

UBC Okanagan Academic Priorities: Position Paper

We respectfully acknowledge the Syilx Okanagan Nation and their peoples, in whose traditional, ancestral, unceded territory UBC Okanagan is situated.

Background

In 2018, UBC Okanagan developed a forward-looking vision for the campus titled [Outlook 2040](#), which imagined a future for the campus that included aspirations and targets, at the request of the UBC Board of Governors. While substantial progress has been made toward these aspirations and associated targets for research funding, program development and student experience, Outlook 2040 was based on enrolment targets for domestic and international undergraduate and graduate students that need re-examining in a post-pandemic and shifting global context.

The challenges faced by higher education institutions globally demands UBCO take the aspirations of Outlook 2040 a step further and clearly define who it is academically. This is an opportunity for the campus to articulate clear short- and long-term academic priorities to plan our future within the overarching vision for UBC of: Inspiring people, ideas and actions for a better world and the corresponding Strategic Plan refresh. This draft position paper introduces proposed academic priorities for consideration and describes the process that led to them.

Key Questions

The Okanagan Leadership Council (OLC), consisting of Deans and Executives, posed two key questions to its members to focus discussions on academic priorities, which could then inform and direct integrated resource planning across the campus.

Who is UBCO academically?

- What are our unique strengths and key differentiators?
- What do we aspire to be known for academically?
- Who are we becoming?
- How are we contributing to and transforming our community and region?

Who is UBCO for?

- How big should we be (short- and long-term)?
- What is our ideal mix of students (undergraduate and graduate) and learners?
- What is our desired student/learner and faculty experience?

In considering these questions, the OLC held a series of strategy sessions throughout 2024, where data were analyzed, including external demographic, trend and outcome data, as well as internal data that considered areas of program and research strength (data available on request).

The following section summarizes the academic priorities identified in response to the first set of questions. The second set of questions requires further discussion and long-term enrolment forecasting.

Who are we academically?

UBCO has spent its first 20 years establishing itself as a vital part of a top-50 university, offering world-class education and research in a unique, student-centered environment. As we look ahead to the next 20 years, we are setting our sights on amplifying our impact by focusing on transformative engagement with our local and global communities.

The upcoming horizon represents a critical turning point. UBCO will define its unique identity grounded in its strengths as a close knit, adaptable institution capable of enacting campus-wide change more effectively than larger institutions. Our location in the Okanagan, coupled with our scale and community focus, provides a strong foundation for taking bold steps into the future.

UBCO's Key Differentiators

- A campus of a top-50 global university, **strategically positioned in a growing, entrepreneurial region**, a unique pairing that provides students, faculty and staff with deep community connections and access to world-class resources and opportunities.
- **A leading economic driver in the region**, attracting distinguished faculty and exceptional students while advancing the local economy through job creation, innovation and training a talented workforce.
- UBC Okanagan's research and creative activity across resilient environments, healthy people, thriving communities and emerging technologies position our campus as **a leader in addressing critical regional and global challenges**.
- Being located within the BC Interior positions the campus to **engage with the region's distinct challenges and opportunities** using a holistic, transdisciplinary approach to sustainability and resilience that informs global, social and ecological issues.
- The campus' compact size within a strong system enables it to adapt quickly and offer **distinct opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and high-impact student experiences**, supporting education and research to address complex challenges across multiple domains.
- A strong **commitment to fostering reciprocal partnerships with the communities we serve**, including local Indigenous nations, to support learning, co-create knowledge and drive regional innovation with global relevance.

Academic Priorities

The academic priorities outlined below are intended to guide our academic direction moving forward--whether through curricular development, research and creative activity or community partnerships. These priorities create space for diverse disciplines and approaches to contribute while providing a shared foundation for collaboration, innovation and collective impact.

Resilient people, communities, economies and environments in support of a sustainable future (Core Academic Focus)

UBC Okanagan approaches resilience as a complex, interdisciplinary challenge that demands insights from across academic domains to foster healthy people, communities, economies and environments. Our research, curricula and creative outputs empower students with the skills and knowledge necessary to tackle one of the most urgent issues of our time—sustaining the planet for future generations.

UBC Okanagan is committed to cultivating and considering diverse expertise, including Indigenous knowledge. By exploring resilience and adaptation through varied lenses, UBC Okanagan equips students with a comprehensive, multi-dimensional understanding of climate and cultural challenges and opportunities, preparing them to lead in building sustainable futures.

The importance of place to inform a global perspective

Our location in the Okanagan, a region confronting diverse climate challenges, deeply shapes and informs our academic mission, as does its historic partnership with the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA). Rooted in the communities of interior British Columbia, UBC Okanagan fosters community-engaged research and applied learning to address critical regional challenges that have global implications. We also work to solve broader global problems by applying a local and experiential lens.

We collaborate through reciprocal relationships with local industries, government institutions, Indigenous communities, cultural organizations and health agencies. UBC Okanagan offers students meaningful, real-world experiences that enrich their education while fostering strong, mutually beneficial partnerships within the community.

Distinctive student experiences that cultivate success

At UBC Okanagan, high-impact student experiences are the foundation of the learning journey, with opportunities spanning classrooms, industries, our communities and the globe. Students at all stages of their learning journey have the unique opportunity to engage in research at a research-intensive university and participate in a vast range of experiential and international study options, ensuring students develop skills in diverse, real-world settings.

Our commitment to student success is reflected in comprehensive academic services and support programs that foster an inclusive and welcoming campus and support critical thinking with integrity. UBC Okanagan is a close-knit community where faculty work alongside students, administrative teams work collaboratively, and everyone is driven by a shared commitment to creating a better future.