

Summer 2021 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

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 January 31, 2021.

Project Title:

Developing a Community Driven, Collaborative Continuum of Care for Mental Health and Substance Use Services in BC

Overview

Mental health, substance use and recovery are impacted by all aspects of community life and engaging whole communities to improve mental health will be more powerful than any single program or intervention. Public health policies and programs should benefit all; however, persistent health inequities prevent many from being able to achieve their full potential. For the past three years, British Columbians have died younger and younger, primarily due to the increase in opioid-related overdose deaths.¹ Since the public health emergency was declared in 2016—despite extensive action and collaboration from government, healthcare teams, community leaders, and people with lived and living experience—over 6,000 lives have been lost to preventable drug overdose.² BC now faces dual public health crises with the onset of COVID-19. As our province gradually shifts from crisis to recovery mode, we believe that we are facing another, equally serious mental health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to profound changes in the daily lives of British Columbians, with potentially far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. The mental health and wellbeing of our entire society has been deeply impacted by the pandemic, and we must work collectively and with urgency to address these unintended consequences, reduce harms, and protect lives. Building health, wellness and resilience in our communities needs to start with wholistic, equity-oriented systems of care.

Mental health and wellness are critical components of social sustainability, good health, and wellbeing. It is imperative that we recognize and elevate communities and people with lived experience as partners in this continuum. To begin to dismantle the structural/systemic racism, discrimination and power imbalances that permeate current systems, institutions, and approaches, community representatives must have a “seat at the table.” It is time to redirect momentum to build a transformative, comprehensive, and equitable system of mental health and substance use (MHSU) care, starting with a framework that is community driven and co-created.

Purpose of the Project

¹ Statistics Canada. Changes in life expectancy by selected causes of death, 2017. (2019).

² BC Coroners Service, BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. *Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths in BC: January 1, 2010 – October 31, 2020*. Victoria: BC Coroner’s Service; 2020. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

A community driven, collaborative MHSU system of care would exist on a continuum that begins in community and extends into health care, but ultimately leads back to community. In the United States, the WellBeing Trust recently convened 90 organizations to create the Healing Nation report,³ which proposes a similar framework. However, systems-change initiatives and evidence are yet to be documented and meaningfully implemented in the local context for Canada. In BC, the development of a framework to support an integrated system of care has historically taken the form of a top-down approach, often missing the integral voice of the true experts, those who are ‘living it’ in community.

Project Description

The Scholar will have the opportunity to co-design an evidence-informed framework for a community-driven mental health and substance use continuum of care. Project outcomes and final documents will be shared with the BC Ministries of Health and Mental Health and Addictions to support their understanding of how to best address mental health and substance use outcomes while achieving goals and outcomes outlined in *A Pathway to Hope: A roadmap for making mental health and addictions care better for people in British Columbia*. Project outcomes will be further utilized to apply for research grants to ensure robust knowledge mobilization and to support implementation of outcomes.

Scope of Work

- Learn about the Community Action Initiative Society of BC, and equity-oriented approaches to granting and community engagement
- Conduct a literature review to explore existing examples of mental health and substance use continuums of care and identify both facilitators and barriers to the implementation of such models
- Conduct an environmental scan to explore key policy documents and identify frameworks from BC, other provinces, and select countries (e.g., New Zealand)
- Identify key research project participants (e.g., community leaders, frontline workers, people with lived and living experience of utilizing the mental health and substance system of care in BC, health authority staff, provincial policy makers, and other key stakeholders)
- Conduct qualitative research by organizing and facilitating a series of virtual focus group discussions with people with lived/living experience (PWLLE) to identify priorities and areas for structural change
- Draft a proposal for a community-driven MHSU framework and a dissemination and mobilization plan that optimizes impact and accountability with key stakeholders

Deliverables

The Scholar will deliver a final report containing a summary of their completed work complemented by a final presentation to key stakeholders (including community-based and peer-led organizations). The report should include:

- A summary of the literature review and environmental scan with key recommendations and suggested approaches.
- A summary of the emergent findings from the focus group identifying key priorities and areas for structural change, including the infographic created from Drawing for Change.

³ Miller, Benjamin F. et al. “Healing the Nation: Advancing Mental Health and Addiction Policy,” Well Being Trust. January 30, 2020. HealingTheNation.WellBeingTrust.org.

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- A final report that includes the draft MHSU framework that begin in and leads back to community.
- A final report for the UBC Sustainability Scholars online project library.

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete.
- This project will be completed from May 3, 2021 to August 13, 2020.
- The Scholar is to complete hours between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, approximately 12 hours per week. Specific days of the week are flexible.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Statistical analysis
- Community engagement experience
- Familiarity conducting focus group research
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Project management and organizational skills
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys

Applications close **midnight Sunday January 31, 2021**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 19. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

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>

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