

READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Territorial Acknowledgement

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have walked gently on the diverse traditional territories where the University of Northern British Columbia community is grateful to live, work, learn, and play. We are committed to building and nurturing relationships with Indigenous Peoples, we acknowledge their traditional lands, and we thank them.

Prince George Campus

The Prince George campus is situated on the unceded traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, part of the Dakelh (Carrier) Peoples' territory.

South-Central Campus

The South-Central campus in Quesnel is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Lhtako Dene Nation, Nazko First Nation, Lhoosk'uz Dené Nation, and ?Esdilagh First Nation (formerly Alexandria Band). Lhtako, Nazko, and Lhoosk'uz are on traditional Dakelh territory, and ?Esdilagh is a member of the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Peace River-Liard Campus

The Peace River-Liard campus in Fort St. John is situated in Treaty 8 territory on the traditional lands of the Dane-zaa people of the Doig River First Nation, Blueberry River First Nation, and Halfway River First Nation.

Northwest Campus

The Northwest campus in Terrace is situated on the unceded traditional Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) territory of the Kitsumkalum and Kitselas First Nation. It includes a satellite campus in the coastal community of Prince Rupert, situated on or near unceded traditional Tsimshian territories including the Lax Kw'alaams Band, Metlakatla First Nation, Gitxaala Nation (Kitkatla), Gitga'at First Nation (Hartley Bay) and Kitasoo Band (Klemtu).

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute

UNBC has a federated agreement with the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl (House of Wisdom) Nisga'a Institute (WWNI). Established by the Nisga'a Lisims Government in 1993 and situated on Gitwinksihlkw Village Lands within Nisga'a Treaty territory, WWNI is a fully accredited university-college serving all people in northwestern British Columbia.

Message from the Vice-President Academic and Provost

As the University of Northern British Columbia prepares to celebrate its 35-year anniversary, it is essential for us to reflect on the dreams and aspirations of those who inspired and built this amazing university and to look ahead to fulfilling many more student learning journeys for the next 35 years.

In 1991, the first UNBC Academic Plan emphasized the teaching, research, and regional service mandates of the university. At that time, key goals included, *“a diverse student body, undergraduate and graduate programs and services that are responsive to regional needs; to support the socio-economic and cultural development of the regions; to serve (sic. ‘assist’) the Indigenous population of Northern BC; to partner with colleges; to recruit and support excellent faculty including responsive adjustment of faculty staffing to correspond to program needs; to support the research and scholarly activities of faculty...; and to maintain equity in employment; to promote excellence in instruction, excellence in research and creativity; create an ‘appropriate’ academic atmosphere including international partnerships to enhance teaching, research and service; and to provide academic service to the scholars and region; and to provide a university infrastructure that supports academic programs.”* These themes have inspired all UNBC academic plans ever since, including the most recent 2017 Academic Action Plan.

In developing this refresh of the 2017 Academic Action Plan and aligning it with the 2023 Strategic Plan, READY, we heard from voices across the UNBC community including a wide variety of students, staff, faculty, and alumni about the need to focus on the core foundations of UNBC’s mandate to the region; to focus on curriculum renewal and pedagogical innovation; to focus on fulfilling student learning journeys. This call to focus on the core foundations is even more imperative in the rapidly evolving post-secondary environment. With a renewed focus, we must work in a coordinated manner to enhance our “Student First” approach and fulfill the vision our Founders had for our students. As we look forward, the *READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031* addresses the following priorities:

1. [Driving Strategic Enrolment Growth and Impact](#)
2. [Empowering Indigenous Voices & Knowledge at UNBC](#)
3. [Transforming Curriculum and Pioneering Pedagogical Innovation](#)
4. [Building a Bold and Inclusive Regional Strategy](#)
5. [Expanding Global Impact through International Strategy](#)
6. [Optimizing Resource Allocation for Maximum Academic Impact](#)
7. [Empowering Lifelong Learning and Enhancing the Role of Continuing Studies](#)
8. [Championing Faculty Excellence and Development](#)

This pathway to 2031 will necessitate that faculty, staff, students, deans, directors, and senior administration develop actionable plans aligned with both READY and the *READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031*. Together, we will focus on our core commitments to students and the community, ensuring UNBC continues to lead as an institution of academic and regional excellence. In this plan, we share the vision that our academic endeavors are recognized as a premier example of how universities contribute to the development of people, community and the economy.

Sincerely,

Dr. William J. Owen, Interim Vice-President Academic and Provost

READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031

The academic path to 2031, and the realization of READY and the eight academic priorities in this plan, will require a focused approach, concentrating on initiatives that build on our solid foundations and advance our vision of leading a sustainable future. This journey will be guided by our core values: academic excellence, experiential learning and discovery, inclusiveness and diversity, community, and integrity.

The “Student First” focus, an initiative aimed at enhancing the student experience across our campus, was launched at the President’s town hall in Fall of 2024. Keeping students on top of mind in every decision we make will enable us to achieve success.

The academic portfolio stands as the largest and most integral component of the university. The success of this academic plan relies on all the incredible faculty and staff who drive it forward. With the collaborative support of all other units, we will ensure that we excel in our primary domains of teaching, research, and service, coordinating and interconnecting academic priorities to achieve the institutional goals outlined in READY.

Celebrating success, and evaluating progress against the 2017 Academic Action Plan

The 2017 Academic Action Plan was the result of significant collaborative effort from across the UNBC community, delivering a suite of over 30 goals and 165 associated recommendations woven together into a comprehensive narrative designed to help UNBC address its challenges and be ready with the direction, flexibility, and responsiveness that post-secondary organizations would need to be successful and sustainable over time.

The 2017 report was organized under the thematic headings of *Respect*, *Restructure*, and *Innovate*, and as a part of the recent ‘refresh’ process the UNBC community was asked to home in on the goals of most importance or relevance to their context and try to evaluate where there have been successes over recent years or there are remaining opportunities for UNBC.

The themes, goals, and recommendations from the Academic Action Plan provided the basis for discussion at thematic engagement sessions and via an online survey throughout Fall 2024 which formed the foundations for the refreshed framework presented in the *READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031*.

There were many successes following the 2017 plan, reflecting the true spirit of the UNBC community to strive for excellence. One of the most notable successes saw UNBC build on the 2017 plan’s premise of transition and new beginnings with the restructuring of academic units, transitioning from a two-college model to a system of five faculties and a division. The implementation of this change was undertaken in 2021, with the five faculties continuing to evolve academically. This continuing transformation enhances further opportunities for academic programs to be supported and grow, within this structure.

One of the main themes carried over from the 2017 Academic Action Plan is the ongoing effort to build a culture of enrollment planning, reflecting and focusing on student success, and showcasing UNBC’s core values.

With a refreshed academic plan, the 2017 goals and recommendations are not overwritten, but re-envisioned into a consolidated set of academic priorities, towards which UNBC can continue

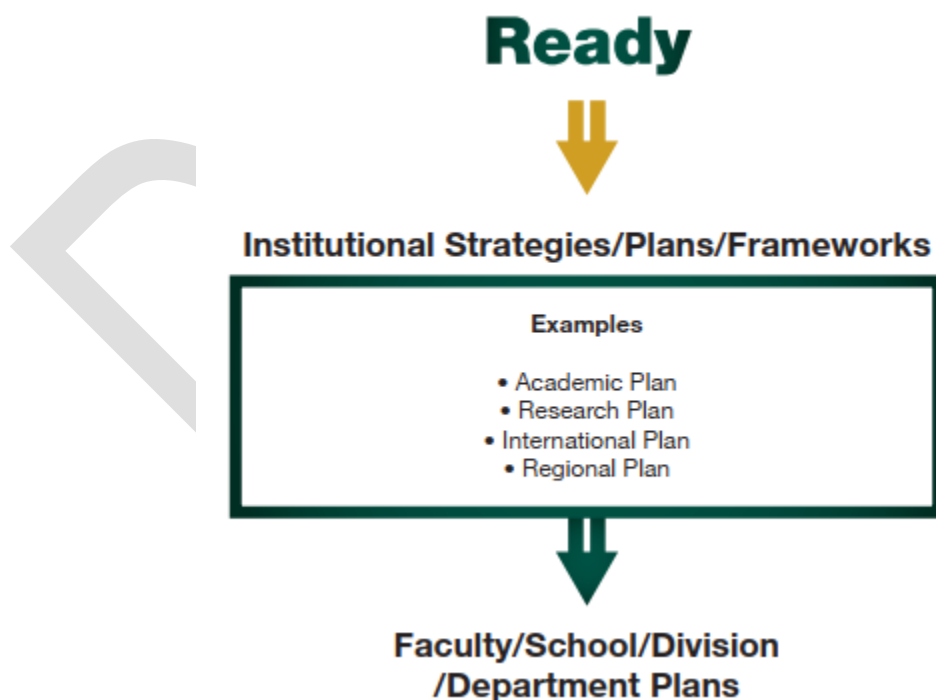
to aspire, and which can be actioned and achieved through focused ground-up action plans built at the faculty or unit level.

Where do we want to be?

We heard from the UNBC community that we share the vision of our academic endeavors being recognized as a premier example of how universities contribute to the development of people, communities, and the economy. Our students will not only receive an outstanding education but will also be known as confident, humble, and innovative leaders in their fields and communities. Our faculty will be celebrated for their excellence as educators and researchers, driving meaningful advancements in knowledge and practice. Our dedicated staff, who support the academic and research pursuits of students and faculty, will be recognized for their unwavering commitment to fostering an environment where learning and discovery thrive. Together as a community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, we will shape a future where UNBC continues to be a leader in academic excellence, community impact, and global influence.

Aligning Strategic Actions and Defining Measurable Outcomes – How can this document be used?

The *READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031* has been prepared at the halfway point in UNBC's long-term planning cycle and is an opportunity to consider how the University can move forward academically on the initiatives presented in the READY Strategic Plan. The academic plan is not a standalone document. It presents high-level but actionable goals that identify a strategic direction towards which planning at the faculty and unit level can align. This refreshed plan leverages the planning framework being implemented across the institution to achieve the goals of READY, as illustrated below:



The strategic plan READY provides the overall university direction. Below READY sits a series of fundamental roadmaps to its achievement; currently envisioned are the academic plan, research

plan, international plan, and regional plan. These roadmaps provide direction for the prioritization of action at the faculty, department, and unit level. As such these roadmaps, and the *READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031* do not lay out detailed action plans, but overarching plans that can weather the changes in the educational environment over the medium term, and that can be used by faculty, and staff in developing their own action plans, all in consistent alignment with UNBC's strategic plan.

Midway to 2031, UNBC must conduct a review of the *READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031*, focusing on key achievements and remaining aspirations.

Using the eight academic priorities identified on the following pages, it is essential at the faculty and unit level to define clear, measurable outcomes that can direct decision-making and provide tangible benchmarks for success. To support the efforts at faculty and unit level, for each of the eight priorities, we provide a context in the next sections and a **non-exhaustive** list of objectives to guide more granular planning efforts tailored to specific needs identified by faculty, staff and students at ground level.

1 – Driving Strategic Enrolment Growth and Impact

Strategic Enrolment Planning was highlighted as ‘urgent’ in the 2017 Academic Action Plan and continues to be a *significant* institutional priority in 2025 and going forward. Strategic Enrolment Planning is “a comprehensive process designed to achieve and maintain optimal recruitment, retention and attainment of students where optimal is defined within the academic context of the institution” (Dolence, 1997).

Strategic Enrolment Planning focuses on the full range of learner engagement, recruitment, retention, and the academic journey from prospect to alumni. It transcends all degrees and credentials. It comprises domestic and international students. It is concerned with the students’ experience and relationship with UNBC.

Overall enrolment at UNBC has *declined* in both headcount and “full-time equivalents” (FTE¹) , from peak for unique headcount² of 4370 in 2008/09 to a low of 3886 in 2022/23, and with a slight increase to 3913 in 2023/24. UNBC has a 60% *utilization rate* based on provincial Government enrolment targets³. Currently, demographic projections show some decline in the traditional university-aged group (18-24) over the next decade within our region. To attract students and fulfil its mandate to support the socio-economic viability of northern Communities, UNBC must both recruit and *retain* students. Further, with changes in the educational system, we must compete effectively with peer institutions in efficiently offering distinctive programs that are recognized and appreciated by employers locally and beyond. The UNBC community must work together to regain a minimum of an 80% utilization rate by focusing efforts on retention. A complex set of strategic enrolment plans, concentrating on retention, will be required to achieve this outcome.

GOAL: Drive strategic enrollment growth and impact		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Develop and prioritize initiatives focussed on retention of UNBC students.	Enrolment utilization rates ~80% of ministry target.	Supporting fulfilling student learning journeys. Cultivate Curiosity.
Review and refresh our student scholarships and bursaries.	Accessible and impactful awards that directly align with strategic recruitment and retention priorities.	
Enhance and integrate novel student advising frameworks to further empower students at UNBC.	Extended innovative and personalized advising practices.	
Time frame: Initiatives require active consideration and may require short to longer term implementation efforts.		

¹ FTEs measure the number of equivalent students enrolled if all students (full- and part-time) were to take a "normal" courseload consisting of five 3-credit courses.

² Unique headcount is tallied across the indicated fiscal year’s Summer, Fall and Winter semesters, not including any for credit Continuing Studies headcount enrolment.

³ Utilization rate is calculated as a 4-year rolling average of utilization (Actual FTE against FTE target).

2 - Empowering Indigenous Voices & Knowledge at UNBC

A cornerstone for UNBC from its inception, indigenization and decolonization became part of an enhanced focus as UNBC responded to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report (2015). UNBC has fostered and nurtured a strong relationship with the First Nation on whose unceded territory we find the Prince George Campus, the Lheidli T'enneh. UNBC works with other First Nations and Indigenous communities near its other campuses in Terrace, Fort St. John, and Quesnel, along with the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute through a federated agreement. UNBC has an obligation to work with all Nations within northern British Columbia and beyond. More focused work is required with all communities to strengthen mutually beneficial relationships.

Working towards advancing initiatives to indigenize and decolonize is a moral obligation for the entire university. The university and its community have a responsibility to support Indigenous programs and students. We have a responsibility to learn about and acknowledge the truth of historical injustices. From an academic standpoint, the infusion of Indigenous knowledges, pedagogies, research, research methods, and governance practices is inherently complex and must be guided, wherever possible, by Indigenous persons.

Key priorities in the next five years include developing and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities, especially in Terrace, Fort St. John, and Quesnel; enhancing recruitment and support for Indigenous students at all campuses; developing meaningful programming delivered in partnership with First Peoples' communities. One aspect will involve working in partnership on the development of language and culture courses and credentials relevant to local First Nations communities. Individually, we must also assume our own work, learning, and responses to the calls to action – both in significant and in small everyday ways – to ensure the respectful accomplishment of these goals.

GOAL: Empower Indigenous Voices & Knowledge at UNBC		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Increase professional development opportunities related to enacting decolonization and indigenization.	Regularly scheduled speaker events and dedicated workshops.	Supporting fulfilling student learning journeys. Act on Truth and Reconciliation. Attract and retain outstanding people for our community.
Infuse Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies into academic programming.	Enhanced content and curriculum, and strengthened relationships between our programs and Indigenous communities.	
Review and enhance academic supports for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.	An Indigenous-led review and report, with actionable recommendations.	
Time frame: Building relationships, partnering with Indigenous communities, and enhancing indigenization and decolonization efforts are ongoing.		

3 - Transforming Curriculum and Pioneering Pedagogical Innovation

Globally, with softening enrolment worldwide over the past five to ten years, universities are striving to offer unique programming in distinctive and novel ways to attract and retain learners to their institutions. Expanded use of remote learning, asynchronous learning, and online programming has made education more accessible to students worldwide. It is now common for students to enroll in more than one institution simultaneously, requiring institutions to offer distinctive programs and foster collaboration to ensure robust student pathways. In the Northern BC context, pathways to and from other institutions remain particularly important.

Over the next three years, UNBC will need to engage in a thorough review of curriculum, environmental scanning, student/learner research, and a streamlining of programs to support their effective navigation by learners, especially learners new to the university sector. Curriculum planning, including diverse and innovative pedagogical approaches to course and program delivery are critical to offering attractive, relevant, and accessible programming. Currently UNBC offers nearly 1200 individual courses. Streamlining curricula can lead to increased flexibility for students, reducing course scheduling conflicts, and improved faculty workload planning. If UNBC cannot effectively address these goals, we will continue to lose potential students to institutions offering greater flexibility in requirements to achieve credentials, alternative pedagogical modalities, and more student responsive scheduling options.

GOAL: Transform Curriculum and Pioneer Pedagogical Innovation		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Support program-level curriculum development by enhancing the program review process.	Implementation of the 2024 Quality Assurance Process Audit recommendations.	Supporting fulfilling student learning journeys.
Create sustainable professional development programming through the CTLT.	Focused streams of professional development and academic leadership training.	Cultivate Curiosity.
Enhance work-integrated learning & experiential education opportunities.	A robust, pedagogically informed work-integrated learning & co-op program.	Attract and retain outstanding people for our community.
Time frame: Initiatives developed may range from quick wins to multi-year planning.		

4 - Building a Bold and Inclusive Regional Strategy

UNBC is a regional university with a focus on the economic and social needs of the North. The Founders of UNBC envisioned a university that served the Prince George area as well as the Northwest, Peace River, and Southern Cariboo regions, where now the Terrace, Fort St. John, and Quesnel campuses sit, respectively. The vision and realization of UNBC was to focus on serving all the communities in these areas including Indigenous communities, and to create access to programming, especially programming relevant to each area and to the North. Each of these areas boasts distinctive geographical, social, economic, and demographic features. The directive for UNBC to address the entire region and these identified subareas suggests non-homogenous program availability, delivery, access, and content based on local needs. Partnerships with the local colleges and communities has been foundational in the delivery of programming at each of the four UNBC campuses and through the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute.

With the pedagogical changes seen in program delivery and accessibility sparked by the transition to increased online learning because of COVID-19 in 2020, UNBC is enabled more than ever to offer access to programming across all our campuses. However, more needs to be done such as further equipping digital classrooms, reconsidering place-based coursework, and facilitating laboratory opportunities either in the regions or through short-course and/or weekend-based classes. Students also can similarly engage with programming offered by institutions provincially, nationally, or globally creating more choice for them in pursuing their educational goals without having to leave their home communities. In this new competitive contemporary market UNBC must continually review and refresh its goals for each campus and its relationships with the communities in each of the campus catchment areas. It also becomes possible to encourage more engagement of UNBC students across multiple campuses to enrich the learner and campus experiences.

GOAL: Build a Bold and Inclusive Regional Strategy		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Review and develop academically and operationally aligned goals to enhance and increase programs offered at regional campuses.	A strong and vibrant regional academic presence.	Cultivate Curiosity. Empower Northern Communities. Influence local and global policy.
Develop and enhance programming with a focus on accessible and flexible delivery.	Increased enrolment across our regional campuses and beyond.	
Review and enhance inter-institutional partnerships, advancing collaboration and cooperation.	Establish a 'Northern Educational Partnership Committee'.	
Time frame: Initiatives require active consideration and may require short to longer term implementation efforts.		

5 - Expanding Global Impact through International Strategy

UNBC welcomes and celebrates the enriched experiences international students bring to our campus and classrooms, as well as the opportunity for our domestic students to experience learning in other parts of the world. With new federal legislation restricting visas and learner permits for international students, alongside provincial requirements ensuring high-quality education for these students, UNBC must develop a clear, international student-centered plan.

This international plan should be foundational and will pave the way for a broader international strategy, aimed at managing the university's global goals, activities, presence, reputation, and international partnerships. A key element of this strategy will involve close collaboration with the Vice President of Research and Innovation, as international research partnerships will be instrumental in recruiting students, fostering industrial collaborations, facilitating scientific exchanges, and attracting top-tier faculty members.

The international strategies will need to be focused on students and faculty to support the many educational and research opportunities afforded by having students and faculty go to other parts of the world, and by students and faculty coming to UNBC. Central to our strategy will be a strategic enrolment plan that prioritizes diversity and proportional representation across a range of countries of origin. This will ensure that our student body remains globally representative and inclusive, enriching the educational experience for all. As part of this effort, UNBC will need to set a target for international enrolment that does not exceed 30% of total enrolment, while also establishing strategies to monitor and manage this target.

To support the delivery of a high-quality educational experience, this plan must also incorporate the development of a robust financial tracking system. This system will ensure that international tuition is appropriately allocated to cover the full costs of programs, student services, and the administrative needs of supporting international students. Importantly, it will prevent these funds from being diverted into the university's general operations, offering transparency that reflects UNBC's commitment to valuing the contributions and experiences of our international student community.

GOAL: Expand Global Impact through International Strategy		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Establish a coordinated and strategic, globally focussed roadmap that promotes a highly impactful educational environment.	A multi-year international strategy, and research strategy.	Cultivate Curiosity. Foster Local Solutions for Global Impact. Influence local and global policy.
Develop and implement initiatives centred on driving international enrolment.	Annual operational plans outlining actionable enrolment initiatives.	
Review and enhance the framework for onboarding international students.	A strong set of supports for international students, including the provision of cultural programming to support diversity goals.	
Time frame: Initiatives require active consideration and may require short to longer term implementation efforts.		

6 - Optimizing Resource Allocation for Maximum Academic Impact

UNBC has finite resources to support its ongoing operations, and while we have achieved balanced budgets for the past few years, inflationary pressures alone will require the university to continually consider and optimize its operations. Much of the work required to manage our operational costs going forward will lie within the purview of the Vice-President, Finance and Administration (VPFA). Initiatives such as the digital infrastructure transformation and enhancing administrative processes to increase transparency and accountability are ongoing. Developing a focus on supporting the core academic activities of the institution will require careful consideration of resource demands (contrasted with simply carrying forward past budgets and expenditures), of resource availability, and resource constraints (both time and financial). Such a process will go hand-in-hand with curricular refresh and streamlining, recruitment and retention initiatives for students, faculty, and staff, and strengthening revenue generating activities across the university. This is a complex and delicate undertaking that will require the full participation and collaboration of colleagues from all portfolios. There will be a period of transition into these processes as the financial services transformation and process optimization process (led by the VPFA and Director of Finance) are implemented in the coming years.

The university must develop and refine its financial systems to support students and academic programming to one that can be responsive to changes in student and academic community requirements. Principles and procedures for optimizing resource allocation must be clear and transparent to ensure a common understanding of budgeting practices at UNBC.

Optimizing resource allocation for maximum academic impact aligns with all seven other priority areas in the READY Roadmap: Academic Plan 2025-2031. It is further aligned with UNBC's vision for *leading a sustainable future*.

GOAL: Optimize Resource Allocation for Maximum Academic Impact		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Establish fair and equitable resourcing practices, supported by enhanced availability of data, and consistent metrics.	Resourcing decisions are data-driven, transparent, and reconciled with workload as well as budget factors.	Cultivate Curiosity.
Ensure conspicuous alignment of decision making to strategic goals and academic priorities.	Regular and consistent unit-level reviews of budget versus one-up strategic plans.	Foster Local Solutions for Global Impact.
Review and enhance administrative or academic procedures in line with relevant policy.	Reduced redundancies and more agile administrative processes.	Attract and retain outstanding people for our community.
Time frame: Initiatives developed will range from quick wins to multi-year planning.		

7 - Empowering Lifelong Learning and Enhancing the Role of Continuing Studies

The concept of lifelong learning was articulated in UNBC's original academic plan – supporting the educational journeys of employed students. By continuously expanding people's knowledge and skills, we build resilience, foster innovation, and create sustainable solutions that meet the unique challenges individuals and communities face. When we commit to supporting lifelong learning, we honor the rich cultures, traditions, and aspirations of the North, ensuring a brighter, more equitable future for all. Lifelong learning is a cornerstone of empowering northern communities and must be supported by UNBC's full range of academic endeavors.

UNBC provides the opportunity for lifelong learning through both our academic programs and continuing studies. In our academic programming, considering course scheduling and course modality to allow adults to take courses during their lunch or in the evening provides greater access to education. The 2017 Academic Action Plan recommended a stronger role for Continuing Studies in the delivery of academic programs. Continuing Studies has an opportunity to partner in delivering for-credit programming, whilst adapting and expanding non-credit programming. Recognizing that Continuing Studies must still meet strict obligations as an ancillary unit within the university in much of its programming it has become a meaningful partner with academic programs in the development of micro-credentials in support of the academic mission.

Within the strong shift to online learning and micro-credentials along with small credential laddering or stacking, Continuing Studies already has significant skills and facilities enhancing UNBC's ability to reach its goals regarding lifelong learning. As Continuing Studies utilizes a separate learning management system for course delivery, UNBC can explore ways in which this resource can add to allowing greater accessibility to UNBC's overall learning environment.

As an ancillary unit, Continuing Studies is cost-recovery and should aim to be profit generating. It will be possible to develop business models that generate support for accessible programming in the regions, as well as the technology and facilities to open remote accessibility in a 'one-campus' approach to course availability.

GOAL: Empower Lifelong Learning and Enhance the Role of Continuing Studies		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Develop and implement initiatives and programming that prioritise remote and asynchronous delivery.	Micro-credentials offered in strategically aligned programs.	Cultivate Curiosity. Empowering Northern Communities.
Enhance pedagogical diversity to broaden program accessibility and relevance to learner environments.	Impactful programming offered in multiple modalities, accessible to traditional and non-traditional students.	
Review, develop, and prioritize sustainable revenue-generating business models for program delivery.	Multiple profit-generating lifelong learning credentials offered to a diverse student body.	
Time frame: Initiatives developed will range from quick wins to multi-year planning.		

8 - Championing Faculty Excellence and Development

Both the 1991 and 2017 academic plans stressed the need for the recruitment and retention of excellent faculty and staff. This recognizes that it takes a team effort and an effective operational environment to fulfill student learning journeys through high-quality teaching and research excellence. To recruit and retain strong faculty and staff successfully UNBC must offer distinctive and highly attractive employment opportunities. We must sustain a respectful and inclusive culture for all our employees which is functional, supportive, and empowers our faculty and staff to achieve their professional goals.

After 35 years, UNBC is experiencing the last wave of original faculty moving into their late career phase and retirement and, unfortunately, a paucity of mid-career faculty. Since 2017, UNBC has welcomed 90 new professors, mostly at the rank of Assistant Professor. Over the next decade, a more steady-state model regarding faculty numbers should develop, along with a more sustainable structure regarding Assistant/Associate/Professors. Similar trends should occur within our Librarian, Senior Laboratory Instructor and Senior Instructor cohorts.

To retain new professors, UNBC will need to provide strong onboarding experience, superior facilities and support, including start-up funding and research space, to encourage these new colleagues to commit to the university for the long term. Strategic opportunities include reviewing faculty administrative supports, enhancing mentorship programs, and expanding professional development initiatives for faculty members considering academic administration roles. This commitment extends to ensuring that professional development opportunities related to our academic mission are also prioritized for staff.

A new generation of scholars and staff place a high priority on quality of life and ‘work-life balance.’ A collegial and developmental environment, which supports inclusion and diversity, will create an upward spiral of influence on the university culture.

GOAL: Champion Faculty Excellence and Development		
Objectives	Outcomes	READY Alignment
Review and identify key needs for faculty and staff development specific to the academic mission.	Established mechanisms and support frameworks to empower faculty and staff.	Cultivate Curiosity.
Review, align and enhance policy, procedures, and planning to address space, equipment and inventory decision-making to enable successful faculty operations.	Efficient use of equipment, space, and resources for teaching and research.	Empowering Northern Communities.
Review and ensure consistent delivery of faculty and staff onboarding frameworks.	Clear and accessible protocols, resources and expertise to support employees.	Attract and retain outstanding people for our community.
Time frame: Building institutional reputation, enhancing professional development frameworks and implementing initiatives to support faculty and staff are ongoing.		

UNBC Academic Plan Advisory and Working Committee

The Academic Plan Advisory and Working Committee was composed of internal academic and student representatives and was responsible for contributing to and steering the academic plan refresh process.

Members:

- Bill Owen, Interim Vice-President Academic and Provost (Committee Chair).
- Shendah Benoit, Assistant Professor – School of Education.
- Heidi Dodenberg, Sr. Lab Instructor – School of Nursing.
- Clarence Hofsink, Sr. Lab Instructor – Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology.
- Nicola Koper, Dean – Faculty of Environment.
- Bella Mesquita, final year student in Biomedicine
- Kealin McCabe, Research and Learning Services Librarian – UNBC Library.
- John McNeill, Director, Academic Operations and Quality Assurance - Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost.
- Kriston Rennie, Dean – Faculty of Indigenous Studies, Social Sciences and Humanities.
- Kyle Ross, 2nd yr UG student in Northern and Rural Community Planning
- Katerina Standish, Vice-Provost, Graduate & Post-doctoral Studies - Office of the Provost.
- Todd Whitcombe, Professor and Chair – Chemistry & Biochemistry.

Academic Plan Refresh Process

The Advisory and Working Committee facilitated a series of thematic engagement opportunities on campus and online, primarily across Fall 2024, where all faculty, staff, and students across our campuses were encouraged to share their ideas, comments, questions, and perspectives around UNBC's academic vision and priorities. Input was also sought and received from alumni, and other relevant interest-holders via an online survey and through a dedicated email inbox.

A draft academic plan was shared with university leadership and the broader UNBC community before a refined and final draft was prepared for endorsement through Senate and formal launch in Spring 2025.

Contact

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University of Northern British Columbia

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