University of Victoria Task Force on Community-Based Resarch

Towards a Structure for Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria: Phase II

Executive Summary

Plans are under way at the University of Victoria in Canada to formally enhance support for community-based research (CBR) activities. In April 2005 the Vice President Research hosted a campus-wide CBR Forum, which was attended by over 80 UVic researchers and some community partners (Forum Proceedings and presentations are available at http://www.research.uvic.ca/CBRF/). Many benefits are anticipated in taking a more coordinated approach to CBR that would help link academics, communities, funders and policy-makers in research activities, from planning projects to mobilizing and implementing results. The next phase of building support for CBR include developing an organisational and governance structure, consulting with community research partners on plans and needs, exploring funding sources and fit with other campus initiatives, and identifying networking partners within Canada and internationally. Connections through the international science shops network in Europe and similar networks in Asia, Africa and North America will be particularly valuable.

Background

On a sunny Saturday in April 2005, the Vice President Research office at the University of Victoria sponsored a university-wide forum on community-based research (CBR). The forum was the first formal step by UVic to explore the extent of CBR as a model of academic practice at the University. It addressed the question of to what extent do UVic scholars identify their work as falling within the broad understanding of CBR? It was also designed to solicit opinions from within the University community on the value of creating a formal organizational support structure for CBR.

The forum was a success with over 80 academics answering to the description of CBR.

The President of SSHRC at the time, Dr. Marc Renaud, in his closing remarks, issued a challenge to the University of Victoria to take up a leadership position in this field as he felt that we were ideally suited to do so. There was strong support from the 80 participants as well as from some 40-50 additional persons who could not attend on that weekend. On the basis of this strong support, Drs. Peter Keller, Dean of Social Sciences and Budd Hall, Dean of Education were asked to lead development of a proposal for a structure and to extend the preliminary thoughts through further consultations on campus.

A report was submitted to Dr. Martin Taylor, Vice-President, Research in September 2006 for consideration (see **Appendix** http://www.research.uvic.ca/CBRF/). A UVic delegation, the strongest of any university in Canada, attended the Community-University Expo conference in Winnipeg later in September and informed that network that UVic was intending to pursue the feasibility of setting up a facilitating structure. The conference participants met this news with much enthusiasm. In October, Ted Jackson, one of Canada's leading scholars in community-based research came to UVic as a Lansdowne Scholar and among other responsibilities met with a number of CBR researchers and administrators at UVic to further explore ways that UVic might move forward. He echoed Dr. Marc Renaud's sense that UVic was uniquely placed to create such a structure. Presentations on UVic work have been invited by the Western and Canadian Councils of Deans of Science, Social Sciences and the Humanities and at the International Conference on Participatory Action Research in the Netherlands in August of 2006.

In January 2006, Dr. Taylor provided funds to move the CBR development project into Phase II: a further consultation and implementation phase. He invited Drs. Peter Keller and Budd Hall to continue providing co-leadership of the overall work and authorized them to work with Dr. Kelly Bannister, a leading advocate for community-university research collaboration and Director of the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at UVic, Maeve Lydon, Founder of Groundworks, a long-time community partner of UVic and Peter Levesque, the originator of the Community-University Research Alliance programme within SSHRC and a leading Canadian specialist in knowledge mobilization and exchange.

What is Community-Based Research?

For purposes of this consultation, our team uses the definition by Strand et al in, "Principles of Best Practice for Community-Based Research" (2003: 6).*

Challenging the Architecture of Knowledge
Building the Scholarship of Engagement

1. CBR is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers (professors and students) and community members.
2. CBR seeks to democratize knowledge by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination.
3. CBR has as its goal social action for the purpose of achieving social change and social justice.

The next steps: towards implementation

The CBR Project Team has a mandate to report by the end of June 2006. Consultations are being held within UVic, with a wider network of UVic community partners, and with a range of potential national and international collaborators. The focus of the work in this phase is on:

1. Exploring needs, interests and expectations with community partners;
2. Refining models and structures from elsewhere that might be applicable to UVic.
3. Making recommendations on the composition, structure and function of a CBR Steering Committee
4. Identifying prospective national and international networks and partners
5. Deepening our understanding of what is meant by community-based research
6. Identifying possible sources of funds to sustain the structure and its activities
7. Providing suggestions on how a CBR structure could interact with already existing research centres and projects, such as the Social Science Knowledge Mobilization pilot project that UVic has entered into with York University.
8. Identifying ideas and support for UVic hosting the next Community-University Expo (CUEXPO) in the Fall of 2007

Additional Resources

The full documentation of the Forum and a number of other related documents are found at http://www.research.uvic.ca/CBRF/

*The special issue of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* on Community-Based Research, Volume 9, Number 3, Summer, 2003 has an excellent overview of US developments in this area.

The University of Victoria has a remarkably rich gathering of nationally and internationally known researchers who work and publish in community-based, participatory

action research and similar engaged forms. We can provide you with more names if interested.

Your interest welcome

For further information, or to get involved with the Phase II planning, you are welcome to contact any of the individual CBR Project team members or send comments by email to CBR@uvic.ca.