

# **Review of the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies**

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This is the very first external review of the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies (FCCS) at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan Campus, and the authors feel a great sense of responsibility in trying to fulfill this task. Fortunately, the impression of FCCS and its plans was overwhelmingly positive. The report and the recommendations below are, therefore, to a great degree a recognition of the work already accomplished rather than a reflection of the challenges still lying ahead.

## **1. Undergraduate Education and Student Learning**

As explained in the self-study, the founding vision of the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies (FCCS) “was to co-locate the fine arts and the ‘cultural’ humanities disciplines in a single administrative unit on UBC’s newly established second campus” (4-5). At the time of the campus’s transition from the Okanagan University College to a comprehensive research campus of the University of British Columbia in the Okanagan in 2005, the bold idea was to bring those disciplines out of the humanities focussed on texts into conversation with fine arts disciplines; in other words, as one colleague explained, to take the creators and critics and house them in one place and see what would emerge out of that. This was a visionary move that not only recognized the value of locating the fine arts in a small Faculty where it could gain visibility and thrive, but also anticipated the decidedly interdisciplinary turn in humanities education and research some ten years later.

The Faculty’s initial structure, which included two multidisciplinary departments of Creative Studies and Critical Studies, did not, however, work well. The consensus was that Critical Studies was too large and unwieldy, and the FCCS was reorganized into three departments—Creative Studies, English and Cultural Studies, and Languages and World Literatures—under the leadership of Dean Traister in 2018-2019. This reorganization has been a significant achievement and there is every indication that it works. Each department can now focus on its core strengths and interests and work toward developing its own unique identity, even while exploring synergies across programs. Creative Studies, for example, has grown from a boutique program into a research-intensive interdisciplinary department that is more than just visual art. English and Cultural Studies is integrated across the campus through the revised BA degree and fulfills a major service obligation to the university. Communications requirements for the revised BA means English courses are needed throughout the system, with 40 sections of first-year English offered each term, serving thousands of students. Cultural Studies courses also share critical thinking requirements with Philosophy. While Languages and World Literatures has suffered from the closure of some programs, like Spanish, the introduction of the major in Languages has filled this gap. French has also remained robust, allowing collaboration with the Faculty of Education in French teacher training.

Under its three departments, FCCS offers a suite of undergraduate programs, including Bachelor of Arts degrees in Art History and Visual Culture, Creative Writing, Cultural Studies, French, English, and Languages; a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Visual Arts; and a Bachelor of Media Studies. FCCS also supports the Environmental Humanities Concentration in the new cross-Faculty Bachelor of Sustainability Degree, and students can take courses in Chinese, Communications and Rhetoric, Digital Humanities, Film, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish (minor), Theatre (minor), World Literatures, and Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Students who wish to pursue a general liberal studies program can take a Bachelor of Arts Degree in General Studies, focussing their concentration in any of the undergraduate programs offered in FCCS or the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences. They can also complete a double major, combining programs in FCCS and Arts & Social Sciences. This wide range of program options provides students with choice and flexibility, while exposing them to multiple approaches. From helping students develop a keen appreciation of cultural differences to the critical thinking skills needed to navigate a rapidly changing world, FCCS offers timely and responsive programs that are seeking to address the major challenges of our times. Other universities, like the University of Saskatchewan and Trent University, offer Bachelors of Arts and Science that combine the science disciplines with studies in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts. Many Canadian universities also offer double or combined majors, but FCCS is unique in offering humanities and fine arts training in single degree programs.

Indeed, while the crisis of the humanities, precipitated by an increased focus on the utilitarian value of university degrees in career-driven economies, has led to rapidly declining enrolments in humanities and fine arts disciplines everywhere, FCCS has managed to mitigate much of this negative impact by developing new programs and revising existing ones to make them more appealing and relevant to students. As a result, while many of their degree programs are small by design (arts and language programs, for example), they are not currently experiencing enrolment decline and some programs have grown. Between 2017 and 2021, enrolment numbers in English have held steady, while the Bachelor of Fine Arts saw almost a 20% increase in enrolment, moving from 107 to 128 majors, and the revised Bachelor of Media Studies (BMS) grew from 21 to 57 majors, an increase of 171%. The actual size of BMS is not indicative of demand. In 2021, the program had 489 applicants, but could only accept 25 students. Course demand across all three departments is also high with seat registrations in World Literature increasing a remarkable 794% (from 67 to 599 seats). It is expected that a fair percentage of these seats will be converted to majors once the program in World Literatures and Intercultural Communications, which is currently under development, is approved.

An overview of the new and revised programs gives a sense of the innovative interdisciplinary work being championed by FCCS and the ways in which they respond to students' need for degrees that are relevant to their lived experiences and provide clearer pathways to careers. The program in World Literatures and Intercultural Communications will help students acquire critical thinking skills while understanding themselves as part of an increasingly interconnected world in which cultural tolerance and cross-border collaboration are required in everything from business, to science, health, and international policy. The Certificate in Communications

and Rhetoric (with plans to develop a major and minor) responds to employers' needs for university graduates with evidence of excellent written and oral communication skills by equipping students with a range of communication and rhetoric concepts, theories and skills. The Environmental Humanities concentration in the Bachelor of Sustainability is an example of FCCS's collaboration across fields to create culturally relevant curricula. The suite of courses in this concentration centers the humanities in understanding and responding to the unfolding climate catastrophe and other contemporary sustainability challenges, such as land and water use, energy transition, and social and economic inequality, by locating these challenges within their specific cultural contexts. The redesigned and relaunched Bachelor of Media Studies further leverages FCCS's interdisciplinary strengths, by including a new focus on art and design, allowing students to build competencies in digital animations, virtual and data worlds, simulations, games, interface and interactive design.

It is also important to acknowledge that this rapid growth of programs has resulted in what faculty members describe as "reinvention fatigue." FCCS is now well-positioned to consolidate its vision, allowing faculty members to focus on research and educational leadership and not just program development. In addition, resources, such as **new hires for the Bachelor of Media Studies, and in communications and rhetoric, and languages and world literatures are needed to make new and newly reinvented programs sustainable.** Support is also needed for traditional programs, like English, that bring in a lot of students. There is a feeling that resources are unequally distributed across departments, and that English is under-resourced in staffing and space. In particular, to offset the current heavy reliance on sessional instructors to meet service teaching requirements **more lecturers are needed in the English program to provide a stable and cohesive curriculum.**

The increased emphasis on community engaged or outward-facing learning in the humanities evidenced in FCCS is part of a growing public humanities approach that promotes publicly engaged knowledge creation, experiential learning, and university-community collaboration. The Public Humanities Project @ Western and Public Humanities Hub at UBC Vancouver are examples of initiatives that center public scholarship as an important mode of academic inquiry, bringing together faculty, students, staff, and public partners to address common problems through community-campus initiatives and public arts projects. Harvard University is making the humanities more visible by inviting all students to participate in humanities and fine arts programming. The new Undergraduate Scholars Initiative and Intergenerational Humanities Project launched in 2021 allow students from across the university to participate in select seminars, as well as in a rotating three-year research project designed by a cohort of interdisciplinary faculty. As Robin Kelsey, Dean of Arts and Humanities, explained in an article in the [Harvard Gazette](#), "the humanities actually happen when people come together and exchange ideas.... We want them to understand the power of those conversations with respect to pushing knowledge forward and changing our understanding of the world." **One way in which FCCS may increase its combined humanities and fine arts footprint on campus is to develop a course that brings local writers and artists into the classroom.** The Canadian Writers in Person course in the Department of Humanities at York University could be modified to

create a course that brings Indigenous writers and artists onto campus. These conversations should be open to the campus community, including students, faculty and staff.

## **2. Student Academic Experience and Support**

While we did not meet with many undergraduate students, those we met were enthusiastic and fully engaged in their programs. They found the programs in FCCS stimulating and interesting and appreciated the introduction to theory, which they have been able to apply broadly. They felt that training in the arts and humanities was indispensable not only for creating a more robust university education, but also in creating inclusive curricula in the primary and secondary school systems. Students also felt included and supported. As a small Faculty, FCCS partners closely with the AVP Students portfolio and the academic and career development office to provide strong mentorship and support for students. Art on the Line, for example, is a signature fundraising event that brings together the local community to celebrate the work of students, faculty, alumni, and community artists. Funds are used to support the fourth-year graduate exhibition, visiting artists, and art focused student trips, with 10% of the proceeds going to a local charity.

While students are largely happy with their programs, they do see room for improvement, especially in response to issues of equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization (EDID). The student body at UBC Okanagan has become increasingly diverse and looks much different than it did 10 years ago. About 6% of students identify as Indigenous with a growing proportion of international students from across Africa and the Caribbean. This shifting student demographic is reflected in changing curricular interests among students. Students, for example, deeply appreciate the inclusion of courses on Indigenous literatures and ways of knowing, and they underscore that understanding the history, and literary and intellectual traditions, of Indigenous peoples is important to them, and that they have been moved and changed by these encounters. In particular, students appreciate the opportunity to be taught by Indigenous and racialized faculty who are able to draw from their lived experiences to extend the learning contexts of the classroom. While students were unanimous in their agreement that the Faculty should continue to diversify its teaching and student populations, they also cautioned against a rush to diversify that is performative, rather than genuine. FCCS should not invite people in without creating the spaces for them to teach in culturally specific ways that are not circumscribed by a dominant Eurocentric worldview. FCCS, in other words, should pay attention to people being invited in, so it is not just about their arrival but making sure they want to stay. Students also express concerns about the ways in which harmful ideas are circulated in classrooms, and power dynamics between professors and students that make it difficult for them to openly challenge oppressive attitudes.

In addition, students expressed the need for a curriculum that is responsive to current issues and the world around them. As one student explained, while she loves English literature and the study of classic literatures, those forms cannot stand alone. This same student described Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* as a revelation. Students, thus, want more opportunities to engage with a range of scholars and to consider the historical alongside contemporary political concerns in rich theoretical debate. They are also open to new

pedagogical approaches in the humanities that move projects and assignments beyond writing or essays to presentations, art works, and other creative engagements.

Continuing to improve the quality of the student undergraduate academic experience will be dependent on the Faculty's ability to respond both to increasingly diverse student populations and students' growing calls for social justice. To address concerns of underrepresentation and a largely Eurocentric curriculum, FCCS should not only continue to work with the Provost's office to recruit diverse hires but also work with its departments to **develop a readiness plan to recruit, accept and support new Indigenous and Black colleagues**. A readiness plan might assess recruitment practices and processes; revise existing recruitment plans to take into account the unique context of Indigenous and racialized scholars; include unconscious bias education for deans, department heads, and chairs of search committees; as well as detail about how Indigenous and racialized colleagues will be mentored and supported toward tenure and promotion. The reviewers also concur with the students' recommendation that **bringing in speakers to address anti-oppressive pedagogies and knowledges should take place alongside the hiring of Indigenous and racialized faculty**. Specifically, students would like to hear from people outside of academia, and in particular more local, community speakers, who have knowledges that are not easily accessible through the formal channels of the university. They would like these speakers invited into classrooms but also made accessible to all students.

Reflecting on the lack of diversity in the Kelowna region, students also offered a vision of the university as a potential cultural space and space of intersection. This idea was repeated by faculty members who felt that FCCS has an opportunity to become the cultural hub of the Okanagan campus. **Better resourcing for the theatre could lead to events that bring community partners on to campus and provide a cultural space for international students so they can begin to develop a sense of connection with the campus**. See section seven, "Community Engagement," for further discussion of FCCS as a potential cultural hub.

### 3. Graduate Education and Post-Doctoral Training

At the graduate level, FCCS offers a Master of Arts in English, Master of Fine Arts, and the MA and PhD in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies (IGS). The Master in Design, a collaboration with Engineering, is a new professional summer program and the first professional Master's degree in FCCS. It hopes to attract business and design professionals who have ideas that can be developed and brought to market.

The MFA has historically done well with one in every four students receiving a CGS-M. The program is currently exploring low residency options for students and looking to become more cohesively cohort based so students can do their exhibitions at the same time. The MA in English, however, is underrecruiting and since their cohort is small (between 6-8 students) students struggle to feel a sense of community. Cross-listed courses that combine undergraduate and graduate students are also not ideal. The program is exploring ways to integrate their students into the IGS or MFA cohort. **FCCS should support a review of the MA English program to determine how to strengthen it.**

The MA and PhD in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies (IGS) was revised with a new theme-based program launched in 2018. IGS now includes six themes with FCCS directly sponsoring and supporting the digital arts and humanities theme that aligns with the revised Bachelor in Media Studies. FCCS also supports faculty members who supervise students in the other five themes: community engagement, social change, equity; global studies; power, conflict and ideas; sustainability; and urban and regional studies. Each theme is supported by a unique set of courses and a professionalization seminar that all students take. Apart from some cross-Faculty degree program challenges, the IGS graduate program seems to be working well. It expands other models of graduate interdisciplinary programs at York University, X University (formerly Ryerson), and the University of Waterloo. Students come from diverse fields and include urban designers, mathematical biologists, and landscape ecologists. Despite this diversity, students have a strong sense of community because they do core courses together and are able to move through the program as a cohort. In 2021, the program received its first Killam doctoral award for a PhD student working in the sustainability theme, comparing participatory modelling and Indigenous research methodologies for multi-actor consensus building and sustainable management of Okanagan Lake. The project is supervised by a Creative Studies faculty member. Concerns, however, remain about funding. As colleagues expressed, the main thing that kills interdisciplinary programs is Faculties. **A fund should be set up (what faculty members call a “Bank of IGS”) into which all participating Faculties are required to contribute to ensure stable funding.** This collaborative funding model will emphasize that although the program’s center of gravity is in the humanities and social sciences, it really is a cross-Faculty initiative.

FCCS currently provides a range of supports for graduate students, including in-house training of TAs and help with grant writing. The Faculty also supported students with emergency RA allocations during the pandemic. The Faculty hopes to reinstate grad student presentations, as Covid responses make this possible, to get students more integrated across their programs and address some of the concerns related to community building and program identity. There is also an international partial tuition waiver for doctoral students across UBCO and **the reviewers support the proposal to add a partial tuition waiver for international MA students.** The Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) initiative is a partnership between the Faculty of Education at UBC and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, which provides Indigenous mentoring across all programs at UBC-Vancouver and UBC-Okanagan campuses to enhance peer mentoring for Indigenous graduate students. This program supports Indigenous graduate students in applying Indigenous knowledges and community-oriented approaches in their graduate research.

Like undergraduate students, graduate research students are intensely interested in questions of equity and justice. They are eager to engage in and learn more about creative and intellectual forms of activism. While some of the IGS themes are centered on social justice and the Faculty is looking to build research capacity in environmental humanities, climate justice and environmental racism, students expressed disappointment about the ways in which literature, for example, is narrowly defined across FCCS programs. Notwithstanding the

addition of new world literature courses, they cited the need to “de-embed eurocentrism” in assigned readings, course bibliographies, and actions in classrooms. Students in small graduate programs are also aggrieved by, but find it difficult to respond to, anti-Indigenous and racist sentiment when these are expressed by faculty members and higher administrative staff. They further expressed disappointment in not having space for what they could regard as truly confidential exchanges with the reviewers or the opportunity for follow-up conversations. A further discussion of graduate student concerns and recommendations related to these concerns are offered in section six of the review under “People, Environment, and Culture.”

#### **4. Research, Scholarly, and Professional Activity**

When the North Kelowna campus of the Okanagan University College became a part of the University of British Columbia on July 1, 2005, the assumption was that the new school would become a primarily teaching institution. Yet within a matter of years, UBCO transformed into a genuine research university. The same is true of FCCS, especially during the last few years when several emerging academics have been hired who are already quite productive. The best indication of FCCS’s success is the recent hiring of the Faculty’s first Tier Two Canada Research Chair in Eco Feminism, as well as the securing of four Canadian Fund of Innovation grants (CFI). Once the profile of UBCO within the UBC system is more fully established, it is likely that the allocation of CRCs for the Okanagan campus will proportionally increase, which could mean further CRC positions for FCCS.

One of the most commendable aspects of scholarly culture in FCCS is the Faculty’s deliberate and well justified research focus. Given its unique geographical and cultural location, FCCS’s emphasis on sustainability, the environment, climate, land and space, and digital humanities offers an ideal platform for twenty-first-century scholarship. FCCS should also be applauded for embracing collaborative research, which is often less common in humanities than in many other disciplines. FCCS is involved in several interdisciplinary clusters, for instance, in Culture, Creativity, and Well-Being and Enhancing Ecosystem Sustainability. The Faculty’s CFI applicants, on the other hand, have been very successful in combining traditional and Indigenous learning. The Department of Creative Studies has been particularly effective in overcoming the traditional division between creativity and traditional scholarship, but we have little doubt that FCCS’s other two academic units will soon reach the same level. **The reviewers sincerely hope that advocacy for creative scholarship will continue beyond the tenure of the current Dean and Associate Dean of Research.**

In general, the research productivity of FCCS’s faculty members meets national standards, especially since the criteria used for the tenure and promotion process are the same as on the Vancouver campus. While some faculty may feel their research profile is still too low, this can perhaps be attributed to the relative youth of the institution and a sizeable contingent of teaching faculty. When the recently hired research faculty approach the peak of their academic careers, the overall productivity is bound to appear higher. **In this respect, the mentorship of new faculty members to ensure they publish with high quality academic presses and avoid predatory journals and vanity presses is essential.**

We also support buyouts for scholars leading large research projects, especially for mid-career faculty members who are normally those carrying the greatest burden of administrative responsibilities, and strongly recommend that the practice of rewarding Principal Investigators of major grants with course releases at the Faculty level be continued. The other mechanism that would immediately increase the research profile of FCCS are **open-rank hires that are likely to attract academics entering the most productive phase of their careers.**

## 5. Leadership and Administration

The most unambiguous part of our review must be a universal consensus that Dean Bryce Traister has been an outstanding academic leader. His contributions are appreciated by his colleagues, support staff, and students, both undergraduate and graduate. As someone who joined a unit in flux, a Faculty which had had four deans in the first eleven years of its existence, Dean Traister has not only managed to make significant improvements to the operation of FCCS but managed to perform them in a manner that didn't alienate even those faculty members most directly affected by the changes. His administration of the Faculty has been exemplary and can be characterized by both inclusivity and transparency in decision-making. During our interviews, Dean Traister has been described as "innovative," "visionary," "champion of the Faculty," and "motivator," and seen as particularly "supportive of Indigenous and minority students" and "advocate of sessional members." He has been instrumental in community engagement and has made his mark on FCCS as a builder and not an austerity dean.

Virtually everyone we spoke to agreed that there is no point in bringing FCCS back into the fold of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, despite the fact that this is a typical structure in most Canadian universities. Quite to the contrary, most interviewees, both members of FCCS and others, see the combination of languages, fine arts, and English as perhaps fortuitous but in practice well suited to each other. Even though a small Faculty with its own administration may not be financially the most efficient option, the clear academic mission of the FCCS nevertheless warrants its continuous independence. FCCS's governance appears effective, with a clear division of responsibilities and a fair distribution of workload. As the "Self-Study" points out, the introduction of "Workday – the university's new enterprise software" has not been particularly popular (8), but even this hasn't seriously affected the Faculty's ability to deliver its programs.

At the same time, most of our interlocutors also agreed that splitting the Department of Critical Studies into two smaller departments in 2019 – of English and Cultural Studies and Languages and World Literatures – has made for a better working environment and more favourable academic synergies. In this sense, there is **no need to reconsider the merger yet again, and no need for a further subdivision of the departments** that seem to function well with the administrative support attached to them. Even in the Department of Creative Studies, where the Head also functions as a producer and deals with facilities and advertising, most lingering

issues could be solved quite simply by the **hiring of an additional employee, ideally a technical director.**

The only notable challenge is the perceived lack of the Faculty's clear identity. Though FCCS is perhaps the most obviously public-facing academic unit on the campus, it could still make itself more indispensable for the strategic mandate of the campus if it had a more integral role in its makeup. As unique as its combination of academic programs is, it doesn't yet resonate either on the campus or in the community. A multi-tiered name of the Faculty that tries to capture the essence of its subunits may be an accurate reflection of its role, but it doesn't on its own serve to present its identity to an outsider.

## **6. People, Environment and Culture**

At a campus-wide level, the UBC Okanagan campus has established Indigenous strategic priorities, widening participation and access for Indigenous learners by working with Faculties to introduce different admission streams. These initiatives include the Indigenous access studies program to which FCCS contributes, as well as a collaboration with the En'owkin Center, in which some UBCO courses, including EN 114, are delivered in community. EN 114 also provides upper-level Indigenous undergraduate students with teaching assistantships with office hours held in the Indigenous Center. These students benefit from wider peer connection, as well as faculty mentorship. Indeed, FCCS has gained a reputation on the UBC Okanagan campus as a leader in Indigenous engagement both with students and at the community level. The Faculty, for example, hired two elders from the Okanagan nation as adjunct professors who have worked with Dean Traister to develop and offer cultural safety training. This has been described as a tremendous undertaking to engage FCCS faculty members in a localized cultural training program. The elders worked directly with the dean to establish a memorandum of agreement that values and honors their knowledges and the work they do, and there is every indication that the engagement FCCS has started registers a meaningful commitment to understanding Canada's colonial history and how the effects of that history continue to be felt. Both students and colleagues have also been encouraged by the growth of Indigenous faculty members in FCCS, and the consensus is that **Indigenous hires should continue**. It is important that Indigenous students see themselves reflected in the faculty cohort and the curriculum, and these hires will help to facilitate a growth in Indigenous student enrolment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Despite these positive gains, there is a sense especially among students that the Faculty needs to deepen its engagement of questions of EDID. Graduate students in FCCS, for example, reported explicit racial bias against international and racialized students and noted that instructors and supervisors are primarily white. In fact, while faculty colleagues were more positive about Indigenous engagement and community-building initiatives, students tended to offer a different picture. Graduate students noted specific concerns around the Faculty's concept of "literature," particularly in the departments of Creative Writing and English, which fails to adequately take into account diverse geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, as well as oral and multimodal forms of literature. They also articulated a need to dis-embed

eurocentrism as this relates to professorial knowledge, awareness, experience and interest, and as evidenced through invited speakers, assigned readings, course bibliographies, and actions in classrooms. Like undergraduate students, research students also need a process by which they can address inappropriate actions and use of power by faculty members and higher administrative staff.

This report, unfortunately, does not allow room for an extensive summary of all the thoughtful recommendations offered by students to improve the overall environment and culture of the Faculty, but the reviewers would like to include three recommendations for consideration. Students were clear in their request that FCCS **support and fund student-led initiatives and activities that recognize and demonstrate interest in the international literatures of the campus' student body**. In addition, the reviewers suggest that FCCS **consider conducting a Faculty audit that provides an overall review of equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization** in the Faculty's academic course offerings, content, and syllabi, and examines how racial demographics correlate to student applications, acceptances, recruitment, course enrollment, and graduation. Finally, FCCS should **introduce a functional system of accountability** that allows students to voice complaints without incurring further personal or group harm.

Other issues affecting the working and educational environment and morale of the Faculty, include an anomalous workload in Creative Studies where research-active faculty members teach a 3:2 workload, equivalent to the educational leadership stream. **The workload in Creative Studies should be consistent with the workload in the other two departments.** Lecturers and sessional lecturers expressed concern about career advancement and opportunities for upward mobility, as well as the inability to be a principal investigator on research projects and the impact of heavy workloads on research production. In addition, they articulated a **need for greater mentorship and for initiatives such as an orientation day**. While lecturers appreciate that they are eligible for merit and PSA, they also called for **more transparency in the merit and PSA process** and suggested that an independent review committee would be preferable to a committee adjudicated by their peers. Sessional lecturers are concerned that they often do not know what they will be teaching until immediately before the term starts. All faculty voiced concern over a lack of appropriate office and studio space and replacement equipment, discussed in greater detail under section nine, "Physical Infrastructure."

## 7. Community Engagement

Interaction with community is perhaps the defining feature of many creative arts programs, but it is particularly prominent in FCCS. In part this is the result of their educational objective, a combination of "creative practice research and engagement" ("Self-Study" 4), but in an equal part it is also the result of the genuine commitment by students, faculty, and staff becoming the cultural hub of the city. The major step on this journey will be undoubtedly the planned Maker Space and Art Gallery in downtown Kelowna which will host not only UBCO's permanent art collection but will also provide a venue for visiting artists and serve as the showcase the students' and faculty members' artwork. **The Art Gallery's transformational influence will be**

**even stronger if it were to be combined with an Artist-in-Residence program, possibly an endowed one.**

As a very young institution FCCS doesn't yet have its body of well-established alumni with a capacity for giving. This is likely to change in the future, especially if FCCS continues to be actively involved in the cultural life of the city. The annual Art on the Line event, for example, is already an important part of the Kelowna calendar and brings the community and students together. While neither Opera under the Stars nor the University Chorus are exclusive to FCCS, its involvement in both further demonstrates the willingness of the Faculty to act as the University's main creative catalyst and potentially explore other art forms.

Until suitable facilities are built, any future expansion of FCCS into music will have to be restricted to study rather than creation or performance of music – perhaps in the framework of a discipline such as ethnomusicology – but this shouldn't prevent the in-house artists and critics from acting as campus arts connectors. Within UBCO itself, such a broadening of FCCS's role would be further increased if the **prerequisites for some of the popular art classes were to be removed**. This would not only provide an additional stream of students from other faculties and thereby stabilize FCCS's enrolment income but would also expose the wider university community to the creative work of the Faculty.

Just as important for the core mission of FCCS is Indigenous engagement. Not only are several faculty members involved in promoting and researching Indigenous art, but one of the main functions of the downtown campus location will be to reinforce the truth aspect of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We have heard repeatedly that the city of Kelowna is not as diverse as the student population at UBCO, and this is precisely where FCCS can perform the crucial function by bringing the two communities together in its exhibits and performances. **This could be done quite effectively through the establishment of internship programs at the undergraduate level**. Being able to contribute to local arts organizations would not only expose the students to experiential learning but may even result in their eventual employment. As the current, postgraduate and not-for-credit, internship program demonstrates, the idea of finding jobs for a group of students who are given the opportunity for community-embedded learning is invaluable. And this is even more true of students who are still trying to decide what career to pursue.

## **8. Support for University and Campus Strategic Plans**

The *Strategic Plan 2019-2024* articulates FCCS's vision "to become a premier academic and creative arts community for faculty and students seeking to work and learn in an interdisciplinary setting" (3), promoting flexible learning and interdisciplinary programming and research. In addition, the plan prioritizes an expansion of "the Faculty's engagement with indigenous peoples and cultures through curriculum innovation (including curricular decolonization), hiring practices, and respectful engagement with local elders, knowledge keepers, and self-identified aboriginal students" (5).

This vision and priorities reflect the key commitments of UBC and UBC Okanagan campus as expressed in *Shaping UBC's Next Century: Strategic Plan 2018-2028*, the *Aspire Consultation Report* and *Outlook 2040*. FCCS, by offering a suite of innovative and original programs that bring traditional humanities disciplines into rich engagement with the arts, enables the UBC Okanagan campus to deliver a comprehensive and flexible curriculum that not only includes the humanities as part of general education and service teaching, but also positions the arts and humanities as critical modes of understanding and responding to global challenges. In particular, the Faculty's focus on advancing interdisciplinary research and new collaborative approaches to curriculum and course development align directly with *Shaping UBC's Next Century: Strategic Plan 2018-2028*. The Faculty's ability to combine traditional scholarship and creation in the humanities and arts with technologies, and to respond to changing student demand with high quality programs creates a dynamic curriculum and research environment that is both cutting-edge and relevant. These research and curricular approaches recognize that "progress will require new ways of working within and across disciplines and with the community" (*Shaping UBC's Next Century* 27). These priorities and values are further reflected in UBC Okanagan's *Aspire Consultation Report*. According to the *Aspire* report, the UBC Okanagan campus aspires "to be a model of innovative and interdisciplinary programming within the UBC system, and a place that has an impact on communities both local and global" (3). *Shaping UBC's Next Century* also identifies people and places, research excellence, transformative learning, and local and global engagement as core areas of UBC's mandate, emphasizing "an enduring focus on academic excellence and Indigenous engagement, sustainability and wellbeing" (4). The bold vision of the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies in championing interdisciplinary and collaborative teaching and research is one of the primary ways in which it extends UBC's core commitments of transformative student learning, research excellence, and community engagement.

FCCS, indeed, stands out as an exemplar in community engagement as already discussed in section six of this report. In our various consultations with faculty members, there was consensus that FCCS has outpaced other Faculties in its careful, thoughtful and collaborative approach to Indigenous engagement, a key goal of UBCO vision documents. A primary goal of the *Aspire* report is to strengthen Indigenous "access, programming, affiliations and presence on campus" (11), while *Outlook 2040*, recognizes the campus's historic partnership with the Okanagan Nation and envisions UBCO as "a leader in Canada in the proportion of Indigenous faculty and students" and as offering "a comprehensive range of academic programs across the sciences, arts, creative disciplines and professional fields." The Faculty's commitment to Indigenous engagement and anti-racism is evidenced in a number of ways, including the creation of the Indigenous Engagement Strategy Committee—the first of its kind on the campus—to promote FCCS Indigenous programming and student support initiatives; the appointment of two Okanagan Nation Alliance elders as adjunct professors; an Indigenous Art Intensive; and new Indigenous faculty hires and appointments to promote Indigenous and anti-colonial pedagogies and practices across all three departments. While there is clearly more work to be done, the Faculty is contributing significantly to UBC's goal to embed principles of "equity and diversity across the university's systems and structures" (*Shaping UBC's Next Century* 27).

Since there is no doubt that FCCS's presence is critical to fulfilling the shared mandates of UBC and UBCO, we encourage the institution to be clear and unequivocal in its recognition of the Faculty's importance both in terms of its contributions to innovative program development and delivery, interdisciplinary research, Indigenous engagement, and intercultural understanding and to provide the support needed to maintain this critical work as outlined in this report.

## 9. Physical Infrastructure

By far the most significant impediment to the successful development of FCCS is the state of its spaces. Everyone, from faculty and staff to students, reports that their facilities are in dire need of improvement. Though the Faculty's main building is comparatively new, it is very limited as a teaching space. What is even more concerning is that a relatively simple upgrade to a single classroom – the so called "Media Maker Space" (CCS 122) – that is needed for the newly developed Bachelor of Media Studies program, can't be completed because the electrical conduits don't accommodate the required wiring. The cost of this upgrade is apparently no more than \$500,000, and we urge the institution **to provide an innovative digital media program with proper network access.**

The main reason for space difficulties that affect much of the campus is the rapid expansion of UBCO's student body which far exceeded the initial estimates on the basis of which the campus was constructed. But the principal obstacle to improving the working conditions is not so much a lack of funding as the very rigid system of rules that govern when the campus can also start to grow physically. While protecting against possible dips in enrolments is indeed a fiscally prudent policy, the discrepancy between demonstrated needs over a long period of time is such that this argument seems untenable.

The litany of space issues is probably too long for the scope of our report – by some estimates FCCS is short of spaces by 45% – so we will just highlight a few of the most obvious problems. The office availability is so poor that "24 faculty members are using/sharing offices of others who are on leave or teaching remotely, up to 3 per desk" with a further 19 sessional instructors sharing 7 offices ("Self-Study" 33). Just as concerning is the lack of common student spaces, which means that no department has a real physical presence on campus. The lack of studio spaces for Visual Arts students is a problem too, with up to one third of students without a proper space. The spaces that are available are quite small and lack proper storage for student artwork and, in some cases, even ports for their computers. Innovation Precinct One is a good example of the space that FCCS could use, but unfortunately it only houses eight to ten students. There is no dedicated space for graduate students either. Individual Principal Investigators may guarantee them bench space, but not a desk.

The only true performance facility, the theatre that also doubles as a lecture hall (ADMIN 026), doesn't have a technical director attached to it, which not only makes any public performance or event difficult but also prevents possible cost-recovery rentals. The FCCS faculty and staff are keen to collaborate with other academic units on the campus, and **we encourage a closer**

**relationship with Engineering and Computer Science.** CNC machines, for instance, could be used by both sets of students. The downtown Maker Space and Art Gallery will be a great addition to the campus, but the most pressing needs should be addressed before 2025. This could perhaps be done **through renting available office space in the city**, which may be readily available considering the changed work practices due to COVID pandemic. This is certainly preferable to the use of portables classrooms that has also been suggested by some of the deans.

In light of space shortage, it is somewhat ironic that when specialized classrooms are available, for instance for language instruction, their effective use is hindered by the universal adoption of automated scheduling software. Though such systems are unavoidable on a campus struggling for space since they help to optimize the use of space, **the constraints built into the algorithm should be adjusted** to allow the relatively simple use of the only proper clients of the three classrooms: the Department of Languages and World Literature.

## 10. Infrastructure and Resources

Any university budgeting model that uses student enrolment as a basis for calculating its units' funding is often at the mercy of factors that are outside the Faculties' and even the university's control. This volatility is especially pronounced in programs that require specialized delivery and cannot compensate for potential fluctuations by expanding the size of their incoming cohort. In this respect, the decision to combine in one Faculty a program that guarantees high service-teaching numbers such as English with small-size programs such as those in Fine Arts was a prudent one. Mandating a Creativity distribution requirement for the new BA program will also enable enrolment figures to remain relatively stable.

At the same time, however, neither measure has managed to help FCCS from getting into a deficit situation four out of the last seven years, and this despite the fact that the number of FCCS's majors has increased by 40% over the last six years, while the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty has remained virtually the same (44 in 2015 and 45 in 2020). In other words, much of the burden of rapid growth has been carried by non-tenure stream faculty members. All this points to a structural deficit rather than the Faculty's financial mismanagement, which also means that **the best way of resolving FCCS's resource predicament is by adjusting the funding model and not by periodic one-time operating grant increases.**

Based on our discussions with the deans of other Faculties, it seems that they are aware that the average-delivery model, which doesn't allow for exceptions, doesn't work for Faculties with a limited capacity for growth in some of its programs. They want to cooperate rather than compete and are likely to be supportive of a move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to Faculty budgets, as long the changes were to be implemented in a collegial manner. Running expensive but essential programs needs a clear institutional commitment and is, in this sense, a collective responsibility of everyone and not just of the units themselves.

22% of last year's FCCS's revenue comes from international tuition fees. While it is unlikely that this percentage will be able to approach the rate of international tuition fee revenue in some other Faculties, a **strategic expanding of recruitment outreach to the USA, the Caribbean, and Central and South America** would almost certainly have a positive effect on FCCS's enrolment. **A further exploration of possible articulation agreements**, such as the one with the Thompson Rivers University, may also be an effective way of shoring up the Faculty's bottom line. FCCS's decision to increase the enrolment cap in first-year English classes and its willingness to experiment with teaching writing in large-enrolment classes will also help, but only if it is accompanied with additional hires, otherwise the growth curve will soon flatten.

When new hires are made, **FCCS should avoid the overdependence on sessional instructors, especially in first-year classes which are crucial for attracting potential majors**. As effective and committed as some of the part-time faculty members may be, the students need continuity and professors need stability. If extra capacity in teaching is needed, the educational leadership stream hires are preferable to sessional instructors, as long as the balance between these and research professors remains even.

## 11. Future Development

According to one of the people we interviewed, the morale among faculty members in FCCS has never been higher. Not only is the Faculty happy with the direction in which it has been moving under Dean Traister's leadership, but everyone, including the University's leaders, agrees that a rich cultural humanities curriculum is an essential ingredient of a comprehensive research university such as UBCO. It should come as no surprise then that time has come to consolidate the vision rather than risk what someone called "reinvention fatigue." FCCS's momentum is currently strong and positive and worth maintaining.

The breadth of programs in FCCS is impressive as well, and **we recommend against expanding for its own sake, at least until new facilities are available**. We do, however, **recommend strengthening ties with the most natural of campus allies, FASS**. In the future, when current program needs have been backfilled, **FCCS should also explore new possibilities for collaboration with Engineering and Medicine, where interest in collaboration remains high**. This will not only serve to foster potential research ties but may also result in the additional enrolment of students who will find interdisciplinary connections in their professors' work inspiring. **We also encourage the further strengthening of FCCS's relationships with the Okanagan School of Education and with the School of Social Work** where many of FCCS's graduates may continue after the completion of their BA and BFA degrees.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Education and Student Learning
  - 1.1 New hires are needed to make new and newly reinvented programs sustainable.
  - 1.2 More lecturers are needed in the English program to provide a stable and cohesive Curriculum.
  - 1.3 Formalize community-engaged learning by developing a course that brings Indigenous writers and artists on to campus.
2. Student Academic Experience and Support
  - 2.1 Develop a readiness plan to recruit, accept and support new Indigenous and Black colleagues.
  - 2.2 Bring in speakers to address anti-oppressive pedagogies and knowledges.
  - 2.3 Provide better resourcing for the theatre to build a cultural hub for the campus and international students.
3. Graduate Education and Post-Doctoral Training
  - 3.1 Faculty should support a review of the MA English program to determine how to strengthen it.
  - 3.2 A fund should be set up for the IGS graduate program into which all participating Faculties are required to contribute.
  - 3.3 Add a partial tuition waiver for international MA students.
4. Research, Scholarly, and Professional Activity
  - 4.1 Continue the advocacy for creative scholarship for the foreseeable future.
  - 4.2 Set up mentorships of new faculty members to ensure they publish with high quality academic presses and avoid predatory journals and vanity presses.
  - 4.3 Pursue open-rank hires which are likely to attract academics entering the most productive phase of their careers.
5. Leadership and Administration
  - 5.1 Discontinue any discussions about the merger of FCCS with another Faculty and its further subdivision.
  - 5.2. Hire a technical director.
6. People, Environment and Culture
  - 6.1 Indigenous hires should continue combined with the readiness plan identified in 2.1.
  - 6.2 Support and fund student initiatives and activities that recognize and demonstrate interest in the international literatures of the campus' student body.
  - 6.3 Conduct a Faculty audit that provides an overall review of equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization.
  - 6.4 Introduce a system of accountability that allows students to voice complaints.
  - 6.5 Make the workload in Creative Studies consistent with the workload in the other two departments.
  - 6.6 Create mentorship opportunities for lecturers and sessional lecturers.
  - 6.7 Provide a review of the merit and PSA process with a goal to creating more equity and transparency.

## 7. Community Engagement

- 7.1 Combine the establishment of the Art Gallery with an Artist-in-Residence program, possibly an endowed one.
- 7.2 Remove the prerequisites for some of the popular art classes to enable students from other programs to access them.
- 7.3 Develop undergraduate internship programs.

## 9. Physical Infrastructure

- 9.1 The University should provide the digital media program with proper network access.
- 9.2 Build a closer relationship with Engineering and Computer Science programs.
- 9.3 Consider renting available office space in the city.
- 9.4 Adjust the constraints built into the automated scheduling algorithm to allow a better use of the three language classrooms.

## 10. Infrastructure and Resources

- 10.1 Adjust the funding model to account for the differences between various programs.
- 10.2 The recruitment outreach should be strategically expanded to the USA, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.
- 10.3 Explore the possibility of further articulation agreements.
- 10.4 Avoid the overdependence on sessional instructors, especially in first-year classes which are crucial for attracting potential majors.

## 11. Future Development

- 11.1. Avoid expansion for its own sake, at least until new facilities are available.
- 11.2 Strengthen the ties with FASS, the Okanagan School of Education, and the School of Social Work.
- 11.3 When resource and facilities needs are met, FCCS may explore future possibilities for collaboration with Engineering and Medicine, where interest in collaboration remains high.