UBC Inclusion and Connection Mapping Analysis

Towards Developing a UBC Wellbeing

Action Framework for Inclusion and Connection

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October 2017

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to identify important themes, goals, current program efforts related to UBC Wellbeing priority area of Inclusion and Connection. Sponsored by the Equity & Inclusion Office, the scope of the project focused on an analysis of the UBC Vancouver campus programming, initiatives, services, policies, and processes that actively seek to educate and support the development of social, cultural, academic, and leadership skills of traditionally marginalized student populations, within a context of students, staff, faculty in the broader UBC community.

Methodology

This research project used a mixed methods approach using interviews and a mapping process of UBC units and resources undertaken over a four-month period (May-August 2017). Through the exploration of the experiences and responsibilities of individual participants, stakeholder interviews identified themes highlighting priorities, challenges, best practices, and their vision regarding inclusion and connection at UBC Vancouver. The stakeholder interviews provided richer understanding of common themes across the institution, while the mapping exercise tracked and documented existing programs and identified potential growth areas for increased and/or future programming. The mapping project documents central services, programs, campaigns and other efforts that align with UBC Wellbeing themes of inclusion and connection for students, staff and faculty on the Vancouver campus. This research project will contribute to and inform the development of a UBC Wellbeing Action Framework for Inclusion & Connection.

The first phase of the project was informed by a review of key documents to identify categories of analysis, that would inform the stakeholder interview questions and the mapping process of UBC services, programs and initiatives. Source documents included the 2013 Report *Implementing Inclusion: A Consultation on Organization Change to UBC's commitments to Equity and Diversity*[1], 2010 *Valuing Difference: A Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity at*

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[1] Iyer, N., & Nakata, S. (2013, April). Implementing Inclusion: A Consultation on Organizational Change to UBC's Commitments to Equity and Diversity. Retrieved August 28, 2017, from http://equity.ubc.ca/files/2010/06/Implementing-Inclusion-Equity-Diversity-Consultation-Report-April-2013.pdf--

UBC[2] from 2010, *Renewing our Commitment to Equity and Diversity: UBC's Response to the Taskforce Recommendations* from 2014[3], and key documents from the *Student Diversity Initiative[4]*. These documents pointed to key UBC activities, as well as provided context and recommendations for change. As mentioned in documents related to the Student Diversity Initiative, Inclusive Excellence literature was used to inform the lens to assess the academic and social programming, initiatives and practices across the institution.[5]

The second phase of the project involved conducting twenty interviews with key stakeholders. The interviews focused on exploring current responsibilities, priorities, and best practices in the interviewees work, as it relates to the intersections of the experiences of wellbeing, inclusion and connection. The interviews provided context and identified gaps in programming, as well as shedding light on promising practices across units and faculties.

The final phase of the project involved a mapping process that involved listing and reviewing current documented programs, initiatives, and services at UBC Vancouver. The programs, initiatives, and services were organized according to seven categories: Social, Cultural, Academic, Leadership, Orientation, and Education and Training, in order to provide more context to the activities listed. Through the mapping, the breadth and scope of initiatives were identified, as well as the important connections between programs, units, and categories.

Findings

Through the stakeholder interviews and mapping, foundational themes of the need for increased knowledges and collaboration were identified as critical to the operationalization and success of what Inclusion and Connection needs to be at UBC Vancouver.

1. Education

Two major themes and concerns emerged within the broader theme of education: the importance of deep dialogues about barriers to experiences inclusion and connection, as well

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[2] (2010). Valuing Difference: A Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity at UBC. Retrieved October 27, 2017, from http://diversityatubc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2010/11/valuingdifference1.pdf

[3] (2014). Renewing our Commitment to Equity and Diversity: UBC's Response to the Taskforce Recommendations. Retrieved October 27, 2017, from http://equity.ubc.ca/files/2014/05/RENEWING-OUR-COMMITMENT-TO-EQUITY-AND-DIVERSITY-FINAL-02.pdf.

[4] Student Diversity Initiative. Retrieved on October 27, 2017, from http://equity.ubc.ca/policy-initiatives/planning-policy-initiatives/student-diversity-initiative/.

[5] Williams, D. A., Berger, J. B., & McClendon, S. A. (2005). Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Post-secondary Institutions. Retrieved August 29, 2017, from https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/mei/williams_et_al.pdf

as the importance of and need for greater capacity building (knowledge and intercultural skills) and policy awareness, procedures and guidelines for implementation and consistent practices.

1A. Dialogue

Many stakeholders identified the need for intentional spaces for dialogues about inclusion and connection to happen at UBC Vancouver, both for staff within units and for students. Some participants explained that often conversations about inclusion and connection do not consider the larger personal political, geographical backgrounds and lived experiences of people involved. Many of the current spaces for dialogue have good intentions but too often fail to consider the intricacies and intersections of inclusion, equity and diversity. Stakeholders envisioned these deeper dialogues as part of more proactive programming and education, with a focus on the intersection between wellbeing and diversity. Additionally, stakeholders suggested that dialogues for students should be student led in order to support peer interactions and provide capacity building to student leaders.

1B. Capacity Building and Policy

A common priority among stakeholders was to improve upon and build understanding between the work happening in units and considerations of equity, diversity and inclusion. This would involve dialogues, as mentioned above, but would also involve education and capacity (knowledge and skills) building.

UBC policies remain unclear and are often misinterpreted by students, with some units even struggling to understand how policies affect them. Some participants identified the lack of a common set of guidelines for policies that guide and inform their work. Many units do not have a shared set of guidelines, procedures and processes that support both the policies (e.g. Policy 3: Harassment and Discrimination) and practices of inclusion within their units, resulting in a reliance upon the limited resources of Equity & Inclusion Office. Further, participants pointed to the lack of a common understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion within the university. For some, this lack of structures and guidelines results in staff having difficulty conveying how concepts of inclusion and connection inform their work. Many agreed that having a broad-based framework, like Inclusive Excellence, which articulates accountability, responsibilities and resources would ground and support their work in connection to inclusion. Stakeholders have expressed interest in having policy articulated and translated for each unit to

improve cohesive understanding of how policy affects and relates to their work regarding inclusion and connection at UBC Vancouver.

2. Collaboration

Collaboration was an over-arching theme in all conversations with stakeholders, as well as being apparent from the mapping project, with a specific focus on the importance of relationships, and communication and feedback.

2A. Relationships

Participants identified the importance of relationship building as a priority and a concern in order to strengthen cross-campus collaborations and programming. Specifically, participants have prioritized identifying individuals on campus who can serve as connectors between units working on similar goals. In order to reach a broad range of communities, units could operate with a higher degree of awareness as to what exists on campus, and partner with units who would be "connectors" to target populations. Benefits of these cross-collaborations expand the expertise that exists across campus, the reach of programming, and encourages and supports connections between colleagues working towards common goals. Additionally, with small teams and a large population, time also becomes a constraint impacting the capacity of staff. Participants emphasized collaborations and relationship building across units is one of the key solutions to overcoming issues of capacity.

Creating and maintaining relationships can be difficult, because of the size of campus and the siloes that exist within the institution. As a result, many stakeholders also identified that competition for resources and participation can sometimes hinder relationship building and partnerships. This can be further complicated with, "confusing and complicated job descriptions and titles that do not convey clear and concise understanding the individual's duties are".

2B. Communication and Feedback

Participants expressed concerns about external and internal factors that prevent clear and transparent communication within and between units. Possibly because of the size of UBC Vancouver and the many siloes that exist, stronger effective communication practices are essential to ensure that collaboration can happen and units are working together. A central

challenge identified is the uneven feedback structures within and across units. Feedback challenges also exist within units and are a barrier to achieving unit specific priorities. Stakeholders suggested more "bottom-up feedback," from those who have frequent interactions with target populations, rather than from senior level leaders who have limited interactions with target populations such as students and staff. This is especially important within units that serve and support under-represented and marginalized students, staff and faculty.

Conclusion

The UBC Wellbeing Inclusion and Connection research project resulted in key findings related to education and collaboration across UBC Vancouver, as well as a map of key initiatives, programming and services on campus. This project will be used to build a UBC Wellbeing Action Framework for Inclusion and Connection, which will set out the goals and collective vision for inclusion and connection at UBC Vancouver.