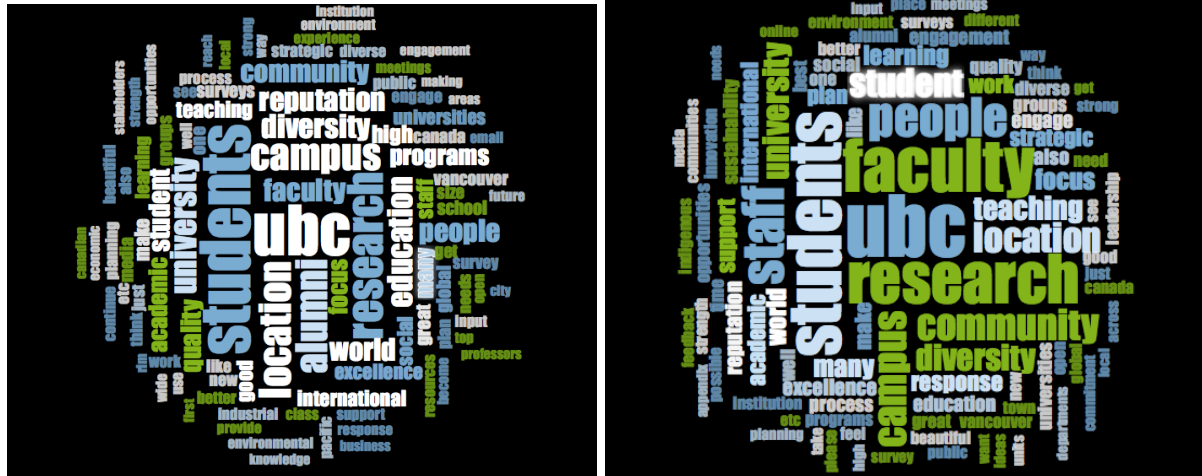


UBC's next century: survey report (alumni)

1. Executive summary



The word cloud on the left contains the words most frequently used by alumni in their responses to our initial survey on UBC's next strategic plan, while the one on the right shows the words most frequently used by other members of the UBC community.¹ We received 450 responses from alumni and 564 survey responses from other members of the UBC community.

As a comparison between these two word clouds suggest, while there were commonalities between the responses given by UBC alumni and those offered by other members of the UBC; there were also some differences of emphasis. These differences may also be seen in a comparison between the ordering of themes that emerge from the answers given by these two groups. Table one (overleaf) compares responses from alumni against responses given by other members of the UBC community, by frequency of reference to the themes identified in *UBC's Next Century: Survey Report (Staff, Faculty, Students and Other Community Members)* (UBC Survey Report I). A description of these themes and important methodological information are supplied in the UBC Survey Report I, and these two reports should be read together.

Table one illustrates that alumni and other members of the UBC community both prioritized institutional factors in their survey responses. Relative to other members of the UBC community, alumni placed a greater emphasis on geography and learning, and a relatively lesser emphasis on people and diversity. Research and international received greater emphasis from alumni, while UBC governance, wellbeing and Indigenous engagement received greater emphasis from other members of the UBC community. Within each of these themes, there were also commonalities and differences within and between groups of respondents. This survey report focuses primarily on the different things we heard from alumni, and therefore supplements UBC Survey Report I.

¹ The phrase "other members of the UBC community" in this report refers to faculty, staff, students and those who fit more than one of these categories (including alumni who are also staff, faculty, etc), as well as community members with other connections to UBC.



Table one: Comparison of themes

Other UBC Community	Alumni
1. Institutional	1
2. People	4
3. Geography	2
4. Diversity	5
5. Learning	3
6. Engagement	6
7. Governance	14
8. Wellbeing	10
9. Innovation	9
10. International	8
11. Indigenous Engagement	13
12. Sustainability	11
13. Research	7
14. Physical Infrastructure	12

2. Institutional

Like other members of the UBC community, our alumni expressed pride in UBC's institutional achievements and global reputation, the quality of UBC's programs and the educational opportunities that UBC affords. Alumni also emphasized the quality of research conducted at UBC. Alumni celebrated UBC's institutional history, particularly the centrality of students to UBC's development and the importance of alumni to BC:

Its history, starting with the fact, still to be celebrated, that it is the result of student determination (The Great Trek and the BACK MAC campaigns were remarkable and defining moments for the university) with a campus, programs and faculties created by brave people. The alumni of the university have built this province.

Alumni valued UBC's academic values and the comprehensiveness of its program offerings:

Preservation of key academic values, including freedom of speech and recognition of importance of arts and humanities as well as science and economics.

Relative to responses received from other members of the UBC community, alumni emphasized the importance of transparency in institutional decision-making, and expressed a particular desire to receive clearer communications from UBC about its activities and governance.

3. People

Alumni placed comparatively less emphasis on this theme than other members of the UBC community. However, many identified the quality of UBC's faculty as a key differentiator. UBC's students also received praise:



I am involved with a foundation that has undertaken about 80 projects involving 8 different faculties in UBC[V] and UBCO and the quality of the faculty and students has been uniformly good.

Many alumni emphasized that they count themselves among “UBC’s people”, and expressed appreciation for UBC’s acknowledgment of the importance of alumni. This alum wrote that UBC’s greatest strength is:

The recognition by the universities governing bodies that the alumni are a significant force in shaping and contributing to the growth and recognition of its position in higher education and research.

Alumni hoped that nurturing strong relationships among students, alumni, faculty and staff continues to form a priority in UBC’s next strategic plan.

Some alumni identified that they would like to see UBC change and improve how it deals with sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus, and in particular how well it secures the safety and wellbeing of women and minority populations.

4. Geography

Like other members of the UBC community, alumni emphasized that they appreciate UBC’s beautiful campuses and its location in BC. Some alumni also identified UBC’s physical proximity to and relationships with Asia and the Pacific Rim as a particular institutional advantage. Alumni mentioned UBC’s location more often than did other community members (and that location is greatly valued by our alumni). However, fewer alumni explored the cultural and institutional significance of UBC’s physical place on the map.

5. Diversity

Diversity received slightly less emphasis from alumni than from other members of the UBC community. However, many alumni identified it as a key strength and priority:

I believe that UBC's diverse student body provided me with the ability to embrace working with people across different cultures and background, which is very important in today's environment.

[C]ontinue to recognise and promote diversity and multiculturalism in curriculum and policy.

A plan that embraces the value of diversity (cultural, ethnic, academic) and commits to the creation of an inclusive learning space; an update to the Aboriginal Strategic Plan.

Alumni also invited UBC to consider how best to include a diverse range of voices in the present strategic planning process.

6. Learning

Learning and the quality of education at UBC was a key theme for our alumni. Alumni emphasized the importance of preparing students for a changing world:

How can UBC become more "engaged" in the community? How do we prepare students for new industry trends (big data, robotics, sustainability)?

I'd be very interested in seeing how/whether UBC is able to find solutions for various important goals in our society which student teams in collaboration with academic and/or industrial groups can complete proofs-of-concept for. Setting CO2 emissions goals, for example.

Alumni also expressed a desire to ensure that UBC remains financially accessible to BC students² and that educational standards continue to be rigorous.

Many alumni expressed a desire to see more continuing education programs at UBC, including programs tailored to alumni and other community members at various life stages:

Build lifelong learning platforms to support the strategic growth of Canadian corporations.

[D]evelop a greater daytime continuing education program at the UBC campus to allow senior alumni to still associate with the physical campus.

[M]ore professional development.

UBC adopted a broad-based admission approach for all direct-entry undergraduate students in 2012. Alumni volunteers help to review these applications.³ Alumni expressed support for approaching admissions in a manner that incorporates attention to factors other than grades:

I think the university needs to get back to allowing students in who don't always have the highest grades. You should look for leaders who only need the tools to release their full ability. I joined the university with a 65% average but I had been the president of my high school. I went on to become a CA and ran my own software company (over 85 employees) for over 25 years. I thought I contributed to society in my own way and it was only because of my university experience (and my varsity [sports]) that led to this.

In 2015-2016, UBC had 61,113 students enrolled in its programs. 47,924 of these students were Canadian and permanent resident students.⁴ Alumni were concerned to ensure that UBC continues to make higher education available to BC students:

Balancing needs of BC students and residents with UBC international aspirations[.]

² See UBC Policy 72 regarding financial accessibility:

<http://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2011/10/policy72.pdf>. Further information regarding UBC tuition may be found at: http://bog3.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2016/11/4.1_2016.12_Tuition-Fees.pdf.

³ <https://www.alumni.ubc.ca/volunteer-and-donate/broad-based-admissions-alumni-reader/>.

⁴ Student numbers are reported at: <http://annualreport.ubc.ca/ubc-at-a-glance-2015-16/>. For BC performance metrics re enrollment and graduation targets, see <http://annualreport.ubc.ca/ministry-indicators-2/>.

Priority is educating BC residents. This should be available at a reasonable cost.

Like other members of the UBC community, alumni were divided in their opinions about the extent to which UBC's degree programs should focus on workplace readiness relative to other skills:

[Try] to resist the pressures to make it a 'job training' institution and [continue] to instill the joy of discovery, knowledge and life-long learning.

UBC also needs to remember to meet the liberal arts needs of our society. Without a strong English, History, Political Science (etc.) based foundation, the incredible business and science community developments will flounder.

Engage more people in the working world about what programs need to and train.

7. Engagement

This was an important theme for alumni as well as other members of the UBC community. Alumni emphasized that they enjoyed working with UBC students, staff and faculty and that they see great value to BC and Canada in an engaged university:

It's become clear that the planet is orienting towards cities, yet universities are rarely local in the sense that they remain disconnected from the cities they exist within. My main priority is to see the university double down on the city as learning environment.

Increase publicity in the world for UBC's research-such as the article in Trek magazine that talks about how butter from grass-fed cows has more Omega-3 fatty acids than butter from grain-fed cows. Don't limit this knowledge to just within the UBC community.

Maintain (or heighten) business community's involvement at UBC (via internships, co-work, opportunities for students to interact directly with experienced professionals).

8. Governance

University governance received considerable attention from other members of the UBC community, but was a less frequent theme within alumni responses. Those alumni who did engage with governance questions signaled that they care to ensure that UBC is governed transparently and well. Some expressed disappointment with UBC's recent performance in light of controversies that have received media attention in the past two years. These respondents asked UBC to ensure that it focused on the key functions of teaching and research and to ensure that university decisions are made openly and communicated honestly.

9. Wellbeing

Wellbeing is another theme that received more emphasis from other members of the UBC community than from alumni. Some alumni responses emphasized the value and importance of building inclusive

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communities and of athletics and physical activity to UBC. Others identified a desire to see UBC continue to foster school spirit among students and alumni. Some alumni identified that UBC could do more to make its campuses accessible and welcoming to those with a range of visible and invisible disabilities.

10. Innovation

Alumni, like other members of the UBC community, identified innovation as a particular institutional strength of UBC:

UBC in general seemed more adventurous to me compared to my other alma mater U of T although both were/are exciting, energized and curious about the world.

Innovative, changes with needs of students and societal demands (e.g., expanded Co-op program, cross-disciplinary studies)

Alumni hoped to see innovation fostered and rewarded in UBC's next strategic plan:

Build UBC's reputation as a key centre of excellence for research and development of new technology

Knowledge mobilization/innovation in partnership with external stakeholders.

Research in alternate fuel ideas, medical advances, AI, inspired world initiatives for basic human needs such as farming and water and education and business and financing ...

Alumni identified the benefits of supporting innovation as touching upon research, learning and institutional engagement.

11. International

Many alumni expressed pride in UBC's international reputation and in the international mix of people at UBC. One described UBC as "truly a national and international university." However, some alumni who responded to this survey also expressed concern that any strategy increasing the number of international students at UBC should not come at the expense of domestic places, and identified that they consider that UBC should prioritise educating Canadian, particularly BC students ahead of other groups. Alumni engaged less with the relevance of internationalization to the learning and research environment at UBC than did other members of the UBC community.

12. Indigenous engagement

Fewer alumni made reference to relations between UBC and Indigenous communities relative to other members of the UBC community. Those alumni who did make reference to this theme identified institutional efforts to build positive relationships and an inclusive learning environment and to incorporate attention to Indigenous histories in UBC curriculum as a strength:

The Aboriginal community and resources provided to Aboriginal students through the longhouse

Alumni who mentioned Indigenous engagement identified truth and reconciliation and positive institutional relationships between UBC and Indigenous communities as key priorities for our next strategic plan:

Truth & Reconciliation

Aboriginal Engagement - Community connection, reconciliation, student support.

Some suggested that we broaden our educational offerings in some relevant fields:

First Nations languages programs designed with more than 1,000 hours of intensive language study. The current programs offer only beginner level programs and are not following successful approaches to create fluency.

13. Sustainability

Fewer alumni mentioned sustainability as a key theme for UBC, but those who adverted to this theme did so positively. Alumni identified sustainability as an important theme for guiding UBC's curriculum and research:

Becoming internationally relevant in specific research areas of strength (sustainability, certain engineering disciplines, etc) and fostering even more multidisciplinary opportunities

Alumni also identified sustainability as a principle that should guide UBC's institutional planning and decision-making:

Continuing to excel in demonstrating what a sustainable campus can look like and pursuing excellence on a global stage

Sustainability and accessibility of campus and student experience. use UBC community to show the world how we can live better as a society than we are now.

I would also like to see skytrain go all the way to campus benefitting both residents on campus and Vancouver as a whole from a sustainability perspective.

14. Research

The quality of research conducted at UBC was a key theme and a source of pride for alumni respondents. Many identified research as one of UBC's greatest strengths and expressed a desire to know more about the research conducted at UBC:

World class research - both theoretical and applied.

UBC has outstanding research in many different areas. I am very proud of the support that these researchers receive. I only wish there was more communication of those achievements similar to Harvard's online emails.

Alumni emphasized that they would like to see UBC continue to produce world quality research:

continue to build upon UBC's excellent research

"big problem" research with paths to applicability

maintain top quality education and research; adapt scope of activities to a changing world - but with a long term view!

Alumni also identified the benefits of including students in the research enterprise:

How to involve not only grad students but, include students at all levels with contributing to research opportunities - pushing the boundaries and allowing as many students as possible to see what an effect they can make on a larger scale.

15. Physical infrastructure

Many alumni mentioned physical infrastructure on UBC's Vancouver campus as a priority. Some sought more or different facilities and services:

A greater range of shops, restaurants, services around the UBC area

others expressed concern for the availability of affordable housing to students:

I think affordable housing for students should be a huge priority.

and to other members of the UBC community:

Develop UBC signature affordable family housing projects off campus to support the recruitment and retention of talented graduates who choose to work in the GVRD and elsewhere in BC.

Perhaps in tension with these expressed preferences, other alumni expressed a desire to see UBC preserve green spaces on campus and to focus on academic priorities:

Moderate real estate development in favor of campus retention.

keep the UBC farm and green space generally.

Strengthen academic and research base of the university. There has been enough renovation and new infrastructure built.