

The UBC Learning Exchange is a university-community engagement initiative based in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Since its inception nine years ago, the Learning Exchange has connected about 5,000 UBC students with non-profit organizations and East Vancouver schools where students have contributed their time and talent to help meet community goals. In addition, since the opening of our Main Street storefront eight years ago, the Learning Exchange has provided free educational resources to hundreds of inner city residents. Throughout its development, the Learning Exchange has been striving to learn from experience, respond to changing circumstances, and, at the same time, consistently work towards the achievement of UBC's Trek vision and its central themes of global citizenship, sustainability, and the strengthening of civil society. None of our success would be possible without the strong support of our donors, our colleagues within UBC, our partners in the community, and the participants in our programs. We are very grateful for this ongoing support. With our move to a new storefront space at 612 Main Street, the Learning Exchange is looking forward to the next phase of our evolution. This report briefly summarizes the highlights of the past year's activities and outlines our plans for the coming year.

Highlights of Activities in the Past Year

- **Community Service Learning (CSL):** CSL integrates students' volunteer work with their classroom learning. This year, a total of 1162 students participated in CSL through the Learning Exchange or the UBC-Community Learning Initiative, a model for course-based CSL activities in the non-profit sector made possible by a generous grant from the McConnell Foundation. This total represents a 36% increase from last year. Fifty-seven percent of these students were taking an academic course that included an ongoing individual community placement or short-term group CSL project as an integral part of the course. There was a 76% increase in the number of students doing course-based CSL this year compared to last year. This reflects our continuing strategic emphasis on increasing the number of courses that incorporate CSL options. Classes in a wide range of subjects incorporated a CSL component, including engineering, First Nations studies, geography, biology, sociology, creative writing, health promotion, and nutrition.
- **CSL in Vancouver Schools:** More than 500 students helped to enhance the learning environment in 14 inner city schools. UBC students acted as academic tutors for individuals and small groups, facilitated hands-on science labs, and led sports and recreation activities. More than 200 UBC students took part in special projects during Reading Week (spring break) where topics such as social responsibility, ecology, and First Nations history were explored through artistic expression, gardening, scientific experiments, and fitness activities. Overall, more than 1800 children and youth in Vancouver schools engaged in educational activities with UBC students this past year. HSBC Bank Canada provides generous support for some of the school programs.
- **Community Leadership Training Program:** A unique aspect of UBC's CSL programs is that UBC staff and graduate students act as leaders of the CSL projects undertaken during Reading Week. Almost 40 people were trained and supported to act as project leaders this year, including staff from Business Objects, an SAP company, one of our corporate partners. UBC's community leadership training program is a joint initiative of the Learning Exchange and UBC-Community Learning Initiative, Human Resources, and Student Development.
- **Learning Exchange Storefront:** The storefront has continued to act as a focal point for residents of the Downtown Eastside, with the number of people attending the afternoon computer drop-in increasing to an average of 45 per day.

... 2

- **Computer Skills Program supported by HSBC Bank Canada:** This program continues to be very popular. This year, 172 people took part in the basic or advanced computer skills workshops.
- **ESL Conversation Program supported by HSBC Bank Canada:** This program continues to operate at capacity, with spaces for immigrants filling up as soon as registration opens. A total of 451 spaces for immigrants were filled this year. Approximately the same number of community members acted as facilitators of the conversation groups as last year (38). UBC's English Language Institute continues to provide training and support to the ESL facilitators. Funding was received this year from the provincial Ministry of Education to support the expansion of the ESL program into a small number of Vancouver schools over the next three years.
- **UBC Okanagan Learning Exchange:** A strategic plan based on an extensive community consultation was completed last year. The plan is being implemented, with a focus on three issues identified by the community as being important: Aboriginal education, the isolation of seniors, and access to community resources. Forty-nine UBC Okanagan students participated in three CSL projects related to these issues, 40 volunteers from UBC Okanagan were connected to community organizations, and the Learning Exchange helped to broker relationships within the non-profit sector in Kelowna. The UBC Okanagan Learning Exchange was established through a generous gift from Jim and Shirley-Anne Eccott.

Highlights of Plans for the Coming Year

- **New Learning Exchange Storefront in Chinatown:** The move to new space at 612 Main Street (at Keefer Street) opens up new possibilities. The new facility consists of about 7,000 square feet on three levels. The main floor will be home to the computer access and training programs, the second floor will house the ESL program, and the third floor will provide office and meeting space for staff. The new facility will open in early November. This new location will enable us to expand the storefront programs that have been in such high demand. It is also providing the impetus to reflect on the role that the Learning Exchange plays in the community and develop new ways to contribute to the resolution of the critical issues facing inner city areas.
- **Advancing Community Service Learning:** As a result of the success of our CSL programs and UBC's focus on enhancing the undergraduate student learning experience, UBC has made the growth of CSL programs a priority. The Learning Exchange has undertaken a strategic planning process, involving discussions with colleagues on campus and in the external community. This process will determine how to significantly increase student and faculty participation in CSL activities while continuing to generate positive outcomes for students, community partner organizations, and the university.

“During the third day (of the Reading Week project)—evaluating and thinking about things in group discussion—the students realized how much theory they had applied, that they were getting use out of their education. This was very valuable. They were applying the concepts they’d learned and seeing how they came into play in practice even though they hadn’t realized it at the time. Without reflection, they wouldn’t have made this connection.”

– Project leader commenting on the value of structured reflection, one of the key elements of CSL.