to nature”
- A replicable community survey or methodology to determine community connectedness to nature
- A report which defines “access to nature” in Vancouver, the context and process taken to come to it and a set of measurable, geographic indicators/criteria.
- A descriptive list of data sets which are currently available or would be required to create a map of opportunities for “access to nature” throughout the city.
- A public facing final report (or executive summary) for the on line Scholars Project Library

**Time Commitment**

- This project will take 250 hours to complete.
- This project must be completed between May 4 and August 17, 2020
- The scholar is to complete hours between 9am and 5pm, weekdays, approximately 22 hours per week.



**Skill set/background required/preferred**

- Excellent research and writing skills.
- Demonstrated interest in nature experiences in urban environments, the health and wellness value of feeling connected to nature.
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- GIS training or experience.
- Familiarity with qualitative research methodologies and implementation
- Familiarity with quantitative research methodologies and implementation
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Familiarity with urban planning, strategy and policy development and function
- Knowledge of community engagement theory (practices, tactics, approaches) especially survey creation to collect quantitative and qualitative information from a broad spectrum of the community
- Communication skills – an aptitude for translating personal stories and multifaceted qualitative data into key messages

Applications close **midnight Sunday February 2, 2020.**

Apply here: <http://sustain.ubc.ca/scholarsapply>

Contact Karen Taylor at [sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca](mailto:sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca) if you have questions

## Useful Resources

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>

The Centre for Student Involvement & Careers will host a resume & cover letter webinar tailored for graduate students on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 from 12:00-1:30. Registration will open approximately two weeks before the webinar, and can be accessed at Careers Online.

