The President of Simon Fraser University, Dr. Andrew Petter, recently launched a visioning initiative entitled "SFU: The Engaged University". It envisions SFU to be the leading university where innovative education, cutting-edge research and community outreach intersect.

The university needs to look no further than the Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology (BPK) for a unit in which these criteria are interconnected. Our department is known for its outstanding and scientifically rigorous curriculum; we have one of the most popular and highly-sought undergraduate programs in the University and one of the strongest programs of its kind in Canada. Our faculty lead well-funded, cutting-edge research across a wide range of biomedical disciplines, and our researchers and graduate students conduct projects not only in well-equipped, state of the art laboratories but also in community centres and nursing homes, hospitals, and communities across the lower mainland and beyond, where they produce information and devices that affect, or have the potential to affect, the lives of people throughout the world.

Historically, the Department of Kinesiology, the first of its kind in Canada, was established in 1970 with Dr. Eric Banister as its first chair. It was part of the Faculty of Education and offered a Bachelor of Science (Kinesiology) degree, which was the first interdisciplinary program in this field to be offered in North America. [To read more about Dr. Eric Banister’s role in the department, please visit this page.]

In 1972, the department moved to the newly established Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, and in 1985 it moved to the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) when the former Faculty was disbanded. In the process of moving to FAS, the department changed its name to the School of Kinesiology.

**BPK’S VISION**

Faculty members and students advance an understanding of, and make a positive impact on, a broad range of health challenges. Our core purpose is to advance the understanding of physiology and human health through fundamental and applied research, education, and service.

**BPK’S MISSION**

To advance the understanding of physiology, movement, and human health through fundamental and applied research, education and service. BPK provides opportunities for outstanding learning, world-class research, and active engagement with the community to improve human health.
Effective April 1st, 2009, the SFU Board of Governors approved the creation of several new Faculties at SFU, including the Faculty of Environment, the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology. As part of this University-wide restructuring, the School of Kinesiology opted to move to the Faculty of Science from the Faculty of Applied Sciences and changed its name to the Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology. This name better reflects the programs and research in which the Department is actively involved.

With these changes over the last few decades, the research strengths in motor control and the focus of study on human structure and function of the Department/School of Kinesiology developed into research foci in Neuromechanics, Cardiovascular Physiology, Chronic Disease and Environmental Physiology. These new research foci have led to increased opportunities for research projects of graduate and undergraduate students. The department’s graduate program has approximately 60 graduate students, half of whom are pursuing PhDs.

BPK also introduced new majors for undergraduate programs in the past few years. Aside from the Kinesiology major, in 2009 the department started a major in Biomedical Physiology and more recently a joint major in Behavioural Neuroscience in affiliation with the Department of Psychology.

By providing distinct majors instead of concentrations, BPK sought to emphasize the distinction between, and the separation of, Kinesiology and Biomedical Physiology. This distinction is reflected in graduates’ diplomas and helps to make clear among students and employers the students’ capability, academic background and skills.

Our programs and goals continuously address emerging market trends. In 2004, BPK modified its Active Health & Rehabilitation stream to a concentration program for Kinesiology majors. This concentration allows students to focus on health and wellness promotion, fitness appraisal, counseling and programming in addition to clinical kinesiology and exercise rehabilitation. The other existing concentration in Ergonomics, meanwhile, was replaced with the BPK Occupational Ergonomics Certificate in July 2013. This certificate targets a labour market growth area – the science and design of healthy, productive workplaces – and was designed for both students and professionals in the areas of ergonomics, occupational rehabilitation, corporate wellness, and occupational health and safety.

In 2005, the SFU Senate approved the redesigning of the Biomedical Engineering Program, an honors-only program and a joint venture between the School of Kinesiology and the School of Engineering Science that started as a stream in 1985. This new design provides students with a strong background in engineering tools and an understanding of their use in medicine and the life sciences. The program’s philosophy is to produce biomedical engineers who will be able to manage sustainable health care technologies and health-care system with cost-efficient products and technologies.
To initiate community outreach while at the same time building upon our existing strengths in Kinesiology, the department’s faculty, staff and graduates founded the British Columbia Association of Kinesiologists (BCAK) in 1991. More recently, the department also developed a new Exercise and Nutrition in Health and Disease concentration. This program, which was approved by the SFU Senate in 2009, aims to improve our community’s health care system. The program is currently waiting for funding from the Provincial government and it will be closely tied with the Fraser Health Authority and other community outreach organizations. Our relationships with other organizations will ensure further developments in our program that reflect current needs of our society.

Aside from community outreach initiatives, BPK has always placed an importance in students’ abilities to discover and realize their academic, professional and personal goals. In the academic year of 1977/1978, the Kinesiology Co-operative Education Program was established. The program, which became BPK Co-op when the department changed its name, has grown to consistently support approximately 130 co-op work term placements per year in a wide range of employment areas and geographic location. At graduation, 45% of BPK students have participated in the BPK Co-op program, which is well above the overall 22% participation rate in co-op for all SFU undergraduate students. Another new exciting development for our students in the department is the establishment of the BPK Undergraduate Research & Experiential Learning Fund, for which we are seeking donors.

After almost half a century, BPK remains central to the teaching and research missions of SFU. We thrive to strengthen productive research, provide excellent programs, and create a positive impact on our community. We believe that the changes and developments BPK has undergone in the past few decades have created a stronger, better, and more engaged department.