

Brief Report: Feasibility Study for Regional Learning Centres

Sponsored by an Ike Barber Foundation Grant

BRIEF REPORT

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Authored by: Lyn Benn

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This research was conducted by:

Lyn Benn: Director, Student Development (Supervisor)

Student Researchers:

- Waheed Taiwo: Lead Researcher & Report Writer
- Matthew Reid: Assistant Researcher
- Gurjinderjit Ghuman: Student Assistant

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- Chris Burns from KPU Library for assistance with the research processes and data collection.

Members of the consultative committee:

Consultative Committee: (Establish goals and terms of reference for needs analysis – including community consultations, environmental scan, exploration of entrepreneurial activities to support the development and continuance of Learning Centres; Identify consultation groups, stakeholders, resources for research assistants; Develop needs assessment tools; Guide evaluation and development of report; comment and feedback on report including final approval.)

Members:

KPU members:

- Lyn Benn – Project management, community connections. (Lead)
- Kyle Matsuba – Research process and ethics, consultative processes.
- Larissa Petrillo – Cross-cultural understanding, First Nations issues, methodology and ethics, institutional ethnography.
- Sapand Jazzi – Entrepreneurial finance and strategic management.
- Jim Pelton – Continuing and professional studies
- Melike Kinik-Dicleli – Strategic Research, Institutional Analysis and Planning
- Bill Wright – Ike Barber Foundation

Community Consultants (Consultative Committee):

- Eva Touzard, Surrey/Delta Literacy projects officer and trainer & Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society representative
- Margaret Dixon Richmond Literacy Outreach Coordinator

Feasibility Study for Regional Learning Centres

This feasibility study, funded by the Ike Barber Foundation was designed to support research into increasing community engagement and access to educational programs in KPU communities. While there is a Full Report from the research project that will be available on the Learning Centre website, (kpu.ca/learningcentres) this Brief Report will focus on the findings for White Rock, Grandview Corners, and Ladner areas. The report outlines avenues through which KPU can work with organizations and people within the community to increase access to educational programs as a way of addressing social, economic, and cultural issues in the communities. The proposals in the report complement programs already in place in various departments within the university. This report highlights the potential for current and future programs that would work towards the enhancement of KPU community presence, in an effort directed towards increasing educational access to all strata of people within the communities.

This study provided an opportunity for KPU students to put their research skills and learning into action. The student researchers were asked to identify community needs that could be met through regional learning centres or hubs. As this project progressed we identified some substantial needs and some real possibilities for meeting those needs – beyond just the idea of offering a course or two for students that would be close to home, and tutoring support, educational advising, local course registrations etc. for students.

As part of the investigation of the potential for regional learning centres, the research team found two major streams through which KPU can fulfil its strategic goal of community engagement, increased student enrolments and engaged learning. These two streams are:

1. **A business model** which is designed to provide labour market, academic, vocational and other programs for local communities using the learning centres (possibly called KPU Connections) which are easily accessible to people in the targeted localities. This model could be used for pilot programs in the White Rock-Grandview Corners and Ladner communities.

2. **A service model** offering the opportunity for experiential and service learning within various communities for KPU students. This service model offers a way to realize the KPU strategic goal of blending theory and learning which provides relevance to the courses and programs at KPU. Learning experiences could include volunteer work or service learning in various community groups. For example, this study found that opportunities exist for students to apply their learning in helping seniors to use new technology (iphones, smart phones, ipads, tablets and computer programs and apps). Learning centres could be used as a resource in identifying further opportunities for experiential learning activities.

Identifying Community and Target Groups Needs

This research began with the identification of potential communities in which KPU could provide service and greater community engagement. It is through working collaboratively, cooperatively and in a coordinated manner that KPU can impact the lives of individuals and groups within our communities to build capacity and improve the quality of life for many. One way in which KPU can connect with individuals and groups is through the concept of regional learning centres.

Ladner, White Rock, Grandview Corners, Pheonix House, Surrey City Centre and later, Mission, Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge were identified as potential areas in which to situate regional learning centres. As the research progressed it was determined that the most opportune places to situate a pilot for any regional learning centres would be White Rock (which could initially attract people from Grandview Corners, so hereafter will be referred to as White Rock-Grandview Corners) and Ladner. Pheonix House is reorganizing its programs and is self-sufficient at present. Surrey City Central will progress according to the current strategic plan for that facility. Mission, Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge already have a KPU Task Force devoted to identifying educational opportunities and partnerships in that area. Thus, the White Rock-Grandview Corners and Ladner communities would be suitable for running a pilot program.

An environmental scan of current educational institutions or organizations situated near or in the target areas, showed that KPU was the closest institution offering access, certificate, diploma or degree programs. However, the proximity of KPU campuses for those communities required commutes between 45 minutes to an hour and a half for individuals to attend classes. Additionally travel costs may be an impediment for some people. Both communities have unemployment rates around 5.6%. Average incomes for 34 % of White Rock-Grandview Corners populations and 35% of the population in Ladner were below \$20,000 per annum.

In White Rock-Grandview Corners the three major high schools see approximately 1,200 students graduate each year. Ladner's Delta High School graduated 300 students in 2014, and anticipates graduating 259 students in 2015, due to a declining population in that age group. The most recent Census data showed that 27% of the existing White Rock population, 27% of the Grandview Corners population and 31% of the Ladner population have high school graduation as their highest educational level. In the Ladner and White Rock-Grandview Corners communities 10% of these populations have trades qualifications. While this aligns with the current national average for trades, the BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint (Apr 2014) indicates that by 2020 BC will require one million workers with technical or trades training. Along with this projection, there is a desire to have flexible options for students entering into post-secondary learning, and that closer collaboration with industry and community resources would be valued.

The White Rock-Grandview Corners and the Ladner communities have organizations that are assisting individuals to access employment or training opportunities. Both communities have a rising trend in the number of people over 50 years who are looking for programs that provide support for a higher quality of life through general interest courses, entrepreneurial courses for starting or supporting part time employment or self-employment, or support in keeping up with changing technologies that keep individuals connected to local and world events.

Opportunities for experiential, volunteer and service learning for KPU students emerged as a key theme in our research. For example, in the White Rock-Grandview Corners, Ladner and Surrey communities, after-school programs that would enhance the physical education of young people or work to address social needs of teenagers, were highlighted as areas in which KPU student volunteers would be appreciated. White Rock and Ladner also expressed interest in having KPU students assist seniors with technology and look forward to having student present TED style talks as part of their recreation programming.

Just as significant was the finding that potential KPU programs offered close to the home for individuals who lived in both communities would be both welcomed and valued by organizations and agencies which support unemployed, disadvantaged, minority or immigrant populations. In particular these local

government and non-profit agencies identified opportunities for KPU programs that would contribute to improving the economic and social situations for these individuals, particularly in the areas of retail, clerical, administrative and social service work.

As the research progressed, data produced by KPU Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) proved to provide excellent support for the research team. This data was used to identifying courses that could realistically be offered locally, based on the current registrations of students living in the target areas.

Consultation with non-profits, Work BC, KPU Continuing Studies and information from the BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint (2014) would indicate that there are opportunities to provide, and considerable financial support for, programs and services. These could be delivered through regional learning centres (KPU Connections) in the targeted communities via Project Based Labour Market Training Programs as well as our academic courses.

Through partnerships with local government and non-profit agencies, such as the White Rock City Council and Sources, KPU would move forward in a dynamic way to engage fully with those communities on two fronts – (a) the provision of student service to the communities programs (through Service Learning and Volunteer opportunities) and (b) through a business model that provides full support for students who wish to enter into courses or programs that are offered locally through the regional learning centres (KPU Connections).

The Service Model for Regional Learning Centres

As experiential learning is integrated into every KPU program, connecting theory to application and the classroom to the community, learning centres could become a resource to assist in this process. For example, Service Learning programs could benefit from regional learning centres' collaboration with community groups to find work or volunteer placements for students.

The Business Model for Regional Learning Centres

The major concern is the economic viability in setting regional learning centres particularly with respect to renting or acquiring space. During the consultation with local government and non-profit organizations the offer of space in the White Rock area for KPU programs or services was substantial. In Ladner the availability of operating space has not yet been fully researched by the team, however we anticipate a similar result.

As identified by KPU's IAP department, there are existing courses in which students living in the targeted communities (White Rock-Grandview Corners and Ladner) are enrolled. From the data available, course registrations for students in these communities range from between 20 –166 for many first year core courses such as ENGL 1100, MATH 1099, CRIM 1101, SOCI 1125, MRKT 0010, ACCT 1110, (to name a few).

Without impinging on the current work of KPU continuing Studies, in collaboration with community partners and with the support of KPU Continuing Studies, regional learning centres could provide the backing and infrastructure for Project Based Labour Market Training Programs (PBLMT). Such projects require cooperation between community organizations, employers, industry groups and EPBC Service Providers. All programs would be designed to benefit the participants, community and the local labour market. The KPU philosophy of providing for the holistic development of students including clear career paths, naturally fits the requirements of these programs which require a focus on providing the academic, vocational and learning supports that students need

to successfully complete their qualifications and be work ready. While group skills training is the preferred model for PBLMT programs, learning centres would deliver through a holistic and collaborative learning community approach – much like the existing model for students attending KPU.

In line with PBLMT requirements, KPU already has requirements such as counseling, vocational and learning assessments, work experience opportunities, job search skills training, peer tutoring, mentorship, referral to community resources and post-project follow-up processes. All of the activities and networking which participants complete supports the development of workplace-ready individuals. Again, this is consistent with regular practices at KPU.

PBLMT programs could form the basis of the funding for the pilot centres. Using such funding opportunities along with an effective marketing and sales campaign that attracts students into locally offered courses, target enrollments for the initial year of operation could see around 100 students accessing programs per day.

The set up costs for regional learning centres, possibly called *KPU Connections* could be offset by the funding that we would receive from the PBLMT programs and in time, fees from student enrolments, fee for service programs and other identified funding opportunities. However, we continue to explore opportunities for other funding.

Courses and Programs

Besides any projected PBLMT programs, the following courses were identified as possible courses that could be offered locally for existing KPU students and potential students from the targeted areas, including the promotion of intergenerational courses for the White Rock-Grandview Corners and Ladner populations who have expressed interest in continuing as lifelong learners. In the research process, various courses were identified where students from the local communities had enrolled. The most popular include:

- Educational Studies 1100 – Introduction to University
- Math 1099 – Fundamental Mathematics
- English 1099 – Fundamental English
- English 1100 – Introduction to University Writing
- Marketing 0010 – Introduction to Marketing
- Computer Science 1100 – Introduction to Computer Literacy
- Business 1210 – Essentials of Management
- Psychology 0010 – Introduction to Basic Processes
- Fine Arts 1110 – Introduction to Painting

Labour Market Programs

Although this has not been a traditional source of funding for general KPU programs (exceptions are in the trades and technology fields), it could be as source of funding for regional learning centres as the services and programs offered through the learning centres increase community engagement, meet community needs, address unemployment rates and meet the agenda for the BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint (2014). The labour market programs target occupations with the highest expected job openings in Mainland/Southwest, (2010-2020) where there are identified skills shortages such as Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks, Clerical Occupations, General Office Skills,

Cleaners , Administrative and Regulatory Occupations, Paralegals, Social Services Workers and Occupations in Education and Religion. These positions have been identified both provincially and through our consultations with community and employer groups as being key priorities for training and development programs.

Resourcing

Item	Salary Range	Total
<u>Human Resources –</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Manager: Manages programs; promote programs to target groups with community organizations, businesses and students; identify funding opportunities; manages tutors; identify issues. • Professional Assistant (Onsite): Manages office; scheduling; sales; arranges tutor appointments, learning support, room bookings, • Program Facilitators and Support Services x 3 positions (Onsite): Learning or vocational assessments, coaching in learning strategies, counselling/advising for students including those with learning difficulties, career advising, mentoring, teaching course elements where necessary, delivering workshops, specialized tutorial support. 	\$70,000 - \$75,000 \$40,000- \$45,000 \$50,000- \$75,000	\$75,000 \$45,000 \$210,000
<u>IT:</u> Laptops for professional and student use with internet, printer and photocopying access.	\$45,000	\$45,000
<u>Physical Resources:</u> Rooms for student advising and student support – career counselling, individual counselling for students who are not performing well, tutoring and language, literacy, learning and numeracy support.	Partnership agreements with non-profit or local government	
<u>Financial Resources:</u> Repair and maintenance budget	\$5,000	\$5,000
<u>Operating costs:</u> Supplies and operating costs	\$20,000	\$20,000
<u>Student Welfare:</u> Free student refreshments would be available.	\$5,000	\$5,000
<u>Start up Pack:</u> Student KPU Connections laptop style backpack (with logo); KPU USB stick; KPU pen.(Sourced from cost efficient providers) @\$20 per student (Promotional costs) Start up costs will vary with economies of scale.	\$10,000 (start up)	\$10,000
Total		\$415,000

Scheduling and Delivery of Programs in Regional Learning Centres

By scheduling morning, afternoon and evening sessions or classes, regional learning centres could feasibly cater to 100 students per day. Some programs may be offered in workplace environments to reduce the strain on centre resources. Other programs can be offered through the non-profit or agency facilities. Opportunities for students to access blended or online courses with regional support in the learning centre facilities may attract increased student enrolments to offset or recover operational costs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

KPU has a mandate to engage with its communities. Our research has concluded that regional learning centres have the capacity to fulfil that obligation and it is recommended that a pilot program in the White Rock-Grandview corners and Ladner localities be initiated in accordance with the models outlined in this Brief.

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Norwinda Binuya-Barros

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External Contacts

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