

SFU

ENVIRONMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 – 2030



Simon Fraser University respectfully acknowledges the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), qíçəy̓ (Katzie), kʷikʷəłəm (Kwikwetlem), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our three campuses reside.

PROCESS

The Faculty of Environment's Strategic Plan unites our academic and research priorities and activities over the next five years (2025 – 2030), and is the basis for implementing practices that allow us to achieve our collective vision and mission. The plan was created in consultation with faculty, staff and students from our Departments and Schools, who

identified aspirations, areas for improvement, and opportunities — to empower our students, researchers and community partners to shape a just and sustainable world.

The academic and research priorities outlined within this plan align with [SFU's Academic Plan](#).

WHO WE ARE

The Faculty of Environment is an interdisciplinary faculty with world-class teaching, research and outreach. Our faculty and students explore the complex relationships between humans and their natural and built environments from the past to the present and into the future. We consider “environment” to include social, economic, ecological and biophysical elements.

We are social, natural and information scientists and scholars with disciplinary expertise and interdisciplinary perspectives. We unearth new discoveries, tackle environmental and societal issues and work with communities to address challenges of biophysical and socio-environmental concern to contribute to positive change.

Crucial to the success of the Faculty of Environment are the four academic units: the Department of Archaeology; the Department of Geography; the School of Environmental Science; and the School of Resource and Environmental Management — who support 213 graduate students and 932 undergraduate students (source IRP Fall 2024). The Faculty of Environment is home to 60 tenure-line faculty members, 9 teaching faculty, 65 research personnel (research associates, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants and support) and 42 support staff working together.

WE HAVE: **7** DISTINGUISHED SFU PROFESSORS **6** ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA MEMBERS **4** CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS

\$4.3 MILLION

Awarded to FENV researchers from Tri-agency funding in 2023/2024

170

Research projects in Canada and 25+ countries world-wide

3

International field schools

VISION | Who we aspire to be

The Faculty aspires to be a leader in innovative and community-engaged teaching, learning and research to advance knowledge of the environment and shape a just and sustainable world.

MISSION | Why we exist

Our mission is to train the next generation of environmentally oriented leaders and informed citizens and to co-create impactful knowledge and transformative change in our communities and beyond.

VALUES | How we do it

We value **discovery and advancing knowledge**. We support world-class research that creates knowledge and informs positive change.

We value **interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary** approaches to teaching and research. We are a faculty that connects and articulates the natural, social and information sciences for a wholistic understanding of our world.

We value **community-centred** approaches to teaching and research.

We value **experiential learning** which involves learning by doing.

We value **diversity, equity and inclusivity** and ensure these underpin learning, teaching, research and work activities. Diversity is a fundamental source of insight, and valuing diversity includes embracing different knowledge systems. Equity and inclusivity ensure we treat one another with honesty and respect.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Our faculty, staff and students shared valuable insights into the development of the Strategic Plan. These discussions identified three strategic priorities to support our values and vision and will help shape the Faculty of Environment over the next five years (2025 – 2030). The Strategic Plan will inform both short- and long-term initiatives, and will adapt and respond to changing needs and priorities within the Faculty of Environment and the world around us.

Strategic Priority 1. Train Leaders and Change Agents

The Faculty of Environment trains leaders and change agents through undergraduate, graduate, professional and post-graduate programs that provide the necessary education and skills to pursue future careers across a diversity of environmental careers.

Goal 1. Improve the undergraduate student experience

Undergraduate students lie at the core of the Faculty’s mission. By deepening and enhancing undergraduate student programing and opportunities, the Faculty seeks to create a transformative experience that prepares students for future careers.

1. Extend and deepen the Indigenization of curricula.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Provide support for more Indigenous pedagogies, land-based learning, and First Nations community engagements in courses.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Expand course offerings that teach students about the status, rights, actions and challenges of Indigenous people all over the world.

2. Optimize field school capacity and increase opportunities for students to work on issues pertaining to socio-environmental impacts.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Increase enrolment and accessibility to field schools e.g., Tanzania (sustainable development, food systems and climate resilience).

3. Allow undergraduate students greater curriculum accessibility and flexibility to individualize their learning journeys.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Provide more summer course offerings to make curriculum more accessible.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Create flexibility around double minor options.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Improve coherence between online versus in-person versus hybrid modes of deliveries.

4. Assess and adapt curriculum to ensure course content is relevant to contemporary issues and pressing global challenges (e.g., conflict, race, economic inequity, climate change, human rights).
5. Support curricular opportunities that address issues facing British Columbia e.g., the new Urban Change stream and existing Planning program to make a difference to urban communities in terms of the housing crisis, infrastructure and civic participation.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Increase enrolments in Urban Worlds major and REM planning stream.

6. Connect SFU alumni with our students to foster an understanding of the job market available to them in British Columbia.

Goal 2. Improve the graduate student experience

Through academic preparation, mentorship and interdisciplinary research, we empower graduate students to test limits, create knowledge and transfer their ideas into action preparing them to be the future leaders in their fields.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Launch the graduate program at the Master and PhD level in the School of Environmental Science by 2026.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Modify Graduate Student Research Day to elevate research practices.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Develop a tighter, better rationalized graduate student funding policy.

Goal 3. Improve non-traditional student experience

Diversity is fostered by ensuring programs and opportunities are accessible and meet the needs of all students.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Support and recognize the service



48%↑

In undergraduate course enrolment from 2019 – 2024



faculty do in recruitment activities and outreach to high schools and colleges such as guest talks and local fieldwork.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Explore the potential of additional micro-credentials or professional programs.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Create opportunities for First Nations to take gratis workshops that support the building of local Indigenous capacity.

Sample Strategic Initiative: When field courses or research is taking place in communities, develop opportunities for community members to participate.

Strategic Priority 2. Create, Co-Create and Uphold Knowledge

The Faculty of Environment creates impactful knowledge and meaningful change through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research designed to deepen our understanding of the world and our interactions with people, nature and places. The Faculty of Environment has research strengths in several societal, biophysical and environmental areas. We will build upon these research strengths to take advantage of emerging trends and opportunities.

Goal 1. Enhance opportunities for Indigenous-initiated or co-created research partnerships based on equitable collaborations with faculty and students

The co-creation of an Indigenous research framework facilitates a shared understanding of Indigenous approaches and will guide the Faculty of Environment’s engagement with Indigenous communities in the future.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Develop SFU-Indigenous Knowledge Exchange. The SFU-Indigenous Knowledge Exchange aims to match First Nations with SFU researchers to facilitate meaningful exchanges; the initiative will launch in early 2025. First Nations will identify research priorities for their communities and submit requests for research collaborations with SFU researchers. Conversely, SFU researchers who do not have connections with First Nations may submit project ideas and identify their research expertise and experience.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Continue to support and expand offerings of field courses with local First Nations. The field course will provide students with the unique opportunity to live on traditional First Nations’ territories to learn directly from their

leaders and knowledge holders about what living on and with the land means today. Student projects advance community interests on socio-environmental issues. This brings SFU to communities and decolonizes learning as it upends the notion of privileging Western ways of knowing over other knowledge systems.

Goal 2. Invest in initiatives that advance community-centred research and scholarship, especially those aligned with community-centred climate action and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sample Strategic Initiative: Assess community-centred research and ensure incentives are in place to support and value faculty and students doing this type of work (e.g., considerations in salary review and tenure and promotion for faculty and recognizing students’ community engagement through the Excellence in Graduate and Research Engagement honors).

Sample Strategic Initiative: Assess research that correlates with SDGs across the Faculty of Environment. Identifying and connecting the research we do (where applicable) with the United Nations’ SDGs and priorities, will help combat the most pressing challenges facing our communities and our planet.

Goal 3. Foster connections within the Faculty of Environment and provide enhanced support and resources

Our goal is to provide a world-class research, teaching and learning experience for all faculty, staff and students, supporting them to be participants in our broader vision and mission. The Faculty of Environment seeks to foster creativity, increase the sharing of knowledge and enhance the impact of what we do by encouraging teamwork and collaborative approaches across Departments and Schools and enhancing the services, supports and resources we provide. Such a goal will unlock a number of new and exciting opportunities across research, teaching and learning.

Sample Strategic Initiative: The Faculty of Environment’s Research Facilitator will continue to provide a high level of support in grant writing, planning of research programs, advice and research administration to our faculty.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Spark opportunities for research funding and collaborations. Launched in October 2023, the Faculty of Environment’s Spark Grants initiative provides



FENV researchers enjoy an approximate

30%

**HIGHER SSHRC
INSIGHT GRANT
SUCCESS RATE**

AND A

20%

**HIGHER NSERC
DISCOVERY GRANT
SUCCESS RATE**

Compared to national competition averages⁹
(2022 – 2024)



funding to support research development and pre-research activities that may lead to securing external grant funding and/or producing impactful collaborations. The Faculty of Environment will continue offering Spark Grants to our research community in a time-sensitive fashion with minimal barriers to the application process.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Link students with opportunities to participate in global conferences. Participating in conferences such as COPs (Conferences of the Parties) inspires networking, supports knowledge exchange and deepens commitment to creating positive change.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Create a strong community, and provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas. The Faculty of Environment will hold regular social events (e.g., The Faculty of Environment Morning Mingle) to foster a healthy, inclusive and collegial environment, and create opportunities for the exchange of ideas.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Streamline health and safety and field planning. The Faculty of Environment's Operations team provides a high level of service to ensure our labs meet health and safety standards and to standardize planning and operations of field activities across the Faculty.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Unite the Faculty of Environment in one location. Bringing everyone together (either through a new building or advocating for contiguous space within existing buildings that adequately meets our needs) will create efficiencies and opportunities. A significant barrier to establishing a tight-knit community in our Faculty is the physical locations of our academic units, which are spread out over the growing campus. This creates a barrier to establishing meaningful connections. Another significant challenge is that assigned space is often inadequate to the needs necessitating costly renovations (e.g., converting non-science space into laboratory space with associated venting, drainage, etc.).

Goal 4. Demonstrate the impact of our work

Enhance the accessibility of the Faculty of Environment's research activities and findings to communities in British Columbia, nationally and internationally through the development of research communication and knowledge mobilization activities. Because of the innovative and ground-breaking research of our scholars, the Faculty of Environment is well-positioned to be leaders and provide solutions to emerging and growing problems of societal, biophysical and environmental concern. We aim to develop meaningful and

long-lasting partnerships with relevant stakeholders (e.g., Government, First Nations, local and global communities, industry, etc.) to develop novel and timely solutions to real-world problems and challenges. To support such aims, we seek to improve communication and knowledge mobilization of research findings, success and partnerships both internally and externally.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Provide training for policy mobilization. This helps researchers translate findings into other types of public resources.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Create a Faculty of Environment community lecture series. The lecture series will provide the Faculty of Environment community (faculty, students, staff) the opportunity to exchange knowledge with communities on pressing issues of societal, biophysical and environmental concern.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Identify and action opportunities to make research findings accessible to the public using different media (podcasts, reels, etc.).

Sample Strategic Initiative: Bring Faculty of Environment research and learning into high school classrooms. Develop and launch a program connecting graduate students with high schools to share knowledge and expertise — creating a pathway for the training of the next-generation of environmental leaders and informed citizens.

Strategic Priority 3. Provide Leadership

The Faculty provides leadership through just and respectful engagement within our Faculty and with our partners to address real-world problems and challenges by providing solutions and actions to improve conditions.

Goal 1. Foster learning opportunities for Indigenous students in communities where SFU faculty are collaborating in research

This work supports the Calls to Actions in Walk This Path With Us and in Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that seek to facilitate pathways for Indigenous learners, increase access to Indigenous ways of knowing and to foster Indigenous-led knowledge creation.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Encourage local Indigenous community members to frame research questions, participate in





field work, data collection, etc. and foster/mentor access to SFU learning opportunities.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Encourage community members to participate in our field schools and/or other learning opportunities when we are in their territories.

Goal 2. Foster a culture of research excellence, showcasing scholar and unit excellence as leaders in research and teaching at national and international forums

Activities will centre SFU's Faculty of Environment and British Columbia in national and international research networks, strengthen local academic and industry collaborations and provide enhanced training opportunities for students. The Faculty of Environment will bring diverse experiences and perspectives and celebrate our success in a collaborative, inclusive and supportive manner.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Increase efforts to recognize, acknowledge and celebrate achievement and success. Nominate outstanding individuals at all career stages for research awards (internally and externally). e.g., the creation of the [Dean's Awards of Excellence](#), which recognizes outstanding accomplishments by faculty members in research, teaching, and graduate student mentorship. Other examples include the [FENV Changelog Awards](#) and Excellence in Graduate Research awards that recognize the important contributions of our undergraduate and graduate students.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Develop an annual gathering for early career researchers to exchange ideas and create more knowledge-sharing community across the Units in the Faculty of Environment.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Apply a lens of diverse metrics to support the recognition of research excellence in different ways (e.g., community engagement, policy influence, public intellectualism and cultural influence).

Sample Strategic Initiative: SFU's Faculty of Environment co-hosting the annual International Conference on Urban Affairs being held in Vancouver spring 2025 and Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) Sustainable Cities and Landscape (SCL) Hub's annual conference summer 2025.

Goal 3. Cultivate a culture of leadership at all levels within the Faculty that drives the delivery

of educational opportunities in an academically rigorous, efficient and fiscally responsible manner

SFU's Faculty of Environment recognizes that working toward our shared goals and priorities requires leaders empowered to pursue excellence that advances and is responsive to the well-being of those they serve. The Faculty of Environment will cultivate opportunities for emerging and established leaders to realize this potential.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Conduct regular reviews to align academic objectives with fiscal realities, ensuring informed decision-making and the long-term sustainability of programs.

Sample Strategic Initiative: Encourage cross-departmental collaboration to share best practices, streamline processes and implement innovative solutions for cost-effective teaching and learning.



