

**Aggregated Findings and Recommendations from Select Community Engagement
Consultation Initiatives**

SFU Office of Community Engagement

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Introduction, Context and Data Sources

SFU's Strategic Vision is to be a leading engaged university defined by our dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement. Our [Strategic Community Engagement Plan](#) describes a vision for the practice of community engagement that seeks opportunities to address critical societal issues and complex challenges through principled, accountable and responsive collaboration and partnership.

Our past vision has made it our mission to be one of Canada's most community-engaged research universities – work that is grounded in the integration of community engagement with our academic and research missions and one that encourages us to expand and value our local, national and international reach and impact in the form of partnership, community-engaged learning, community-engaged research, compelling and thoughtful dialogue, and attention to EDI, reconciliation and social justice.

From a university-centered perspective, community engagement offers us a method of enriching our teaching, research and creative activity by providing students, faculty and staff with enhanced experiences to learn, discover and partner with diverse communities.

It is undeniable that SFU has created strong university-community partnerships and networks that have produced rigorous scholarship and achieved community impact.

And, we have undertaken a variety of initiatives and studies to help us measure this work and which aid our understanding of our institutional strengths as well as inform the places where we encounter challenges and have room to grow.

Some select examples of these include:

- An engagement process (2018) that involved countless small group sessions and discussions across SFU and with communities that culminated in the renewal of SFU's initial 2013 Community Engagement Strategy in the form of [SFU's Strategic Community Engagement Plan](#).
- A thought exchange that asked the full campus and community partners: "[Community Engagement at SFU: What's working well and what isn't?](#)" (Spring 2020)

Catalyzed by a renewed Strategic Community Engagement Plan that encouraged us to deepen the integration of community engagement with SFU's faculties and departments, this thought exchange offered us one way of localizing strategic conversations so that community partners and networks could help guide community engagement in an ongoing way. Over an eleven-day period, 677 SFU students, staff, faculty and alumni, together with community and institutional partners, donors, retirees and the general public shared 633 thoughts and made over 14,000 ratings of these thoughts.

- **A research project centered on [community-engaged learning and teaching \(CELT\)](#)** (May 2021) that was co-led by a faculty member from Health Sciences and SFU's Office of Community Engagement. This project included a select literature review, a scan of institutional models, focus groups with SFU students and semi-structured interviews with SFU faculty and staff. The

goal was to identify benefits and challenges / gaps related to CELT from the perspective of faculty, staff and students, and to frame ideas and considerations for strengthening CELT at SFU.

- An [Engagement with Indigenous Governments, Communities and Organizations report](#) (June 2021) that details SFU's engagement with Indigenous governments, communities and organizations. This report intended to help gain further understanding of current external Indigenous engagement activities, to better understand work being done to deepen relationships and engagement with Indigenous partners, and to identify challenges faced during engagement with Indigenous governments, communities and organizations. Fifteen SFU units were represented in the survey responses, which reported more than 50 examples of engagement initiatives with 55 Indigenous governments and communities and 16 other Indigenous organizations.
- SFU's co-presentation and participation in a [Canadian Pilot Cohort of the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification](#) (November 2018 – present) – a framework that intends to catalyse and strengthen campus and institutional infrastructure to support reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships with communities, and one which centers co-creation and the partnership of different forms of knowledge (academic and community) to make collective impact. The Carnegie CE Classification process has been overseen by an executive with representation from SFU's VPA, VPRI and VPER portfolios, a SFU Leadership Team, and an advisory with representation from all of SFU's faculties. It represents thousands of discussions and meetings, many formal dialogues, three large national convenings, a site visit, a 100+ page SFU submission, and two formal reports from the Carnegie Management Team with recommendations for improvement at SFU and across the Canadian post-secondary sector.
- The creation of SFU's [Partnership Hub Pilot Project](#) (October 2020 - present) – a joint initiative of the VPRI, VPER and VP Advancement portfolios, that seeks to improve partnership support for the university by:
 - Facilitating connections to the right expert, resource or process
 - Strengthening collaboration and information sharing across teams
 - Building capacity and shared resources to support partnerships at different stages

Aggregation of Dominant Themes, Findings and Recommendations

The primary purpose of this report is to aggregate findings across different sources to better understand how SFU might advance its community engagement efforts to further strengthen its learning, research and community impact mission.

There are several themes, findings and recommendations that appear consistently across the initiatives and studies cited in this report. They are provided below.

Findings

SFU vision, mission and brand (cited in 5 of the 6 studies) – SFU’s dynamic vision for the deep integration of community engagement into our work has set SFU apart. We are recognized as an international leader in community engagement by national foundations and peer institutions – recognition that has helped differentiate SFU from its peers, giving SFU a competitive advantage in recruiting students, staff and faculty; developing community partnerships; and securing external funding. This vision has helped launch and grow numerous programs that have provided rich education for students, has led to ground-breaking research and knowledge, and has had local and direct positive impact on communities. The Carnegie Management Team holds up as a model SFU’s commitment, not only to community engagement at its own institution, but also to the transformation of Canadian higher education for the benefit of Canadian Communities.

The challenge of defining “community engagement” (cited in 4 of the 6 studies) – there is a range of involvement with community engagement at SFU with tremendous variability across a continuum of community-engaged practice. At SFU, *community engagement* means many different things to many different people, from service to outreach to dialogue to performance to partnership to co-creation and more. From a Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching perspective at SFU, community engagement involves a range of educational, experiential, and research activities that occur primarily within designed settings: courses, research projects, co-op work, co-curricular volunteerism and specialty programs. It is understood to involve values such as reciprocity and mutual benefit, systems change or social transformation, and EDI and Reconciliation, and it is consistent with democratic learning and teaching approaches that strive for fairness, care, transparency and teaching through deliberative reasoning. From the perspective of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the strength of an institution’s community engagement grows out of a precise definition of what *community engagement* means across the university, and every other effort or recommendation should stem from a single, consistent definition. Within higher education, community engagement is most frequently thought of as a methodological innovation in research, teaching and creative activity that makes a principled approach to foundational relationships central to practice.

Community engagement as a method of enriching teaching, learning, research and creative activity (cited in 2 of the 6 studies) – SFU offers some excellent examples of community-engaged scholarship, including community-based participatory action research and learning opportunities through well-developed structures dedicated to social change, such as CityStudio, the Semester in Dialogue, the Sustainable Development Program, and RADIUS; however, not everyone at SFU thinks of community engagement as offering a method of enriching teaching, learning, research and creative activity. Some think of community engagement as interaction that happens in portfolios that are separate from the academic and research mission of the university. This perception creates a barrier to

shared-ownership of community engagement and a barrier to organizational change, both with respect to infrastructure and with respect to culture change.

Community-engaged learning, teaching and research offers pedagogy and process that partners academic knowledge with lived experience and provides greater opportunity to learn and make impact *with* others and in ways that are highly relevant to the broader community. It offers opportunities to decolonize curriculum in the form of community-situated experiences and learning opportunities that are enriched by bringing diverse perspectives together in dialogue with one another. These opportunities deepen students' education by situating analysis and action propositions in place-based ways that respond to social, environmental, and economic challenges. From a faculty recruitment and retention perspective, advances in a tenure and promotion system that values and accommodates community-engaged scholarship and teaching would result in normalized recognition of faculty who are disproportionately from historically marginalized populations.

The value of partnership, reciprocity and doing “with” not “for” (cited in 5 of the 6 studies) – a defining feature of community-engaged work is reflected in the distinction between working *for* community and working *with* community. Living that distinction takes effort.

Many thoughts shared as part of the SFU community engagement thought exchange focussed on the importance of increasing and enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion along with Reconciliation in the type of programming, partnership, and ways that we engage. The Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching report recognized that CELT supports the capacity of students to become leaders in systems change through opportunities to be involved in social, environmental and economic challenges. The Indigenous communities report affirmed the importance of reciprocal, multi-year relationships with band councils, Elders and Indigenous knowledge holders, and the need for SFU faculty and staff to be aware of the history and cultures of the nations and communities with whom they are engaging. The Carnegie Management Team cites partnership management and curation as an important function in large institutions to protect partners from being dropped or overwhelmed by university relationships. And the Partnerships Hub indicates that taking a collaborative approach enables SFU to increase its partnership momentum and better capitalize on opportunities with external partners.

In all these examples, community engagement demands that we pay attention not just to what we're collectively trying to accomplish, but also to why and how we're doing it. It asks us to “walk the talk”, and to commit deeply to the collaboration required to develop ongoing shared purpose and accountability in our partnerships.

The importance of enhancing EDI and Reconciliation work (cited in 4 of the 6 studies) – SFU's community engagement thought exchange brought forward Reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion as important priorities, particularly in the form of broadening and deepening learning and action that enable equitable and diverse participation by under-represented communities. The community-engaged learning and teaching report centred CELT as including approaches that have the potential to address inequities in racial composition and financial accessibility, gender diversity, and colonial structures, given that CELT is consistent with democratic learning and teaching approaches that strive for fairness, care, transparency, and teaching through deliberative reasoning. The engagement with Indigenous communities report affirmed that relationship building with band councils, Elders and Indigenous knowledge holders was important and ongoing with new connections being established and

existing ones continually strengthened. And the Carnegie Management Team lauded SFU's work with Indigenous Peoples and communities as containing elements of strong community engagement that should be teased out and generalized in application to engagement with all communities.

The need to address barriers to participation in community engagement (cited in 6 of the 6 studies) – barriers to participating in community engagement are cited frequently across the studies. Information accessibility, a lack of information about institutional and portfolio priorities, and a lack of incentives for collaboration run counter to the creation of long-term partnerships.

The Community-Based Research Advisory Committee highlighted a need to clarify tenure and promotion committee guidelines to address how to value and evaluate community based (engaged) research and to create awards that recognize faculty and graduate students. Gaps in institutional support, inadequate time for faculty to prepare, a lack of recognition for community engagement skills, conventional academic culture, exclusion from evaluation for tenure, a lack of coordinated structures that contribute to challenges in knowledge sharing, burnout and inaccessibility all work against SFU faculty who might otherwise pursue community-engaged learning and teaching in their courses.

From a student perspective, volunteer-based programs can be “classist and exclusive”, participation in classroom-based projects require unrecognized costs such as meals and transportation, it can be difficult to find and navigate community-engaged opportunities, and inequitable access to information creates disparities in access and levels of engagement. From a community partner and Indigenous government perspective, a lack of resources contributes to the overburdening of individuals and organizations.

SFU's model and structure: distributed versus a center approach (cited in 4 of the 6 studies) – in many ways, SFU's distributed structure has provided a solid foundation for community engagement. SFU has many engaged students, faculty and staff who are actively and critically involved in the work and care about its value and impact. High levels of unit autonomy have helped grassroots community-engaged work to flourish, and signature initiatives have helped launch impressive stories of community-engaged outcomes. This offers a tremendous strength on which we can build.

SFU's community engagement thought exchange reinforced a perspective that community engagement at SFU should emerge from many places and people across the institution and that there have been many diverse and unique strengths based in the organic, decentralized way that community-engaged learning has developed across the university.

There has also been recognition, however, of the need for better connection among SFU's varied faculty, staff and students and across portfolios in ways that allow us to better partner, coordinate projects, respect local community partners, and share and develop practices that lead to co-created and meaningful impact. The SFU Partnerships Hub consultation found that staff and faculty have questions about partnership coordination, continuity and development as well as need for access to information about activities conducted by multiple SFU contacts with the same community partner.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is a strong proponent of the implementation of a centralized office or center that would build the aspects of infrastructure that support high quality community engagement. Key elements in the Carnegie model include a Chief Engagement Officer to lead campus engagement efforts, a center that facilitates engagement across the campus, a center that carries the responsibility for developing an organizational culture of assessment and accountability, a

center to provide faculty with opportunities to build their community engagement capacity through professional development, a center to provide management and stewardship for relationships between the institution and its community constituencies, a centre with the authority to maintain fidelity to the institution's definition of community engagement, a center to convey established best practices, a center to facilitate campus-wide tracking and coordination of students time, and a supra-coordinating council or connecting group across entities.

The need for adaptation in infrastructure (cited in 6 of 6 of the studies) – community engagement requires adaptation in administrative and incentive structures. Examples are found across SFU's research, learning and teaching, and community partnership enterprise. The area with the highest engagement rate in the SFU community engagement thought exchange was that of institutional policy and support with a clear message that there are many SFU policies that act as barriers to doing community engagement effectively across academic, research and operational areas. These included areas such as general policies regarding campus space, faculty recognition for community engagement, support for community engagement at the unit level, and unequal levels of community engagement across campuses. The community-engaged learning and teaching (CELT) research project identified further gaps in institutional support for CELT including inadequate time for faculty to prepare for a CELT course, different skill sets and knowledge needed for CELT, and a conventional academic culture that rarely allows for training in CELT pedagogy methods. The Indigenous communities report cited institutional challenges that indicated that SFU's organizational structure is not set up for supporting and maintaining long-term relationships that lead to meaningful engagement work, and that SFU's organizational structure is characterized by a lack of resources and a lack of institutional support. The Partnerships hub engagement process found that SFU partnerships would benefit from coordinating continuity and delivery and improved access to information. And, the Carnegie Management team indicated that the composition of SFU's community engagement infrastructure requires more foundational support mechanisms.

The need for better evaluation and measurement of "community engagement" (cited in 2 of the 6 studies) – the question of how best to measure community engagement is a primary focus of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (CCEC) Framework, although it is interesting to note that it is infrequently mentioned as a priority in discussion with internal SFU community engagement practitioners. The CCEC framework itself, offers an institution the opportunity to evaluate its community engagement as part of a robust self-study process to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

The Carnegie Classification Management Team believes that the strong community of practice at SFU is creating a strong culture for community building, but they do not yet see clear evidence of organizational coordination and accountability as evidenced by a lack of campus-wide tracking, monitoring and assessment of community engagement. Where there are assessment practices that are focussed on community engagement, they tend not to be systematic (well described, repeatable, routinized form consistent application and comparability over time).

An interest in improving campus spaces (cited in 1 of the 6 studies) – this finding was only apparent as a component of the SFU community engagement thought exchange and speaks to the different ways in which different people process the words "community engagement" when they hear or read them. Within a university community context composed of students, faculty and staff, "community

engagement” can be deciphered as “on campus engagement for the SFU student/staff/faculty community”. That is, university students, staff and faculty don’t necessarily think of the “community” portion of “community engagement” as referring to external communities but rather, as referring to their own on-campus community. Although there were an interesting array of findings associated with improving SFU on-campus community particularly with respect to improving space and making spaces more welcoming, these findings have not been included in this report as the focus of this report is on inter university-community engagement and partnership between SFU and its broader, surrounding communities (non-profit organizations, industry associations, NGOs, Indigenous communities, and local First Nations, provincial and federal government departments).

Recommendations

- Increase communication, information sharing, dialogue, engagement, connection and collaboration between community-engaged practitioners and professionals at SFU

1. Create and host a series of dialogues and appreciative inquiry events specifically designed to bring together community engagement practitioners and professionals from across SFU.
2. Implement a new community engagement organizational structure at SFU designed to bring community engagement practitioners and professionals from SFU’s VPER, VPA, VPRI, VPAAE and VPPEI portfolios together with community partners in structured dialogues of reflection and insight, and to encourage collaboration and resource sharing/building to make improvement to SFU community-engaged practice.

Create an SFU Community Engagement Executive Steering Committee (SCEESC)

The SCEESC would be jointly overseen by SFU’s VP External Relations, SFU’s VP Academic, SFU’s VP Research and International and SFU’s VP Advancement and Alumni Engagement with a mandate to provide overall oversight of community engagement at SFU.

Consider the creation of:

1. **An SFU Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching Advisory (SCELTA)** to design, advance and implement a model for community-engaged learning and teaching at SFU.
2. **An SFU Community-Engaged Research Advisory (SCERA)** to review and advance SFU’s model for community-engaged/-based research at SFU.
3. **An SFU Community Partnerships Advisory (SCPA)** to advance SFU’s model for community partnership and reciprocity.

- Co-create, adopt and socialize, across the SFU community, an SFU definition of community engagement

- Embed community engagement into SFU’s culture as a method of teaching, research and creative activity

Key potential contributors to this work would include SFU’s community engagement practitioners and professionals to co-create a SFU-centric definition of community engagement.

The creation and adoption of a shared definition of community engagement is a necessary first step to next stages to further embed that definition in an enthusiastic way in to SFU culture. Action regarding policy adaptation, faculty recognition, the strengthening of SFU infrastructure, the identification and allocation of needed resources, strengthening opportunities for community-engaged learning, teaching, and scholarship, and the measurement and evaluation of community engagement would be additionally supported through a shared definition.

- Consider developing conceptual clarity about the distinguishing aspects of community-engaged learning and teaching

Create a working group to refine criteria, identify examples of existing community-engaged learning and opportunities, create a plan to enable student participation in community-engaged learning opportunities and consider whether these opportunities will be identified on transcripts.

- Consider developing conceptual clarity about the distinguishing aspects of community-based research

Create a working group to refine criteria, identify examples of existing community-based and community-engaged research, create a plan to enable faculty and student participation in community-based and community-engaged research opportunities. CERI is already doing good work in this sphere and would be well positioned to mobilize this work forward across the university.

- Strengthen opportunities for partnership and relationship development with community

1. Create and host a series of dialogues and appreciative inquiry events specifically designed to bring community engagement practitioners and professionals from across SFU together with community partners and key representatives from the broader community.

- Broaden and deepen actions and partnerships to enhance equity, diversity and inclusion

- Broaden and deepen engagement with Indigenous communities

- Enable equitable and diverse participation in community engagement
- Support more community engagement that addresses Indigenous Reconciliation, both with external partners and the SFU internal community
- Examples:
 - i. Involve Indigenous, Black and racialized people in CELT, CBR and community-university partnership design; focus on their role in creation, implementation and decision-making
 - ii. Provide Indigenous, Black and racialized people with leadership roles and adequate supports to design and pursue CELT, CBR and community-university partnerships
 - iii. Use an intersectional equity lens (gender, race, etc.) when considering adaptation in institutional support and tenure and promotion
 - iv. Ensure that CELT, CBR and community-university partnership activities explicitly recognized, incorporate, and uplift the valuing of non-academic knowledge, specifically Indigenous worldviews and knowledge
 - v. Include the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of learners to design opportunities that are culturally safe

- vi. Strengthen approaches to partnership with community, including valuing reciprocity; relationship; respect; justice; equity, diversity and inclusion; Reconciliation; accountability and sustainability

- Adapt policies that impede or fail to support community engagement
- Strategically allocate new and existing resources to support, increase and strengthen community engagement
- Strengthen SFU's community engagement infrastructure
- Strengthen frameworks that support community-engaged scholarship: learning, teaching and research
- Recognize faculty for community engagement, including modifications to tenure and promotion criteria
 - Examples:
 - i. Consider the implementation of a CELT-supportive model that provides structure and coordination for crucial activities, e.g. knowledge and resource sharing, training, coordination of community partnerships, communications for CELT opportunities
 - ii. Consider the implementation of a CBR-supportive model that provides structure and coordination for crucial activities, e.g. knowledge and resource sharing, training, coordination of community partnerships, communications for CBR opportunities.
 - iii. Consider the implementation of a model that provides structure and coordination for crucial community-university partnership activities, e.g. knowledge and resource sharing, training, coordination of community partnerships, communications for partnership opportunities.
 - iv. Create a working group tasked with developing tenure and promotion criteria that value and accommodate community-engaged scholarship (community-engaged learning and teaching, community based/engaged research, and creative activity) in each faculty and department.
- Strengthen measurement and evaluation of community engagement

Appendices

Appendix 1 - [SFU's Strategic Community Engagement Plan \(2018\)](#) – findings and recommendations

Findings

- SFU's dynamic vision for the deep integration of community engagement has set SFU apart. We are recognized as an international leader in community engagement by national foundations and peer institutions.
- Leadership matters. The strong vision to be a leading engaged university is a message carried by leaders and champions that has helped raise the profile of community engagement work and has differentiated SFU from its peers, giving SFU a competitive advantage in recruiting students, developing community partnerships, and securing external funding. The vision supports educational innovation with respect to programming and curricula, has helped launch and grow numerous programs that have provided rich education for students, has led to ground-breaking research and knowledge, and has had local and direct positive impact on communities. Despite this activity and noted benefits, there is an ongoing need to improve the structural support for, and recognition of, deeply committed community-engaged work.
- SFU's distributed structure provides a solid foundation for this work. SFU has many engaged students, faculty and staff who are actively and critically involved in the work and care about its value and impact. This is a tremendous strength we can build on. High levels of unit autonomy have helped grassroots community-engaged work to flourish, and signature initiatives have helped launch impressive stories of community-engaged outcomes. There is recognition, however, of the need for better coordination among SFU's varied faculty, staff and students and across portfolios in ways that allow us to better partner, coordinate projects, respect local community partners, and share and develop practices the lead to co-created and meaningful impact. There is interest in establishing ongoing, supported, broader based hubs for work in key communities or challenge areas that could serve to amplify our impact.
- Defining community engagement is challenging. SFU adopted an adapted version of the Carnegie definition of community engagement in SFU's 2013 Community Engagement Strategy: "Community engagement is defined as collaboration between the university and communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity." While many believe this to be a good definition, others question whether the definition suffices to support the dynamic range of work taking place at SFU, especially our international role and mandate as a research university in creating knowledge and encouraging innovation.
- There is a range of involvement with community engagement at SFU. There is tremendous variability across a continuum of community engagement practice at SFU. Community engagement is a methodological innovation in research, teaching and creative activity that makes a principled approach to foundational relationships central, rather than peripheral, to its practice. The importance of community outreach is still clear, but we must also support those wishing to move into deeper partnerships with community.
- The joy (and pain) of cultivating authentic relationships. A defining feature of community-engaged work is reflected in the distinction between working for community and working with community. Living that distinction takes effort. Community-engaged work can require deep and heavy personal commitments of time, energy, emotion, and resources that, in some cases, are felt to be inadequately recognized or supported in position expectations. The Community Based Research Advisory Committee highlighted the need to clarify tenure and promotion committee

guidelines to address how to value and evaluate community based (or engaged) research and to create awards that recognize faculty and graduate students.

- Community engagement requires adaptation in administrative and funding structures. The practice of community-engaged work can be demanding, as noted above. There is emotional commitment and time required for the relationship formation and trust-building that must occur to properly support equitable, reciprocal partnerships, whether for research, teaching or creative activity. Some community engagement researchers feel isolated in their work due to administrative constraints in a wide variety of areas, from recognition of their efforts in tenure and promotion decisions to the frustration of small but significant barriers in supporting this work, such as issuing stipends for community member involvement or elder compensation.
- How do you measure and evaluate community engagement? The need for better measurement has been frequently mentioned in recent consultations. SFU can learn from advances in evaluating the rigor of community-engaged scholarship and the efficacy of community-engaged pedagogies, as well as from efforts to apply a systems and complexity lens to program evaluation and governance. This includes work to clarify whether/how such activity leads to desired co-defined impact for community and society.
- Focus on building and supporting relationships. Community engagement demands that we pay attention not just to what we're collectively trying to accomplish, but also to why and how we're doing it. It asks us to "walk the talk", and to attend compassionately and courageously to those things that help and hinder this process. Above all, it asks us to commit deeply to the collaboration required to develop ongoing shared purpose and accountability.

Recommendations

- Continue to build SFU's inventory of community engagement activities and capacities. Utilize storytelling to communicate our efforts and reflect on our practice.
- Utilize existing and new initiatives and engagement infrastructure to better support collaborative efforts across units and portfolios.
- Expand efforts to support the building of sustainable, mutually beneficial, equitable, and respectful relationships with community.
- Build on SFU strengths in dialogue and engagement, and deepen meaningful inclusion in institutional initiatives for faculty, staff, and students.
- Identify and reduce constraints associated with expanding community-engaged learning across all campuses.
- Invest in further mechanisms to measure the impact of community-engaged work, and facilitate continuous learning over time.
- Expand external resource opportunities and innovate in existing budgets to realize more support for deeply integrated community engagement.

[Appendix 2 - SFU Community Engagement Thought Exchange: What's Working well and what isn't? \(2020\) – findings and recommendations](#)

Shared thoughts were grouped into 19 emergent themes and these were then further organized into the following four summary themes:

Theme 1: Enhance EDI & Reconciliation – findings and recommendations

Thoughts in this summary theme focused on the importance of increasing and enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion along with Reconciliation in the type of programming, partnerships, and ways that we engage.

Recommendations

- Equity, diversity and inclusion – calls to broaden and deepen actions and partnership that enhance EDI through community engagement; enable equitable and diverse participation in community engagement.
- Indigenous Reconciliation – support more community engagement that addresses Indigenous Reconciliation, both with external partners and the SFU internal community.

Theme 2: Institutional Policy and Support – findings and recommendations

Thoughts in this summary theme identified strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in SFU's institutional policies and support for community engagement.

Recommendations

- Build on strengths – build on the experience and reputation that SFU has in community engagement; opportunities to build on particular initiatives or areas of action that are working well.
- Contradictions in policy impede community engagement – address SFU policies that act as barriers to doing community engagement effectively across academic, research and operational areas; address the internal contradictions in SFU policies that impede community engagement.
- SFU's distributed model for community engagement – the perception that community engagement at SFU needs to emerge from many places and people across the institution; opportunities to recognize and enable a model of distributed community engagement at SFU.
- Embedding community engagement in the institution – an interest in embedding community engagement needs across academic, research, and non-academic mandates and/or models; opportunities to recognize and support an embedded approach.
- Faculty recognition for community engagement – an interest in recognizing and rewarding faculty for community engagement work; identification that current systems of recognition impede faculty participation in community engagement.
- Support for community engagement at the unit level – community engagement can be disconnected from unit functions and resources; departments and units need the mandate and resources to support and enable community engagement.
- Unequal levels of community engagement across campuses – observations about the varying degrees and approaches to community engagement at SFU's Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey campuses; opportunities to participate in community engagement is dependent on campus/location.
- Recognizing different understandings of community engagement – thoughts reflecting the many ways of defining or understanding what community engagement is; important to recognize that it means different things to different people.

Theme 3: On-campus Community and Experience – findings and recommendations

This summary theme includes thoughts focused on SFU's internal community and the overall experience of working and studying at SFU.

Recommendations

- Improve internal community and student experience – thoughts reflecting the desire for more community-building at SFU and ways to improve student experience through more connections and building internal community.
- Welcoming spaces – some spaces are more welcoming than others for SFU community and for external community members and partners; overall desire for welcoming spaces.
- Other/miscellaneous – thoughts seemingly unrelated to the broader topic of community engagement, but related to SFU.

Theme 4: Supporting Participation in Community Engagement – findings and recommendations

Many thoughts emerged around barriers to participating in community engagement and opportunities for supporting participation in community engagement for faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

Recommendations

- Bringing together people & information – challenges related to operating in silos and SFU's distributed decision-making model; interest in opportunities that bring together people and information to support engaging with community partners.
- Integrating experiential learning with community engagement – a desire for better links between community engagement and experiential learning (coursework, volunteering, coops, applied research, etc.).
- Removing barriers to staff participation in community engagement – identified challenges for SFU staff to participate in community engagement; interest in increasing opportunities for staff participation in community engagement.
- Removing barriers to student participation in community engagement – identified challenges for students to participate in community engagement; interest in opportunities to remove barriers.
- Working well with community – ideas for improving how we work with community partners; opportunities to implement best practices for working well with community partners.

Appendix 3 - Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching Research Project (2021) – findings and recommendations

What is CELT at SFU? – findings

- CELT involves a range of educational, experiential, and research activities that occur primarily within designed settings: courses, research projects, co-op work, co-curricular volunteerism and specialty programs
- CELT is generally understood to involve values such as reciprocity and mutual benefit (between academics/ universities and practitioners / community organizations), systems change or social transformation, and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Reconciliation
- CELT is consistent with democratic Learning and Teaching approaches that strive for fairness, care, transparency, and teaching through deliberative reasoning

SFU CELT Strengths - findings

- Many diverse and unique strengths based in the organic, decentralized way that CELT has developed across the university
- CELT is unique within the constellation of experiential learning opportunities at SFU, and provides a unique value proposition for students
- CELT advances systems-change and supports capacity of student to become leaders in systems change as they move forward as citizens and professionals
- CELT opportunities deepen students' education by situating analysis and action propositions in place-based ways that responds to social, environmental, and economic challenges
- CELT exists in diverse disciplines at SFU, and in diverse settings from programs, to courses, to research initiatives, to co-op and volunteer opportunities
- Cultivated cutting-edge, well-developed structures dedicated to social change exist at SFU, such as CityStudio, the Semester in Dialogue, the Sustainable Development Program and RADIUS
- SFU is well-recognized for leadership and relationships of trust with communities
- SFU has memorandums of understanding (MOU) with the Squamish Nation and the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee. It is working to develop MOUs with other Coast Salish Nations, and many Faculties have a close working relationship with the First Nation Health Authority. Various faculties across the institution have taken up their work in reconciliation in important ways

SFU CELT Challenges – findings and recommendations

Student navigation

- Students experience difficulty navigating CELT opportunities + often don't find CELT courses, programs, volunteer opportunities until near end of their degree
- CELT opportunities can be exclusionary: certain students have easier and greater access; or some campuses may have more access than others
- Inequitable access to CELT information creates disparities in access and levels of engagement

Recommendations

- Student-centered design would improve accessibility and diversity of participants in CELT
- Engage students at every stage of their academic career (from 1st year undergrad through graduate school)

- Coordinate institution-wide communications regarding CELT (e.g., centralized website about CELT and how / where to participate, inter-departmental promotions of opportunities)

Financial accessibility

- CELT opportunities more easily accessed by students with more economic resources
- Volunteer-based CELT programs and commitments can be "classist and exclusive"
- Participation even in classroom-based projects that involve community-engaged activities require unrecognized costs such as meals and transportation
- These financial barriers reinforce class privilege and intersect with other identities (e.g., racialization or differently-abled)

Recommendations

- Plan for and provide fair and equitable student compensation (wages, honoraria, providing transit passes, and meals - maybe based on needs identified by the community)
- Consider linking community-engaged volunteering to co-curricular record or bursaries, etc.
- Provide centralized funding for courses with community-engagement activities

Indigenous, Black, and racialized representation in leadership

- Racial composition in CELT is not purely a representation issue, but also governance issue in terms of leadership roles in defining community and creating CELT opportunities.

Recommendations

- Involve Indigenous, Black, and racialized people in CELT design; focus on their role in creation, implementation and decision-making
- Provide Indigenous, Black, and racialized people with leadership roles and adequate supports to design and pursue CELT

Faculty & Staff Perspectives on CELT

- Gaps in institutional support for CELT
- Inadequate time for faculty to prepare for a CELT courses (takes more time than traditional courses due to ongoing community relationship development and management)
- Different skill sets and knowledge needed for CELT (not supported to develop these skills and/or little recognition for having these skills)
- Conventional academic culture rarely allows for training in CELT pedagogy methods
- Lack of recognition of different ways of measuring learning impede CELT-based courses

Recommendations

- Recognize the diversity of support required for faculty engaged in CELT
- Material/ financial support
- Curriculum design support
- Training in various competencies (e.g., anti-racism and trauma-informed approaches)
- Communities of practice / opportunities for sharing and learning from each other

Lack of recognition for CELT work

- Major barrier: CELT not sufficiently included in areas evaluated for tenure

- Discrepancy between the time involved, depth of work required for CELT and institutional-level recognition
- Pre-tenure faculty discouraged by lack of incentives
- Engaging in CELT often impedes or slows career progress

Recommendations

- Incorporating criteria and points for recognizing CELT in the tenure and promotion process
- Provision of course release or partial course release to pay for time invested in community relationship building and management
- Increased institutional supports for CELT (see above)

Gendered dimensions of CELT

- CELT work relates to community, care, and relationships, which tend to be social roles more commonly associated with women
- Indeed, 11 interviewees identified as women whereas just 2 identified as men, reflecting a skewed gender composition of CELT work at SFU (this finding was validated by others participating in monthly discussions about CELT)
- Women often experience a negative impact on their career trajectory from doing this work (since much of it is invisible at institutional and departmental levels)

Recommendations

- Use a gender-based lens in the institutional support and tenure-related suggestions (above)

Colonial structures

- Emerged as a prominent theme from faculty and staff
- Systems-level need to value different forms of knowledge within academia and acknowledge that lived experiences and traditional knowledge are a form of expertise

Recommendations

- Important conversations are already occurring about to support Indigenous students and faculty across academic programs and in community engagement activities - CELT needs to intersect with these conversations and plans
- Ensure that CELT activities explicitly recognize, incorporate, and uplift the valuing of non-academic knowledge, specifically Indigenous worldviews and knowledge
- Include the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of learners and design CELT that is culturally safe and integrate cultural ways of knowing, beyond purely academic frameworks
- Involve Indigenous peoples and organizations in CELT in a reciprocal and respectful manner

Gaps in institutional model

- Lack of coordinated CELT structures contributes to challenges in knowledge sharing across CELT practitioners and departments at SFU
- As CELT happens across academic, research, student and external relations components, it is often lost in the mix
- Experiences of faculty and staff often represent patterns of burnout and inaccessibility in this work, despite University commitment to engagement

- Disparity between engagement goals at the institution level and structures available to support faculty and staff in engaged learning

Recommendations

- SFU could consider the implementation of a CELT-supportive model that provides structure and coordination for crucial activities, e.g., knowledge and resource sharing, training, coordination of community partnerships, communications for CELT opportunities.

Appendix 4 - Engagement with Indigenous Governments, Communities and Organizations Report (2021) – findings and recommendations

Findings

- The majority of participants responded that their relationships with Indigenous governments, communities and organizations are long-term, continuing for over a year – and in many cases, participants specified that these relationships have been cultivated over many years and are reciprocal in nature.
- Relationship building with band councils, Elders and Indigenous knowledge holders was affirmed to be important and ongoing with new connections being established and existing ones continually strengthened.
- The three most common challenges faced by respondents during engagement with Indigenous governments, communities and organizations included a lack of resources, a lack of institutional support and the overburdening of Indigenous individuals and organizations.
- Survey respondents also discussed institutional challenges with several expressing that SFU's organizational structure is not set up for supporting and maintaining the long-term relationships that lead to meaningful engagement work.
- Respondents also mentioned that faculty and staff need to be aware of the history and cultures of the nations and communities with whom they are engaging. Lack of experience and understanding was noted as a barrier to establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships.
- Another notable challenge includes a lack of coordination among SFU units. Some respondents were unaware of ongoing engagement initiatives at the university or efforts to coordinate such initiatives.

Recommendations

- Opportunities for sharing of ideas and best practices among the SFU community
- Potentially direct resource allocation decisions and reflection on how SFU can further develop and co-create meaningful, diverse and lasting relationships with Indigenous partners in B.C. and beyond.

Appendix 5 - Canadian Pilot Cohort of the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification (2018 - present) – findings and recommendations

Data from SFU's participation in the Canadian Carnegie Pilot has arrived through multiple channels including SFU's internal reflections from the self-study process, observations from participating in the learning community of the Canadian Pilot Cohort, feedback in the form of two reports from the Carnegie Management Team that is headed by Carnegie Fellow Dr. Mathew Johnson from Albion College, as well as an immersive SFU site visit and dialogue that included approximately 30 community-engaged colleagues from SFU together with the Carnegie Management Team.

SFU Reflections from Carnegie Self-Study – findings and recommendations

SFU completed the Carnegie self-study process as part of the Canadian Pilot Cohort in 2019-2020. The self-study was informed by ongoing discussions with SFU's Carnegie Advisory Committee; an in-depth review of the SFU website, news articles, budgets, strategic plans and other relevant documentation; and consultation with dozens of staff and faculty. The final self-study that was submitted to the US Carnegie Management Team included data and documentation of important aspects of institutional mission, identity and commitments; information about how we are aligning our institutional policies and practices to enable and facilitate community-engaged work across SFU; and information about how we are assessing the quality and outcomes from this work.

The Learning Community of the Carnegie Canadian Pilot Cohort – findings and recommendations

The Canadian Pilot Cohort (CPC) is made up of sixteen Canadian post-secondary institutions. The group was originally convened in early 2019 to explore learn about the existing, US-based Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and to consider how it might support community engagement in diverse Canadian contexts. The group quickly formed a learning community with monthly meetings, shared resources and collaborative projects.

The CPC spent three days together during the Initial Convening in 2019 to develop a project plan, timeline and set of resources to support the cohort. In January, 2020 the group came together for a Mid-cycle Convening to engage in workshops with an integrated Indigenous lens. In early summer 2021 the group came together in a virtual environment for the Closing Convening, where the twelve institutions that were available during the vote declared with unanimous assent that it was desirable to found and develop a Canadian version of the Classification. Through the remainder of 2021, the CPC, in collaboration the Carnegie Management Team (CMT), is working to formulate recommendations for the Canadian classification, including guidance on governance, the framework itself (the questions), methods of consultation and the formation of a wider community of practice.

Findings & Recommendations

- Build meaningful, sustainable connections and networks of community engagement activity across SFU's multi-campus and multi-community environments.
- Build the necessary foundational components to appropriately incentivize, reward, and recognize community engagement in tenure and promotion criteria.
- Strengthen existing and develop new opportunities for community-engaged learning, including adopting a set of criteria to denote community-engaged courses and co-curricular activities.
- Strengthen opportunities for community-engaged research that is co-created by faculty, staff, and students with community partners.

- Strengthen approaches to partnership with community, including valuing reciprocity; relationship; respect; justice, equity, diversity and inclusion; reconciliation; accountability; and, sustainability.
- Continue to steer the Canadian Pilot Cohort of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification through collaboration and the self-study process.
- Continue to position SFU as a leader in community engagement internationally and with like-minded national organizations, including opportunities to make impact while building SFU's brand and reputation as a leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement.

Feedback from the Carnegie Management Team – findings and recommendations

On March 26, 2021, SFU's Carnegie Leadership Team, members of SFU's Carnegie Advisory Committee and representatives from areas of SFU's community-engaged work came together to meet with the US Carnegie Management Team to engage in a site visit centred on shared learning. Conversations focussed on how engaging with the Carnegie classification could be used as a springboard to effect change within SFU and beyond.

In June 2021, Dr. Mathew Johnson and the US Carnegie Management Team provided feedback to SFU in the form of a *CPC Collective Feedback Report* that speaks to themes observed across the Canadian Pilot, as well as an *SFU Individual Closing Report* which offered more detail on how the US Carnegie Management Team saw these themes reflected in SFU's organization and commitments to community engagement.

Findings & Recommendations (from the US Carnegie Management Team)

- Simon Fraser University has been a leader in the CPC process, as host institution to the opening convening, as co-convenor, and as intellectual partner. It is clear that SFU is committed not only to community engagement at its own institution, but also to a Canadian Classification and to the transformation of Canadian higher education for the benefit of Canadian Communities. The entire project would not have been possible without your partnership.
- Ultimately, the strength of community engagement (CE) grows out of a precise definition of what CE means across the university. Every other effort or recommendation stems from a single, consistent definition. SFU has not yet broadly adopted a clear institutional CE definition and, in some ways, has adopted "engagement" so pervasively and in many cases colloquially, that narrowing and defining CE may continue to be challenging for SFU. Still, reviewers were hopeful that given the clear, pervasive nature of the enthusiasm for engagement, sharpening the definition utilized to describe CE will be possible.

Related thoughts from the collective feedback report to the full CPC:

- CIHEs will need to settle on their own institutional definition(s) that are referent and consistent with CFAT's definition of community engagement to move ahead in this work.
- CIHEs will need to iterate the institutional definition across the culture and structure of the institution to guarantee quality assurance and make explicit commitments to community engagement, and where needed, build new commitments.

- The composition of SFU's CE infrastructure too requires more foundational support mechanisms, preferably through a centralized office or center that has the gravitas to hold fidelity across the institution to the CE definition and to claim the role of purveyor of CE best practices and collector of data.

Related thoughts from the collective feedback report to the full CPC:

- CIHEs must continue to develop and institutionalize the "core unit" or "center" role and build other aspects of infrastructure that support high quality community engagement in order to achieve the depth and pervasiveness necessary to be classified.
- Key elements of the architecture in the U.S. context:
 - A Chief Engagement Officer to lead the campus engagement efforts.
 - A "center" or other centralized office that facilitates engagement across the campus.
 - A responsible core unit, sometimes the "center," sometimes the institutional research office, that carries the responsibility for developing an organizational culture of assessment and accountability around community engagement work.
 - A responsible core unit, sometimes the "center," providing faculty with opportunities for building their capacity through faculty professional development to be effective collaborators with community partners in their teaching and research.
 - A responsible core unit, sometimes the "center," providing relationship management and stewardship for the relationships between the IHE's constituencies and community constituencies to assure care and cultivation of those relationships from semester to semester and across different stakeholders.
 - A responsible core unit, sometimes the "center," that has the authority to maintain the fidelity of the community engagement definition and institutional mission across portfolios of the institution. This can include tagging courses to track community engagement courses.
 - A responsible core unit, sometimes the "center," that is responsible for conveying established best practices and emerging ideals in the field to the rest of the institution.
 - A responsible core unit, sometimes the "center," that facilitates campus-wide tracking and coordination of students' time within community-engaged learning. With such, students can ultimately create a co-curricular transcript that recognizes and legitimizes the value of their knowledge exchange through community engagement. Two examples of tracking systems are GivePulse and Yaffle.
 - Lastly, with lively, issue-based engagement going in academic departments, interdisciplinary centers, and curricular and co-curricular units across campuses, it may be particularly useful to have a supra-coordinating council or connecting group across entities.
- The strong community of practice at SFU is creating a strong culture for community building, but reviewers do not yet see clear evidence of the necessary organizational coordination and accountability. This is evident in the lack of campus-wide tracking, monitoring and assessment.

Related thoughts from the collective feedback report to the full CPC:

- CIHEs must build robust systems of assessment and continuous improvement that are systematic and that assess the variety of aspects of community engagement across the institution.
- There are few examples of assessment mechanisms that explicitly focus on the outcome or impacts of community engagement. Where there are assessment practices that are explicitly focused on community engagement, they tend not to be systematic. By systematic we mean: well described, repeatable, routinized for consistent application and comparability over time.
- Centralized coordination would allow for more consistent and clear management of CE partnerships. Partnership management and curation is an important function in large institutions to protect partners from being dropped or overwhelmed by university relationships. SFU will benefit from developing a centralized relationship management function to better coordinate partnership relationships across the institution.

Related thoughts from the collective feedback report to the full CPC:

- CIHEs must build on the strengths they exhibit in indigenous community engagement and cultivate the capacities to build, assess, and steward high quality relationships with community as colleagues in the academic missions of their institutions.
- This work to build relationships with indigenous communities is premised on the very decolonization that the community engagement classification seeks to bring about in IHEs to begin with. Framing indigenous community members as knowers, with legitimate yet quite different epistemology, is a first principle to set the stage for culturally humble and reciprocal partnerships to be built. We strongly encourage CIHEs to seek, define, and cultivate the best practices developing in this space among other non-indigenous communities.
- A stronger internal infrastructure will also assist in the university's ability to meet its faculty and student diversity goals. Such an office could coordinate the university's movement toward a Tenure and Promotion system that values and accommodates community-engaged scholarship and teaching and normalized options for faculty, who will disproportionately be from historically marginalized populations.

Related thoughts from the collective feedback report to the full CPC:

- If there are no faculty rewards for community engagement at the time of promotion, then sustained curricular and scholarly engagement is extremely difficult. When there are not policies that create clear validation for faculty to collaborate with community partners in their teaching and/or research, then there are disincentives, and community engagement will not take hold in faculty culture.
- In addition to creating specific language and processes for valuing community-engaged work in the tenure and promotion process, considerations about the additional labor, time, and complexity should be defined in policy and allowances made for the reward system to be equitable. This type of adjustment to tenure and promotion is predicated on a well defined precise institutional definition of community-engaged teaching and learning as well as community-engaged scholarship.
- SFU's work with Indigenous Peoples and communities contains elements of strong CE that should be teased out and generalized in application to engagement with all communities. This,

together with a strong definition and a more robust centralized infrastructure would be significant, strategic steps for SFU to build on the plethora of engagement activity and messaging that has been built deeply into the institution.

Additional thoughts from the collective feedback report to the full CPC:

- When community engagement is part of the core institutional culture of the campus, then it is commonplace and expected in the academic work of the campus – in teaching and learning, in curricular structures, in student learning outcomes, and in faculty research and creative activities. The evidence around community engagement in the curriculum and in faculty scholarship, for many campuses, is not as robust as it needs to be to substantiate classification. On most CIHE campuses, there is not yet a precise curricular definition for community-engaged courses. Where there is a precise definition, there often is not yet a system to assure fidelity to that definition in any course that is designated as a community-engaged course. A common system for this is a faculty curriculum committee. When one or both of these are not present, the evidence presented about curricular community engagement will not be reliable from the perspective of reviewers.

Appendix 6 - [SFU Partnerships Hub Pilot Project \(2020 - present\)](#) – findings and recommendations

Findings and Recommendations

Partnerships are part of SFU's mission as an engaged university but, at times, challenges have arisen from siloed activities. Sometimes, this has resulted in duplicated efforts between teams, complicated or unclear processes, or many "hops" to find the right support at SFU.

Key themes resulting from the partnerships consultation held in October/November 2020:

1. Coordination Continuity and Delivery
 - a. Who does what? How do we coordinate?
 - b. Important to ensure relationship continuity
2. Goals, Priorities and the Big Picture
 - a. Need to understand institutional and portfolio priorities
 - b. How to connect to others work?
3. Information Accessibility
 - a. Improving information flows across teams
 - b. Unified view of activities with partner X
 - c. Understand SFU strengths
4. Incentives for Collaboration
 - a. More visible championing of collaboration from VPs and teams
 - b. Address competing interests and rewards
 - c. Ensure sufficient resourcing
5. Partnership Possibilities
 - a. Understand tools in the partnership toolbox
 - b. How to leverage different tools
 - c. Develop internal community of practice
6. Increase Transparency of SPH Pilot Work
 - a. Increase visibility of SPH supporting SFU
 - b. Understand SPH steering committee teams
 - c. Share process and model developed by SPH

Recommendations

1. Be a connector and navigator – facilitate connections and help internal and external stakeholders navigate SFU to find the expertise and support they need.
2. Provide key account coordination – facilitate the co-creation of strategy and coordination of activities across teams to grow key accounts for the long term.
3. Create a partnership resource centre – create a web-based portal offering common resources, toolkits, and background information to help faculty and staff develop and grow partnerships
4. Coordinating priority institutional partnership initiatives – provide high-touch, end-to-end coordination across teams to build a coalition of partner support to secure and deliver against complex opportunities.