



An Academic Plan for Green College UBC 2017-21

## **UNIVERSITY THINKING AT LARGE** **Critically and Creatively Wide-Sourcing Our Shared Futures**

A Program of Public Lectures, Performances, Residencies, Colloquia and Media  
Hosted and Produced by Green College UBC 2017-21

Since 1993, Green College at UBC has supported a **multidisciplinary, residence-centred community** of graduate and postdoctoral scholars, hosted **free public presentations, discussions and performances** across a wide range of sciences and arts, and partnered with other UBC and non-UBC organizations to enlarge the sphere of ***informed and informal interaction between the university community and society at large***. Over the same period, hundreds of former resident members of the College and others associated with it have graduated to membership of the worldwide Green College Society.

As its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaches in 2018, the College is proud to reaffirm and renew its commitments to scholarly and creative community-building, communication and partnership by announcing a dedicated program of public lectures, performances, residencies/fellowships, colloquia and media for the next four years. This plan for Green College seeks to advance the interests of UBC and of the constituencies that the University serves by expanding and adapting its programs in ways designed to raise the potential for constructive interaction between university thinking—in the first instance, the work of those enrolled and employed in university-based academic and professional programs and projects—and the wider world.

The new plan for the College has three axes:

- **encouraging multidisciplinary conversation**
- **testing the limits of disciplinary and professional expertise**
- **building cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral capacity**

Each of the bulleted phrases names an orientation of university life and work that was designed into Green College at its foundation and for which the College has since acquired a local, national and international reputation. It is the blending of these three functions in the **residence-centred community of Green College** that makes the College **a distinctive academic unit of UBC**. The aim of the present plan is to add focus and force to such activities.

Two principles underpin the plan as a whole:

- to coordinate and concentrate our intellectual and other resources **internally** for the sake of a sharper engagement with pressing and fundamental issues for university thinking

- to extend the reach of the College's projection of university thinking **externally** for the sake of understandings constructive for a liberal and democratic society at large (cf. the College's current tagline, "Scholarship in Society")

For each of the three main axes of interest, the paragraphs below spell out the College's *traditions*, the institutional *status quo*, the particular *context* in which change is being proposed, and *strategic goals* for the next four years.

## Encouraging multidisciplinary conversation

### Tradition

The residential community at the heart of the larger society of Green College is founded on the motto of "Ideas and Friendship" and the habit of relaxed conversation at meal-times. When people with different backgrounds and formations share ideas at leisure and in an atmosphere of trust, new horizons open for them. That experience is the essence of the **transformative education** that members of Green College (residents and non-residents; students, faculty and other Members of Common Room) promise to deliver to each other. It is their readiness to render that mutual service, in a spirit of intellectual generosity, that qualifies them to be selected and invited into membership in the first place.

### Status quo

Beyond the dinner-table, the primary vectors of the College's cooperative educational mission to its current members and regular guests are the Monday evening *Resident Members' Series*, the *Leading Scholars Program* and the *Senior Scholars Series*. Between them, these series muster the talents of early and later career scholars, modeling an ideal of cross-disciplinary, self-aware, socially engaged intellectual engagement from the earliest moments of graduate work to the maturest reflections of a long academic and professional life.

### Context

The serendipity of relaxed conversation and random multidisciplinary encounter is a luxury that we cannot afford to relinquish. At the same time, and especially at this time of crisis for institutions of culture, public consensus-building and shared cognition, we need planned opportunities for bringing our minds to bear together on issues of the hour and/or of fundamental importance.

### *Strategic goal:*

- I. Without compromising the integrity of existing series/programs (Resident Members', Leading Scholars, Senior Scholars), add a level of advance planning and coordination to provide for **termly, plenary, multidisciplinary colloquia on topics of emergent interest and/or fundamental importance**, and also for fuller, direct involvement of Members of Common Room from outside the ranks of the Leading Scholars.

## Testing the limits of disciplinary and professional expertise

### Tradition

One key element of the legacy of the College's Founding Principal, Richard Ericson, is a corporate conviction of the value of cross-cutting between disciplines and of critiquing—for the sake of eluding, where possible—the epistemological limitations imposed by divisions of academic and professional labour (“expert knowledge”) within the university and in society at large. Long-running series at the College on “Science and Society” and “Law and Society” witnessed to that conviction, as did the presence for several years of a string quartet in residence...

### Status quo

Every year the College supports several broadly conceived or more narrowly themed interdisciplinary and/or cross-sectoral series of lectures/presentations, convened according to the interests of colleagues across the University—e.g., in recent years, on “Histories of Sustainability,” “Conversion and Religious Transformation,” “Ideas of the University,” “Eurasian States and Societies,” “Bridging Northern Knowledges of Change,” “Rethinking the City in Time,” “Access to Justice,” “Adapting to Global Change in Oceans and Fisheries.” We have also partnered over many years with Early Music Vancouver for a series of lecture-recitals at the College.

### Context

If ever there was a time for critical and creative thinking about how our societies manage expert knowledge, that time is now. This is an area in which the College should continue to lead at UBC. As with our habits of conversation (see above), so with our habits of disciplinary experimentation and critique, the challenge is to become more creative by becoming more responsive and—at least some of the time—more focussed.

### Strategic goals

2. Rationalize the College's **programming of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral series** to put critical stress on routine assumptions about how best to manage knowledge for the good of our societies.
3. Selectively develop and disseminate **podcasts and related online media** (webcasts, etc.) for new series and high-profile events.
4. Concentrate the soliciting and commissioning of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral series for the College on Faculty Members of Common Room and on **(neighbouring and other) UBC or external (non-UBC) organizations** whose mandates, programs and multidisciplinary constituencies make them natural partners for the College's style of sustained, month-to-month, critical and experimental, public, “live,” academic and artistic programming (e.g., FNHL, MOA, Faculty of Law, Liu Institute and other units within the future School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, School of Journalism and other units within the future I+J+? School, PWIAS, School of Music, Early Music Vancouver, Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver Institute).

5. Look for further opportunities to make Green College an institutional resource for collaboration between personnel from the Vancouver and Kelowna branches of UBC.

## **Building cross-sectoral capacity**

### Tradition

By its founders' design, the academic community of Green College was to be not merely residence-centred and multidisciplinary but also attentive to the world beyond its precincts. Before putting up the money for the College, Cecil Green and his wife Ida endowed the **Green Visiting Professors Program** to bring distinguished visitors from outside the Province to speak both at UBC and to a wider local audience. Before that, their gift of the house next-door, now Cecil Green Park House, was intended to foster what were then (fifty years ago) still called "town-and-gown" relationships—an ideal that also shaped Dr. Green's and other founders' thinking about the new college. Built around a mansion that was originally no part of the University, at the edge of what has since become UBC's Cultural Precinct, Green College was conceived from the start as a portal to the University for citizens of Vancouver and the region. That assumption had an important corollary: the College, for its part (and hence the University too), would benefit from the influence of members of the local community who were drawn into its orbit. Not only would the College channel some of the best university thinking to its local constituencies, but local constituents—including of course UBC alumni and other university-trained cadres—would contribute to the intellectual and creative wide-sourcing of the University (and the university, not only UBC) through the College.

### Status quo

The College's academic and artistic programs have always been open to the public at no charge, and anyone who cares to make a reservation is welcome to stay for dinner. The College selects and hosts the Cecil H. and Ida Green Visiting Professors (typically 4 per year, often booked to speak as well at the Vancouver Institute). It recently assumed responsibility for the John V. Clyne Lecture, the terms of reference for which also envisage a crossover between UBC and wider community interests. Other appointments specific to the College provide an array of additional points of contact with worlds outside Point Grey, Vancouver, BC and Canada: Supreme Court of Canada Justices in Residence, Writers in Residence, Journalists in Residence, Liu Institute Visiting Fellows in Residence, Visiting Scholars in Residence, etc. Then there is that other wider-world population specific to the College: the global community of former resident and non-resident members making up the Green College Society and now numbering well over 1000.

### Context

Promoting the College's accessibility to the wider local community beyond students, faculty and staff of UBC has been a declared priority of the present Principal and his staff. "Reinterpreting interdisciplinarity in the key of community engagement" was the theme of the College's budget submission to the Provost's Office in 2010, and the 2012 External Review of the College gave a very positive account of progress up to that time. Two years ago, the College positioned itself to play a more developed role in the local

mainstreaming of university thinking by experimentally assuming the functions of secretariat or “administrative home” for the Vancouver Institute (a role previously played by UBC Continuing Studies). As UBC formulates its new strategy for community engagement under President Ono, the College is well placed to contribute. Less well prepared so far, chiefly for lack of staff and/or volunteer time, is the realization of the extraordinary educational resource represented by the **Green College Society** (see previous paragraph). As the College turns 25 in 2018, and an average former resident member from its first cohort (1993-) turns 50, we have a chance to make something of that shared college history, for the sake of more widely shared futures. (A separate plan for the development of the Green College Society will be formulated in the course of 2017-18, on the basis of consultation with local and remote Society Members.)

### Strategic goals

- 6 Enhance the week-to-week engagement of members of the wider local community in the life of the College by expanding the category of **Members at Large** within the class of **Members of Common Room**, by involving those Members at Large in the committee processes of the College, and by soliciting their ideas and contributions for, *inter alia*, the proposed new-style colloquia on topics of special interest.
- 7 Formalize connections between the College and other intellectually, politically, socially and artistically engaged British Columbians by creating a membership category of **BC Fellows of Green College**, in the expectation that these individuals will make occasional visits to the College, help to promote its programs and extend its networks.
- 8 Institutionalize and market a set of high-profile **Green College Lectures** (with videos and/or podcasts) every year, funding to come primarily from the Cecil H. and Ida Green Visiting Professors endowment and (with due acknowledgment and/or separate billing) the John V. Clyne Lecture endowment.
- 9 In consultation with **Green College Society Members** in BC and around the world, develop platforms and programs (including a hybrid online and print **Green College Annual Report & Society Magazine**) for regular interaction between Green College Society Members and the current College community, beginning with special programming for 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary events in 2018.