

UBC Intercultural Understanding Strategic Plan: *The Intercultural Promise* | **Executive Summary**

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The University's commitment towards intercultural understanding is a response to a unique opportunity at UBC Vancouver (UBCV) to be a genuinely intercultural learning and work environment, contribute to the human wellbeing of the campus community, and fulfill the University's social obligation towards intellectual diversity.

The intercultural understanding mid-level strategic plan, *The Intercultural Promise*, introduces the conceptual framework and working definitions for the University's overall approach towards intercultural understanding, and outlines the strategic framework and goals specific to UBCV. This includes the framework for engaging faculty, staff, students and alumni around intercultural understanding, related leadership and staff development, interfaith initiatives and measuring progress. The working draft builds upon UBCV's unique context, its intercultural assets, and outlines an open framework of six strategic goals, developed through an extensive needs assessment and consultative process with staff, students and faculty.

UBCV is already a culturally diverse campus, strategically positioned with many assets. Being a diverse campus is not UBCV's challenge, nor is it sufficient as a goal. Contrary to common belief, experience and research show that being on a diverse campus and having regular contact with diversity does not necessarily produce intercultural understanding in students, faculty and staff. Rather, intercultural understanding is the product of intent and design.

UBCV's Intercultural Assets (The Opportunity)

- Student body and alumni: highly diverse and possess high expectations for intercultural experiences;
- Promising place: UBCV is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam People, surrounded by culturally diverse communities, and situated on and highly connected to the Pacific Rim;
- Great degree of expertise and experience: much success in internationalization of students, cultural exchange and international programs, and many existing academic, administrative and cultural centres with expertise in intercultural understanding and related fields;
- Faculties with high levels of commitment and enthusiasm towards intercultural understanding, with a diverse range of world-leading researchers and experts in areas related to intercultural understanding, and teachers who are passionate and experienced in integrating intercultural understanding into the learning experience.

The Conceptual Framework

To make intercultural understanding more concrete, *intercultural fluency* is being introduced to describe what this strategic plan aims to cultivate in UBC's students, faculty, staff and alumni. The term "intercultural fluency" is the derivative of two familiar ideas: academic fluency and "cultural fluency", and describes the development of intercultural awareness and interpersonal capacity in students, faculty, staff and alumni. The overall aim of this mid-level plan is to establish an organisational foundation from which a collective vision for an intercultural campus can emerge.

The Strategic Framework and Goals

This mid-level plan outlines two sets of strategic goals: the first set address the root issues at UBCV around intercultural understanding; the second set of goals identify what is required to normalize and institutionalize intercultural understanding into UBCV. Faculties, departments and units are invited to concentrate on 1 to 2 strategic goals, per set, varying on their needs, assets and constraints, in a staggered sequence.

1. Foster a culture of dynamic interaction;
2. Build capacity for courageous conversations;
3. Establish intercultural understanding as classroom content;
4. Support faculty vision for excellence;
5. Tighten connections between expertise and experience; and
6. Leadership and staff development.