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AN INVITATION
TO SHAPE THE CSL PROGRAM

Community Service-Learning at the University of Alberta has turned 12 years old. Now practiced by many staff, instructors, students and community partners across the Edmonton (North Campus) and Camrose (Augustana) communities, CSL has become recognized at the U of A as a high impact educational practice that both deepens student engagement in their learning as well as builds the capacity of the Not-for-Profit sector. With a new University of Alberta Strategic Plan, ‘For the Public Good’, it is now an appropriate time to reset a course for CSL that will build on our existing successes and position us for even greater impact upon students, the Edmonton and Camrose communities, and the Not-for-Profit sector in Alberta more generally.

The CSL Strategic Planning team, comprised of the Executive Director and members of the CSL Advisory Board, and with assistance from the CSL staff, invites you to join us as we shape the key directions for CSL for the next 5 years. We ask all of CSL’s allies, community partners, students, instructors and researchers, adult learners, donors, alumni and friends to join us as we discuss, review and plan how CSL can play an even more vital role in facilitating authentic, community-university engagement for our mutual benefit and common good.

Although CSL faces challenges in its work, which are elaborated in this discussion document, we believe strongly that there are also new opportunities for CSL to flourish at the U of A for its students, instructors, and most importantly, its community partners. The values that guide our discussion are the historic goals and practices of CSL at the U of A, which can be summarized as follows:

What?
to create and facilitate mutually beneficial learning and research partnerships between the university and the community...

How?
by linking together U of A students, instructors, adult learners and Not-for-Profit agencies...

Why?
in actions aimed at making our communities more just and more inclusive and the ecosystems that support our lives, more sustainable.
Our overarching question for discussion will be the following:

\[ \textit{How can the CSL program best create, facilitate and support meaningful opportunities for U of A students and instructors, community partners, and adult learners to partner in mutually beneficial learning and research projects which collectively achieve positive social impact for the people of Edmonton, Alberta and beyond?} \]

After a description of the main strengths of the CSL (North Campus) program in 2016, the discussion will move towards a reading of the important contexts for our work today: the strategic directions of the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Arts, and then the rapidly changing contexts for the Not-for-Profit sector in Alberta and Edmonton. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action, spanning across university and community contexts, will also be discussed to situate CSL’s possible responses.

Built into this discussion document are a series of discussion questions upon which we seek your feedback. There is an online, interactive version of this discussion document that enables you to provide anonymous feedback to these questions. This online discussion document and survey will be open for you until late Fall, 2017, to enable you to make your contribution.

You can access this document at [http://bit.ly/2hQXJWu](http://bit.ly/2hQXJWu)

As a key partner of CSL, your perspectives are crucial for us to hear as we attempt to forge a path ahead and to collectively achieve the impact in our university and communities that we seek.

We will also seek more in depth consultations with each of CSL’s main constituencies by way of focus groups and in-person meetings. A draft strategic plan will be written and sent to you once again for your feedback. Then, by November 2017, CSL will release a new strategic plan for 2018-2022. The strategic plan is not meant to handcuff the CSL program for the next 5 years into strategies that may prove inadequate, if left unrevised, to meet emergent needs, opportunities and challenges. It will, however, provide a contemporary re-articulation about what is most important to the CSL program, and provide signposts for our collective actions to build mutually beneficial community-university engagement outcomes.
CSL
STRENGTHS IN 2016

CSL at the U of A (North Campus) has been successfully built upon an academic model of community service-learning in which students, while taking courses for academic credit, have worked on community designed projects (on average, 20-30 hours of voluntary work) that support community objectives and allow for enriched learning experiences, both in the community and in the classroom. What brings these two worlds together is a process of critical reflection, in which course concepts are wrestled with, discussed, written about, presented, redesigned and rearticulated in light of direct community experience. In 2016, this pattern of learning happens in five CSL designated or specific courses, around 44 courses across multiple departments in which CSL is either optional or (in fewer cases) mandatory, with 1178 students working with over 150 community partners.

CSL also provides, in collaboration with the Careers Centre, a co-curricular CSL experience, the Not-for-Profit Board Internship Program, which sees students educated in governance for the Not-for-Profit sector and taking their places on a community board to work on a governance project. Approximately 25 students participate in the program each year.

CSL has constructed an academic **Certificate in Community Engagement and Service-Learning** that students get annotated and attached to their undergraduate record. The Certificate, given out to approximately 10-15 students per year, is completed through 15 credit units of courses with CSL activities (one a CSL designated course), or 12 credit units of courses and one substantial co-curricular CSL or community engagement activity, attested to by the community partner and/or other referee. It is quite common for CSL Certificate holders to hold meaningful positions in the social sector not long after graduation.

An expansion of CSL course placements and the Non-Profit Board Internship program, the new **Pathways Program** is a journey that sees the student progress through the Certificate requirements, the Non-Profit Board Internship and a paid summer internship with a Not-for-Profit organization in Edmonton. A generous donor has made possible this program for 5 students in 2016/17/18, and CSL seeks to build on this program into the future.
A thriving community for the last six years, the Humanities Program (HUM) brings together a diverse group of adult learners who all share a passion for lifelong learning. A collaborative effort between the U of A and the community, HUM offers multiple courses each year that emphasize critical thinking in everyday life. Each semester, two courses take place on campus, while another is held at a second stage women’s shelter. Each course has its own, unique, curriculum that is developed responsively to the learning wants and needs of the community. Although many people have a passion for learning, HUM recognizes that a lived reality for many is that too often institutional, situational, and financial barriers make post-secondary education inaccessible. HUM decreases these barriers by providing transportation, food, and supplies. It strives to make its courses accessible and so cultivates an opportunity for critical thinking, regardless of a learner’s previous educational experiences. HUM fosters the coming together of university faculty, students, and community learners in a way that challenges the traditional university classroom by equally privileging lived experiences alongside conventional understandings of knowledge.

The Humanities Program has always been a critically reflexive and responsive program, involving a community of inquiry into the best learning conditions for diverse participants. To ensure that HUM stays responsive it is important that we develop an evaluation process that further explores the learning and impacts arising for all the varies participants.

What might be some creative and appropriate ways to place HUM learners at the centre of efforts to evaluate the learning happening through the HUM courses?
CSL also provides a well-developed program of seed funding for community partners, CSL instructors and students. The Small Grant ($4000) can be accessed by community partners and/or U of A instructors to co-design a CSL course and/or research, or contribute to their professional learning around CSL. An Instructor Support Grant (up to $5000 when matched by a Department) supports U of A instructors teaching CSL in a larger course (30/40 student registrations or more) to employ a Teaching Assistant to better integrate the CSL pedagogy. For students, the Boardwalk Rental Communities Learning and Change Award (BRCLCA; $10,000) provides a student with a summer opportunity to address community priorities through research, practice and reflection projects that students design and execute in collaboration with community partners. Last year’s recipient student, for instance, worked with Action for Healthy Communities and 30-40 teenaged newcomers to Edmonton on a digital story telling project that enhanced the students’ capacity to tell their own stories of arrival and adjustment to Edmonton living. CSL also works with the Registrar’s office to enable students to gain a CSL Bursary (for a low-income student who has participated in a CSL class) and the Lynne Morgan Scholarship for a third/fourth year student who has completed two CSL courses (or one with the Not-for-Profit Board Internship) and who has achieved academic excellence. Finally, CSL offers the Partnership Grant ($30000 over two years) to enable deeper collaborations amongst instructors/researchers, community partners and students in multiple CSL courses to achieve greater community impact. As with all Seed Grant programs, the CSL grants and awards have not always had the same success or impact; nonetheless there have been genuine examples of transformative change for organizations, students and academics that have occurred through participation in collaborative activities catalyzed by this seed funding. These grants and awards are crucial in enabling reciprocity of benefits amongst the CSL participants, and give concrete expression to the mutuality sought through our university-community engagement.

The Faculty of Arts also recognizes the potential value of its faculty and instructors in supporting both the CSL program and our community partners. From 2017, it will fund both the Engaged Scholar and CSL Teaching Awards, designed to support community-based research and recognize excellence for instructors using CSL as a teaching strategy for community benefit.
Volunteering in the community is often dependent on two things that are often in short supply for students: time and money. Many U of A students engage in paid employment to support their studies and tuition costs, and some have complicated caring relationships with family members, or live sufficiently far from the university that they have little time left for volunteering activities. The advantage of academic course-based CSL, however, is that these students get credit for these activities, and they are built into the work load of their courses. This makes a difference.

Research by the current Director, working with a former CSL Director has demonstrated that CSL is attractive to ‘first generation’ university students, students who are the first in their family to go to university. Indeed, when a student from a ‘first-in-family’ background is presented a choice at the beginning of a course of whether they would like to do CSL, or complete the course in the traditional, classroom-based way, the ‘first-in-family’ students are statistically more likely to choose the CSL option. Research is ongoing to determine why, yet clearly students from these backgrounds appreciate the social connections that CSL enables, and also are attracted to pursuing higher education in a way that recognizes the needs of communities. This remains an untold story at the U of A, and CSL needs to tell it clearly: CSL is an inclusive pedagogy that assists with student retention, particularly with students without the experience of higher education cultures.
The CSL team is a small but efficient, highly professional staff comprised of an academic, an academic administrative officer, two partnership coordinators, a communication & program coordinator, an adult educator and administrative assistants. The Executive Director, with research, administrative and teaching responsibilities, provides strategic direction and leads instructor engagement and education in CSL teaching and community-based research. The Executive Director shares an Executive Assistant with the Director of the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, as well as an Assistant Director, Administration whose responsibilities span CSL, OIS, as well as the Centre for Writers. The Assistant Director, Administration also provides the human resource leadership for CSL and participates in strategic and financial analysis and planning with the Director of CSL.

Two Partnership Coordinators link up community partners and their projects with students and instructors, through in-person conversations as well as through managing the CSL Portal, and also provide practical assistance to ensure the quality of relations amongst instructors, community partners and students. Recently the Partnership Coordinators have also participated in CBR projects with community partners, and an instructor workshop. A Communications & Program Coordinator coordinates the Pathways program and the Non-Profit Board Internship, mentors CSL student interns, and also coordinates the communications of CSL activities to the university and community. This staff person also provides communications support for the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies. Another staff person coordinates Humanities Program courses, taking place on campus and at a women's shelter, and mentors graduate students and volunteers, as well as a Humanities student intern. The CSL Administrative Assistant provides general support to all members of the CSL and OIS team including and provides support to students, instructors and faculty within CSL and OIS. The Graduate & Undergraduate Coordinator works with students and other internal units such as Student Services, Faculty of Arts and the Registrar's Office for the Certificate details as well as tracks form completions. In total there is three full time staff whose work solely serves CSL. Then there is four staff that serves both CSL and OIS. Finally, CSL employs an Evaluation Coordinator, usually a graduate student, who administers and refines the CSL surveys and analyses data with the Director of CSL. The Evaluation Program that the CSL has developed over the past decade is one of the most comprehensive in Canada, and it continues to refine our program practices to better serve our partners.

Through leaves, secondments, restructurings and new leadership, CSL staff have proved themselves resilient, professional, and deeply committed to their work. They have driven the success of the program and cultivated CSL's greatest asset: its trusted reputation with Edmonton's Not-for-Profit organizations.

A new strategic plan will assist in best allocating human and financial resources to CSL objectives in innovative but sustainable ways into the future.
THE SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR CSL: CONTRIBUTING TO UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

In 2016, the CSL program is both situated by and contributes to reform efforts from the Arts Faculty in which it is housed, the University as a whole, and within a number of sector wide innovations and strategies from The City of Edmonton and the Province’s extensive Not-for-Profit sector. Cutting across all of these social contexts is the arguably once-in-a-generation opportunity and challenge for acknowledging the truth of Canada’s history of relations with Canada’s Indigenous Peoples, and taking responsibility, from where we are, for authentic reconciliation and reparation, through committed actions premised upon mutual respect. The CSL program must in some way speak to all of these contexts.
The Faculty of Arts is setting out on its own planning journey to create a new 2017-2022 Academic Plan. Some of the contours of this plan are already clear, such as a commitment to experiential learning as crucial to the education and engagement of student citizens, leaders and scholars. The Curriculum review currently underway is being designed, in part, to enable students to have greater opportunities to pursue experiential learning goals such as CSL, the Arts Work Experience Program, the HUB Career Centre, Study Abroad and Undergraduate Research opportunities. This vision is anchored in a contemporary view of Liberal Arts learning outcomes, a set of knowledges and graduate attributes required for an examined life, engaged citizenry, and meaningful work in a globalized 21st Century.

CSL clearly provides concrete pathways for students to achieve these goals. CSL in North America has been researched and acknowledged as a ‘high impact practice’ in higher education, and provides an academically oriented and community responsive form of experiential learning. CSL can assist in the development of students’ critical thinking, creativity, intercultural capabilities, capacity for professional ethical judgement, a pluralistic understanding of complimentary knowledge systems, and a recognition and valuing of Indigenous ways of being and knowing. CSL, through its Not-for-Profit Board Internship, Pathways summer internship with community organizations, and opportunities for undergraduate research projects with community partners, also provides for critical skill development important for the construction of meaningful career trajectories.

The artificial dichotomy between ‘knowledge for its own sake’ and the development of capabilities useful for employment, including socially minded careers in the Not-for-Profit sector, has always been strongly resisted in CSL practice. CSL and Community-Based Research (CBR) offer opportunities both for students’ enhanced engagement with academic texts as well for acts of civic engagement serving public and social ends. Within the Faculty of Arts and beyond, CSL is not designed to provide ‘skills for the real world’. CSL invites students to form communities and identities supporting a scholarly and critical engagement with the world. CSL does not simply conform students to an existing world; it invites their creativity and critical imagination in constructing a better world, a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. Within CSL practice, this creativity happens in partnership with the wisdom and knowledge of people in the community, and as allies of those seeking positive social change.
‘For the Public Good’, the U of A Institutional Strategic Plan, offers a vision demonstrably aligned with CSL’s existing practices. President Turpin and his team’s articulation of the social responsibility of higher education to serve its hosting civic and provincial communities, the Canadian nation and the needs of the world, aligns with CSL’s values and its efforts to link community and university in reciprocally beneficial relationships.

Specifically, CSL directly supports the university’s strategic goals for all of us to ‘EXPERIENCE diverse and rewarding learning opportunities…’ (Strategy 2), and ‘ENGAGE communities across our campuses, city and region, province, nation, and the world to create reciprocal, mutually beneficial learning experiences, research projects, partnerships and collaborations’ (Strategy 4). CSL is clearly identified in in the Plan in kind, if not in name, in Strategy 2 (‘Experience’), Objective 7 and its Strategy ii, which calls for ‘students’ access to and participation in…curricular experiential learning opportunities that are well integrated with program goals and enrich their academic experience’ (p. 14). This experiential learning is to occur, in part, through ‘mutually beneficial engagement with community…’ (ibid). CSL practices, including our community-based research work with partners, are also closely aligned to Strategy 4 (‘Engage’) and Objective 16, to ‘Enhance, increase, and sustain reciprocal, mutually beneficial community relations, community engagement, and community-engaged research and scholarship that will extend the reach, effectiveness, benefit, and value of our university-community connections.’ (p. 24). CSL’s long standing work with Edmonton’s multicultural communities (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, etc.) finds expression here in the call to ‘build, strengthen and extend…’ engagement with ‘…neighbouring communities, ethnic and cultural communities…’ (Strategy i).

If CSL did nothing else from what it currently does, it would faithfully serve the core objectives of the university. The university’s latest report to government, the Comprehensive Institutional Plan (May 2016) goes even further in acknowledging CSL’s distinct contribution. It will be the task of the CSL community to keep this alignment squarely in the view of the University executive as it allocates resources for the accomplishment of ‘For the Public Good’.
At the level of the City, and as the Edmonton Social Planning Council has clearly documented, the interrelated issues of poverty, homelessness and food security remain stubbornly resistant to improvement, despite the last boom, and especially so in our current economic bust. When these issues intersect with a person’s ethnicity/race, Indigeneity, gender identity and/or expression, dis/ability and mental health, their impact can be brutalizing and disturbing of our collective conscience. Racism is real in Edmonton, within the University and outside of it, as we have been uncomfortably reminded recently through high profile media. CSL has a role to support efforts in poverty reduction, but also in educating students through facilitating anti-racist and non-oppressive inter-personal relationships for students with community members ‘othered’ by race, class, ability, and immigrant/refugee status.

Many of CSL’s partners mediate for our students learning of this connection between racism and poverty, and have proven expertise in the practice of anti-oppression and anti-racism education. For instance, Boyle McCauley Health Centre/Kindred House initiates and engages our students in conversations with sex workers; E4C-McCauley Apartments involves CSL students in supporting adults to participate in an Indigenous literacy program; and students learn to build rapport with youth from different cultures, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses in their work with newcomers (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers) and Indigenous youth (Catholic Schools’ Braided Journeys FNMI program). CSL students engage the LGBTA+ community at the Pride Centre’s Family Arts nights and ballroom dancing for seniors. They also work alongside inner-city residents weeding, and picking fruit and vegetables for the Lady Flower Gardens organization. Through this mentoring of CSL students, our community partners are truly our co-educators in anti-oppression and anti-racism practices, realized through concrete acts of solidarity.

CSL’s Partnership Coordinators also specifically design placements so that students have opportunities to discover, reflect upon, and negotiate their own privilege in order to constructively build relationships across difference. Students engage in anti-oppressive practice when they negotiate interactions with clients at agencies in a non-judgmental way, when they have to think critically about their role as service-learners, and negotiate their whiteness/ablleness/gender/sexual orientation/social class. CSL works well when it immerses students in these complex social relations, and demands critical reflection on, for some of them, their unearned privilege and how it can hinder as much as help in efforts for social justice. Yet CSL structures these educational events in this way because we remain hopeful, like our community partners, that positive actions for social change, and enhanced student agency, are genuinely possible.
CSL also works to involve students in grassroots initiatives with organizations that support and empower marginalized people to participate in Edmonton civic engagement processes. Many of our partners support citizens to learn to read, write and learn and invite our students to assist. The Learning Centre Literacy Association facilitates employment readiness curriculum building and classes, and is working next term with a CSL instructor and students to create a multilingual book highlighting the crucial roles of teachers. The Migrante organization holds information and advocacy sessions for Temporary Foreign Workers. Through 2012-2014, supported by a CSL Partnership Grant, Skills Society Project Citizenship Action Lab convened CSL students, people with disabilities, and caregivers to explore lived experiences and meanings of citizenship. SAGE offers computer literacy classes that teach and assist seniors to use computers and to access internet and email. Next term, Action for Healthy Communities will invite our students to assist with English language learning, disseminate Edmonton Public Library resources, and work with people to learn to navigate the City of Edmonton website. CSL students have also supported the Africa Centre’s Women’s Conversation Café, where English language learning happens during the activities of community kitchens. Finally, CSL students learn to work, play and share life with the people of the L’Arche Community, facilitating egalitarian teaching and learning interactions with people with disabilities.

CSL’s recent partnership with the Centre for Public Involvement (CPI) promises another effective strategy to connect students with civic engagement agendas. CPI, like CSL, understands that civic engagement is not something that is simply understood, it is also practiced. CSL designated courses, taught by an instructor who has worked for the CPI, have been Community & Civic Engagement: Theory and Practice (CSL 300), and Imagining Cities: Theory and Practice of Civic Engagement (CSL 350/370). Students in these courses partnered with EMCN, and facilitated focus groups examining how newcomers interact with City Parks. Other projects have linked students with Edmonton City Council’s Office of Public Engagement, Council Initiative on Public Engagement and CITYlab – Make Something Edmonton. Our CSL 100 students next term will similarly benefit from their instructor’s work on the City of Edmonton’s Gender Based Violence & Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative. CSL looks forward to continuing our relationship with the CPI to, as they put it, ‘advance the practice and scholarship of public engagement’, and provide students with concrete engagements in Edmonton’s civic engagement projects.
Finally, CSL’s own Humanities program (HUM) provides CSL with grounding in the hopes and aspirations, as well as some of the daily struggles, of a number of adult learners in our inner city. The Humanities program strives to make post-secondary education accessible to a diverse range of adult learners. It cultivates critical thinking for everyday life in community and campus settings and provides transportation, food and supplies to enable learners to participate. It is safe to claim that the HUM program is unlike any other education on campus. Around 40 – 50 learners come to campus on Tuesday evenings for ‘Humanities 101 and a unique ‘Humanities Methods’ class. Curriculum is co-designed with adult learners, and involves graduate students and instructors sharing their passions for learning and research. In the ‘Methods’ course, in a partnership with researchers from the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, the group learns about issues surrounding core neighbourhood planning and decision making, and whose voices get counted and whose do not. Learners at Wings (a second stage women’s shelter) also participate in learning experiences that begin with recognition of their own wisdom and knowledges, and open out to issues, topics and dialogue with some of the U of A’s most engaged feminist and critical scholars.

In all of these ways, CSL seeks to broker new knowledge and learning amongst community partners, U of A instructors and CSL students, to better serve and advocate for the rights of Edmonton citizens, particularly the vulnerable and those typically excluded from socio-political processes. We regard this local focus to our work as critical to our ongoing programming, even as these local issues are situated within the wider political economies of Alberta and beyond.

What Edmonton issues do you feel are most important for CSL to engage at this time? How can it best do this?
Alberta’s Not-for-Profit sector has, like the post-secondary sector, experienced tumultuous political and economic transformations in the past few years. While new governments at the Provincial and Federal level have provided new opportunities for some organizations (e.g. within health care/end of life care, First Nations organizations), a collapse in global oil prices and a marked increase in unemployment, have created acute challenges within the social sector. In Alberta, social service agencies have pointed to links between contracted economic activity and increased levels of suicide, domestic violence and food bank use. Immigrant settlement organizations (CSL is linked, for instance, to the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, and Edmonton Immigrant Services Association) have responded wholeheartedly to the Federal government’s plan to provide a home to Syrian refugees fleeing war, while other charities have been tested like never before in the wake of the recent Fort McMurray fires. These events have collectively created great pressures on Alberta’s Not-for-Profit sector resources, both financial and human.¹

At the organizational level, among all of the current trends² impacting Not-for-Profit operations in Canada, one seems particularly salient for CSL community partners. The discourses and practices of ‘social innovation’ have been embraced and led by Skills Society of Edmonton and the development of their Action Lab. Other community partners, such as SAGE, have experimented with in-house social enterprises to drive key resources to service delivery areas, and our CSL Business students have supported these developments. CSL is currently working on a CBR project with Skills staff precisely because of their capacities to assist not-for-profits in creatively mapping complex social problems and networking them together in coordinated solutions. The Skills Action Lab is also linked into wider Albertan social innovation networks, such as the influential ABSI (Alberta Social Innovation) project. It is worth noting that the major national funder of CSL in the 2000s, the McConnell Family Foundation, is now in 2016 at the forefront of philanthropic support for the ‘social innovation ecosystem’, including various university-based social enterprise labs. MacEwan University is also currently designing a social innovation lab for students and not-for-profits. A CSL practice informed by a social innovation approach can make for a potent synthesis of critical idealism and a more solutions-focused pragmatism. Crucially, such an approach can create mutual benefits for students and communities.

In response to these challenges for and innovations within the Not-for-Profit sector, CSL needs to be alert to how it can assist, and to when it might prove burdensome. A ‘growth for growth’s sake’ in student numbers and courses seems an unwise strategy for CSL within these difficult conditions for the Not-for-Profit sector in Edmonton and Alberta. We should avoid loading onto our community partners more students than they can mentor. This is always a balancing act within CSL: the benefits to the community partner have to be proportionate to the amount of resources they invest in their co-education and training of our students. Each organization will make this calculus differently, but CSL needs to be mindful of community organization capacity when their financial and human resources are stretched.

Joanne Cave (2016) identifies these as leadership and capacity building, human resource efforts towards ‘decent work’, social innovation and social finance, outsourcing administrative functions and the rise of ‘shared platforms’ of delivery amongst agencies, further explorations but limitations in exploiting new data technologies for impact measurement. See The Philanthropist, October 10, 2016. Retrieved October 27, 2016.

What are the conditions necessary for productive CSL projects and partnerships with the Not-for-Profit sector agencies? How can CSL support not-for-profits in times of human and financial resource constraints?
CSL +
THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CALL TO ACTION

The University of Alberta, as well as the Faculty of Arts, have clearly named responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission a priority in both ‘For the Public Good’ and in recent Faculty supported events such as a colloquium on ‘Indigenizing of the Curriculum.’ It is important that CSL make its own considered contribution to the TRC Call to Action in a coordinated way that aligns with the U of A and the Faculty of Arts, flows from and builds on our existing relations with First Nations and Métis organizations and scholars, and opens out to students in CSL classes to experience the strengths and revitalization of Indigenous cultures in Alberta and Canada.

CSL praxis understands that transformative education, while it involves recognition and understanding of basic ‘content’ and facts, requires active and inter-personal learning experiences often outside of the traditional classroom in order for the heart to move along with the mind. The TRC Commissioners have written that achieving reconciliation is a long term process that goes beyond ‘awareness’, and needs to involve the ‘heads, hands, and hearts, working together...’ By inviting particularly non-Indigenous students into educational experiences that involve the ‘head, hands and hearts’ through CSL projects in courses where Indigenous issues are discussed, CSL can support the TRC Call to Action for ‘building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect’ (Call to Action 63, iii, p. 7).

CSL has relationships with a number of First Nation and Métis organizations from which to explore a further CSL response to the TRC. We have often been invited into these relationships through our collaborations with First Nations and Métis faculty and through our work to support the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry to provide co-curricular CSL opportunities for medical students. For instance, medical students have worked with Poundmaker’s Lodge to assess and recommend nutrition guidelines, revise addictions treatment curriculum for the Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, learnt from cultural support workers and participated in ceremony at Bent Arrow/Kahkiyaw, and supported the Braided Journeys FMNI leadership clubs in Edmonton Catholic Schools.


CSL has also employed U of A Instructors who have taught our CSL 100 Introduction to Community Service-Learning and Community Engagement explicitly from Treaty 6 perspective. We have partnered with Reconciliation in Solidarity in Edmonton (RISE) through CSL 350 marketing and website projects, and an Agriculture, Life & Environmental Sciences (ALES) communications course project.

CSL acknowledges that the conditions of possibility for it to engage the community are the Treaty 6 relations into which we have been invited and for which we share privileges and responsibilities. We look forward to possible future collaborations to honour these responsibilities. We could connect our Education CSL students (EDU 100/300) with FMNI students in schools. CSL could also utilize its seed funding grants to broadly support some goals of the TRC and the Call to Action. For instance, a Small Grant has recently been awarded to a Faculty member in Arts (English and Film Studies) to collaborate with a Cree language educator to assist students in appreciating a poetic, Indigenous-centred reading of Treaty 6 relations. More can be done, yet we must also be vigilant against the ‘recolonizing gaze’ that often accompanies ill-considered and naïve desires to ‘help’.

How can CSL support the TRC and its Call to Action, and support the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Arts in their goals to reform curriculum and teach the valuing and recognition of Indigenous ways of knowing and being?
CSL also faces a number of challenges to its ongoing work. These are not insurmountable, and even present new opportunities; yet they do require our attention and determined action.

**Sustainable Growth**

First, CSL has grown very quickly in the past decade. In 2005/2006, CSL involved 42 partnering community organizations offering projects for 136 students from 12 courses. This past year (2015/2016), the program saw 154 community partners connecting with 1178 students through 49 courses. That represents astonishing growth: 766% growth in student participation over the past ten years, or an average of 77% annual growth. Similarly, it represents an average annual growth rate in CSL courses of 31%, and a 27% annual average growth rate of community partners. This growth represents the tireless work of CSL staff, University of Alberta instructors and students, past and present, but also and most critically the generosity of community partners who have collectively opened their doors to our students and their hopes and dreams to contribute to a social good beyond their own narrow, personal reward.

Yet this growth has also caused some growing pains for CSL and for its partners. Internally, CSL practices have necessarily had to move from primarily face-to-face interpersonal relationship building to a more complex and technologically sophisticated ‘systems-based’ communications with CSL constituents. Even the current CSL Portal that links community projects with academic course intentions, and Google sheets linking these to student participation, are now out of date and unable to provide the kind of data management required for instantaneous tracking of CSL student, instructor and community partner participation necessary for emerging university accountability requirements. Such data management programs require more substantial annual investment, and are a part of some of our comparator CSL programs’ operations.

Given there are no current resources for the employment of extra staff, a ‘growth-for-growth’s-sake’ operation in CSL seems unsustainable. It is critical to remember that the point of CSL is to provide the depth and quality to our community engagement so that it might produce positive community impact. Simply delivering more students into the community to do flimsily constructed and unsustainable learning projects delivers neither valuable learning for those students nor value for community partners.

Unmanaged and unsustainable growth in CSL can also lead to increased risks to the University and to our community partners and the people they serve, which is clearly undesirable. If CSL is to innovate and improve its program, it needs to do so in such a way that it does not simply add ‘more’ to everything it is already doing. A new strategic plan will assist in best allocating human and financial resources to CSL objectives in innovative but sustainable ways into the future.
Continued philanthropic support and resourcing
CSL has been successful to date in securing key philanthropic investments from Foundations and individual donors. The McConnell Foundation in the mid-2000’s enabled CSL to expand and create a successful culture of academic student-community engagement at the U of A. The support of Sam Kolias of Boardwalk Rental Communities has also been extremely important for CSL to develop its suite of community, student and instructor seed grants to build mutual capacity for our community partners and opportunities for students, teachers and researchers. Both of these investments, however, have come to an end5, and CSL needs new support to be able to provide the level of programming it currently offers. This will become critical in the next two years.

First year student uptake
One of the ongoing challenges for CSL has always been to attract larger numbers of first year students into courses with CSL. Often students find themselves in a course that offers CSL by chance. The current Bear Tracks university system of enrolment makes it very difficult to note this option, and often instructors are assigned to teach a class with a CSL option long after the Bear Tracks notification for the course has been published.

Nonetheless, CSL is moving ahead with plans to engage a diverse group of high schools, to support their own student activist groups and volunteering efforts, and to promote CSL to them earlier in their university life. CSL, through various university student-led activities, seeks to affirm high school students in their aspirations for university, and model a CSL-path through higher education that values civic engagement, the needs and strengths of communities, and social and environmental justice. With its demonstrated capacity to attract first generation, or first-in-family university students, CSL offers a crucial engagement strategy to support the U of A’s increasingly diverse cohort of students as they persist and thrive at university.

5The Boardwalk Rental Communities continue to fund their annual $10,000 Learning and Change Award, for a student to conduct a summer CSL project working in collaboration with community.
Movement into new Faculties

With its home in the Faculty of Arts, yet serving a wider mandate to support CSL across the university, CSL has naturally been most successful for the past decade in the social sciences and humanities. More recently, however, the Faculties of Education, Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences, Pharmacy and Native Studies have been providing many of CSL’s students each year. This expansion represents a challenge and opportunity. There is also no reason, aside from staff capacity for the extra work, which would preclude CSL from making greater inroads into the ‘natural’ sciences, and the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (‘STEM’) disciplines. Although students may have fewer electives in these STEM disciplines to enrol in an existing CSL class, there exist opportunities to work in new ways to support new courses in those Faculties. The call for experiential learning is as strong here as elsewhere. Perhaps a move towards more project-based CSL, where students work as ‘consultants’ in groups for their community ‘client’, inspired by human centred design approaches, may have more resonance as a model.

Should CSL focus primarily upon courses and instructors in the Faculty of Arts? If it spreads further into new faculties, how should this be funded to ensure sustainability?
**Leadership for the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL)**

Community Service-Learning came of age in Canada in the 2000s as universities such as UBC, St Francis Xavier, Guelph, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Ottawa and the U of A reached out to colleagues in the sector to form a national organization to encourage and promulgate CSL. Today, CACSL is between volunteer directors, and without funding to continue the former scale of its work. The U of A has become a temporary administrative home for CACSL until the membership can determine the next steps. An opportunity exists for the CSL team at the U of A to take a further leadership role here, and to advance the scholarship and practice of CSL in Canada, and align it with new funding opportunities. Such a leadership role would enable the U of A CSL teams, both at North Campus and Augustana, to jointly realize an aspiration to ‘be recognized as a leader in community-engaged learning through excellence in community service-learning’ (CSL Vision statement).

*Should U of A CSL, both on North Campus and at Augustana, take further leadership roles in reinvigorating the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning? For instance, might the U of A convene the next National CSL conference?*
Link CSL projects into longer term Community-Based Research (CBR) approaches

Both in practice and in theory, CSL has proved in the past decade to be a community engaged pedagogy and learning activity that has often opened up new collaborative research opportunities for community-based organizations and U of A Faculty, particularly those in Arts. CSL can act as a first step in connecting instructors to community partners on small projects, enable them both to build trusting and productive relationships, and position them for further collaboration beyond the scope of one course or term and into longer term community-based research activity. As was demonstrated in the CSL organized Community-Based Research Symposium of March, 2016, that saw world experts in CBR come to the U of A to discuss the links between community engaged teaching and research, CSL works collaboratively with others on campus and their own CBR mandates, such as the Faculty of Extension and the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Youth, Children and Families, and the Centre for Public Involvement, in supporting impactful community-based research.

CSL has recently been engaged in a CBR project with Skills Society of Edmonton, the Kule Institute of Advanced Study (KIAS) and 15 or so of our community partners to help construct new pathways from CSL to CBR and back. The goal is to help Arts researchers and others recognize the value of community generated knowledge and wisdom for solving complex social problems, and to assist community partners to strategically invest in relationships with researchers to produce socially responsive research. CSL and KIAS offer multiple funding mechanisms to help build these CBR partnerships so that they can be competitive for Partnership Grants from the Federal Government.

The Director of CSL is also teaching an ‘Introduction to Community-Based research’ next term in collaboration with the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. In a first for CSL, all students will be learning and practicing community based-research on the same project as they examine how a particular after-school Homework Club works for newcomer students.

There is an emerging knowledge brokerage role that CSL is providing the university and the community, productively linking the two for research that produces social impact. As well as providing students with opportunities for undergraduate research with our existing community partners, and supporting student-organized summer projects, CSL is uniquely placed to supplement other efforts on campus (e.g. Undergraduate Research Initiative) to provide high quality student learning and research, and in our case specifically for community identified purposes.

How can CSL best contribute, in collaboration with the Faculty of Extension and other areas of CBR activities on Campus, to the U of A’s Objective (16) to ‘Enhance, increase, and sustain reciprocal, mutually beneficial community relations, community engagement, and community-engaged research and scholarship that will extend the reach, effectiveness, benefit, and value of our university-community connections’?
To provide a critical, social justice inspired global service-learning experience

CSL is well positioned to make a contribution to the theory and practice of global service-learning, which includes both local CSL in multicultural contexts, CSL partnerships with Canada’s Indigenous peoples, and CSL in communities in other parts of the world. The Director has experience with and publishes on global (specifically international) service-learning education. Our Partnership Coordinators have extensive experience in community development in Central America, with the Canadian International Development Agency and with international health issues. Our newly appointed Administrative Assistant is a First Nations person with substantial community contacts, and all our staff have intercultural communication abilities and experiences. Specifically, CSL can facilitate critical community service-learning where students reflect on their own positionality, racialized and gendered identities, and socio-economic and geo-political backgrounds which collectively structure the learning across difference that lies at the heart of global service-learning.

Although U of A CSL has not theorized or practiced global service-learning in this way before at a programmatic level, our staff and some of our instructors have the capabilities to pursue this work with credibility. CSL is currently working through university governance processes to establish a global service-learning course for the Spring of 2018 where students would be prepared at the U of A for an immersive experience in Nicaraguan culture and family life, working on community designed projects.

The University of Alberta has a goal for the enhanced global competency of its student body and its access to short and long-term outbound international experiences (Strategic Goal 2, Objective 7, strategy ii). As CSL explores contributing to this goal through a short-term, GSL course experience in Nicaragua, what other strategies might be considered?
CSL and Blended Learning

Universities across the world today, including the U of A, are promoting innovation in the way instructors ‘blend’ their traditional face-to-face learning and ‘e-learning’ teaching strategies. There are multiple reasons for this, including accessibility and retention concerns for non-traditional students who cannot travel and stay at university, often all day, for three-to-four days a week. Although CSL has traditionally been utilized in smaller classes and been heavily reliant on interpersonal teaching styles and face-to-face contact with community partners, there are ways to supplement these CSL styles with on-line inter-active and reflection spaces.

CSL has supported instructors to seek funding for blended courses involving CSL, as it provides opportunities for larger numbers of students to be introduced to the pedagogy, and then to pursue it in more depth in traditional, smaller classes. Blended learning CSL models with large numbers of students requires re-thinking the community ‘placement’ model we have practiced, and to enable community partners and students to work collaboratively on projects without being physically located in the same physical space for these activities, with the possible exception of an orientation and then a final presentation. Clearly this could involve more ‘project’ based CSL work.

CSL is working with the Faculty of Native Studies to support the development of its online Masters program. Although we are initially concerned to provide support to students doing projects for local First Nations and Métis led organizations, a blended learning model for CSL could potentially assist with Aboriginal students in Northern Alberta connect to organizations closer to home, given the right community mentoring and support, and build upon the partnerships of Native Studies faculty and staff and others. Clearly this kind of service from CSL would add considerably to meaningful, experiential learning activities for diverse cohort of students, a goal in alignment with the U of A’s strategy to recruit and retain Indigenous students (Objective 1, Strategy ii).

CSL is also partnering with the Faculty of Education to support many students in EDU 100/300 courses as they get some authentic community experience before their teaching practicum in schools. We have begun with CSL as an option, yet consideration is being made by the Faculty of Education to have these courses involve mandatory CSL. As the CSL manages larger numbers of students from these courses, it becomes clear that various blended learning strategies, and even ‘flipped learning’ courses, may be required to both provide authentic learning experiences for students and to prevent community partners ‘inundation’ with U of A students beyond their capacity.

How can CSL support blended learning courses without diminishing the quality of the relationships which underpin the pedagogy?
Interdisciplinary Collaboration in CSL

From a community perspective, the long and noble histories of discipline based knowledges gain their utility through their ability to generate solutions to complex social problems. Yet this complexity is often best tackled with interdisciplinary approaches and collaborations. Clearly, mitigating poverty and homelessness in Edmonton, or walking a path to Truth and Reconciliation with Canada’s Indigenous peoples, are activities beyond the scope of narrow disciplinary framings.

CSL is organized as a unit within a wider administrative structure within the Faculty of Arts that encompasses the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies (OIS) and the Centre for Writers (C4W). Despite our proximity to OIS, for instance, CSL has not often engaged in collaborative and interdisciplinary, student-community projects. Such project-based CSL, where an interdisciplinary team of students works as consultants for community partners on a particular problem, learns from each other’s approaches to the problem, and presents their product or process back to the community partner for feedback, offers strong opportunities collaborating with OIS. One can imagine, for instance, students from across the social sciences and humanities joining with students from the U of A’s Humanities Computing (HUCO) program to develop app prototypes for community partners to better reach their clients or service-users. An app that young homeless people could use to assist in their street-level interactions with police, for instance, could be designed by criminology students, HUCO students and Art and Design students. Youth centred, social justice inspired interfaith events, organized amongst Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu communities, for example, could provide OIS and CSL with reasons to work together more strategically.

How can CSL’s community partners gain access to multiple methodologies and perspectives from students on one project or problem? How might CSL support Objective 17 of ‘For the Public Good’, which calls for building and supporting ‘interdisciplinary, cross-faculty and cross-unit engagement and collaboration’?
A Vision for CSL as a Community Engaged Research and Learning Unit

The construction of an Executive Director position for CSL, with administrative, research and teaching responsibilities, lends itself to new opportunities. Without extra responsibilities for separate departmental research and teaching, the ED has the opportunity to both apply for and hold research funds to direct CSL and CBR research projects specifically benefitting the CSL program, and also to potentially supervise a post-doctoral researcher in CSL and/or CBR initiatives which can also serve the needs of the CSL program and our partners. Indeed, our current Humanities program’s outreach to Wings shelter for women was, in part, initially designed by a post-doctoral researcher. A post-doctoral researcher might also work alongside faculty participating in CSL’s new Engaged Scholar Program, where the Faculty of Arts provides two teaching releases for faculty a year to work with CSL on pedagogy or CBR projects over the course of a year. Under these conditions, CSL can build on past work to generate its ‘own’ research agenda for community engaged learning and research practices, and to further become recognized throughout the university and community as a centre for critically reflective community-university engagement. CSL would in this scenario have a dual function of as a unit to support and enable other faculty and instructors to pursue community engaged research and learning, and to become a research-productive unit in its own right.

In a research-intensive university like the U of A, the long-term sustainability of CSL as a community engagement strategy is likely to be enhanced when community engaged learning, through the CSL model, is coupled with and flows into community-based research practices. CSL has occupied a vital niche at the University to form relationships with grassroots community-based organizations, and in turn link them to university lecturers. After a decade of this work, and given the appropriate level of resources, CSL is poised to go further. Through facilitating community-based research and learning projects, CSL will be able to link its community partners to new intellectual and financial resources, to further their organizational and social ends. CSL will then broker community-university engagement ‘for the public good’, as mutually constructed with Edmonton’s Not-for-Profit sector and the people of Alberta.