

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY PROJECT UPDATE</b>
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	<b>FEBRUARY 14, 2017</b>

Forwarded to the Board of Governors on the Recommendation of the President

**APPROVED FOR  
SUBMISSION**




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Santa J. Ono, President and Vice-Chancellor

**For Information**

<b>Report Date</b>	January 13, 2017
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**Presented By** Angela Redish, Provost and Vice-President Academic *pro tem*  
 Louise Cowin, Vice-President Students  
 Sara-Jane Finlay, Associate Vice-President Equity & Inclusion

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In December 2015, the Board of Governors approved the UBC Commitment to Diversity Fund. Recognizing the significant opportunity these funds represent, in the Spring of 2016, the Provost, VP Students, and the AVP Equity & Inclusion established the Student Diversity Initiative (SDI) that will develop a framework for the funds. Working with an Advisory Committee, the SDI Project Team are in the process of identifying systemic and strategic priorities for Year 1 and 2 in support of student diversity throughout UBC Vancouver’s systems and operations.

In the following document we provide an update on the first phase of the initiative and a high-level summary of the research and analysis which has been done to date. In addition, we provide information on the current work and look ahead to the submission of the full report in April.

Attachment: Project Update report

**INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES SUPPORTED**

- Learning     
  Research     
  Innovation     
  Engagement     
  International  
 (Internal / External)
- or  Operational

# UBC's Engagement and Commitment to Student Diversity Initiative

## Update: Board of Governors February 2017

In December 2015, the Board of Governors approved the [UBC Commitment to Diversity Fund](#). Recognizing the significant opportunity these funds represent, in the Spring of 2016, the Provost, VP Students, and the AVP Equity & Inclusion established the Student Diversity Initiative (SDI) that will develop a framework for the funds. Working with an Advisory Committee, the SDI Project Team are in the process of identifying systemic and strategic priorities for Year 1 and 2 in support of student diversity throughout UBC Vancouver's systems and operations.

From September to January, the Project Team synthesized a number of data sources to clarify and understand the experience of diversity for undergraduate students at UBCV, and inform future priorities, principles, and structure for the Fund. This phase has included:

- a. Analysis of relevant UBC data.
- b. Literature review of approaches to diversity and excellence at peer institutions.
- c. Facilitated consultations with key administrative stakeholders.

### Analysis of Relevant UBC Data

Analysis of the Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES) data indicates that particular groups of students feel excluded from the student experience at UBC across a range of variables. For instance:

- Students from a wide range of marginalized populations generally feel pride they attend UBC, but some do not feel a strong connection with the institution. If given the choice, these students would not choose UBC again.
- Upper year undergraduate students feel less connection with UBC than first year students.
- LGBQ and Transgender students, students with mental health conditions, commuter students, students with significant debt, and some Asian student groups are least likely to feel a sense of belonging on campus and feel they have less ability to balance academic and non-academic time.

### Literature Review of Approaches to Diversity at Peer Institutions

A literature review of approaches to diversity at peer institutions identified the importance of 'inclusive excellence' as a means to support diversity initiatives. This concept recognizes that excellence at universities is not only enhanced by diversity, but that excellence cannot be achieved without structural and systemic support for diversity. Structural strategies for achieving inclusive excellence include:

- A comprehensive mission statement that reflects an authentically deep commitment to diversity and inclusion in explicit terms.
- Strong plans for the operationalization of a diversity plan, with measurements of intercultural competency and clearly articulated accountability measures.
- Centralized responsibility for diversity, with commitment and responsibility to the deployment of diversity strategies from all levels of leadership.
- Opportunities for critical dialogues on diversity in classrooms and campus settings.
- The elimination of institutional and systemic bias in hiring and promotion practices for marginalized faculty.

### Facilitated Discussions with Key Administrative Stakeholders.

Between November and December 2016, we invited faculty and staff – particularly front-line student support staff, to facilitated discussions regarding their experiences of the strengths and structural limitations of diversity at UBC, and its impact on the undergraduate experience. Their insights, as well as

the UES data and the literature review, will inform the next stage of the SDI engagement with students and student groups.

Six themes emerged in the discussions:

- **Recruitment and admissions** – UBC’s commitment to diversity in recruiting must be operationalized in recruitment strategies and admissions policies, and aligned with efforts to engage and support diverse students.
- **Classrooms and curriculum** – Classrooms and curriculum provide a significant space for students to engage with each other and their teachers across difference. Faculty should consider ways in which the relationship between intercultural competence and academic success could be conveyed through the curriculum.
- **Extra-curricular spaces** – Inclusive and welcoming spaces are an essential ingredient for student engagement.
- **International students** – Many stakeholders questioned how the term ‘international’ student is used in reference to diversity since many of our domestic students from diverse backgrounds.
- **Cultural dimensions of other identity characteristics** – UBC’s understanding of diversity should go beyond ethnicity, national origin, and language to include other identity characteristics such as socio-economic status and gender identity.
- **Staff, faculty, and graduate students** – Many stakeholders suggested UBC give greater emphasis to intercultural competence as a requirement in the hiring and evaluation of all faculty and staff. Responsibility for diverse students should be a broad responsibility and not fall to those who share diversity characteristics with students.

### Current Steps - January-March 2017

The data collected in 2016 will act as the foundation for the next steps in the SDI. From January to March 2017, we will be consulting student leaders and students from representative groups, specifically those groups that were identified as a concern in the UES data analysis. The outcomes of this phase of the project will engage students in conversations on diversity and inclusion to understand and clarify:

- Their perceptions on the sources of concerns surrounding the experience of diverse students.
- Their experience of existing supports to attract and retain diverse students and any subsequent gaps in those systems and supports.
- Their insights into areas for change to ensure a campus where all undergraduate students can academically thrive and feel they belong.

### Final Steps – April 2017

At the April meeting of the Board of Governors, we will provide for review the Student Diversity Fund Framework. Through the valuable insights gained from students, faculty, and staff at UBC, the data analysis, and literature review, we will recommend a framework of principles and priorities for the distribution of the *Commitment to Diversity Fund* for 2017/18 to 2019/20. These principles and priorities will range from addressing areas of immediate need, to more strategic priorities that respond to future areas of need, as well as accountability measures such as annual reporting to Board on the impact of the fund.