

**20 Questions for 2020:
BC's Research Universities in a Changing Context**

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Executive Summary

Over the past 20 years, BC's post-secondary system has undergone great change. The twin expansions in numbers of students and numbers and types of institutions has led to a new landscape and brought many challenges with them.

There are now four universities with full research mandates: Simon Fraser University (SFU), the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), and the University of Victoria (UVic). These four universities have now been joined by Royal Roads University (RRU) in offering doctoral programs. RRU therefore faces many of the same issues as the full-mandate research universities.

In this discussion paper, we focus on these five universities and identify 20 questions which need critical examination in order to guide BC public policy over the next decade.

Despite government's absence of long term planning in the post-secondary sector, our universities have made achievements of which we are proud. That being said, without a long term vision and financial commitment from government, our universities cannot sustain their success and reach their full potential.

The 20 questions identified in this paper cover a range of issues and are contained in sections on Accessibility, Funding, the Research-Teaching Nexus and the External Direction of Research, Governance and Accountability, Internationalization and, finally, System Coherence. These issues raise complex questions of principle, of empirical fact and of appropriate balance and trade-offs.

These issues impinge on the daily lives of the faculty members and librarians who make up the membership of the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) at BC's five doctoral universities. While some of these questions are common to all post-secondary institutions, many take particular forms when applied to research universities and, indeed, many are unique to them.

In identifying these questions, it is fitting that CUFA BC looks to its membership for answers. There is considerable experience and expertise in the membership—members who may have published on some of these questions or who have thoughts and opinions based on their experience working at one or more of the universities. I hope that after reading this discussion paper that you will want to take up the challenge of providing answers to these questions. You can find out more information about the logistics of doing so on CUFA BC's website at www.cufa.bc.ca/universities2020

20 Questions for 2020: BC's Research Universities in a Changing Context¹

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Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC

A strategic planning background document prepared for the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) as part of its Universities 2020 initiative.

CUFA BC represents 4,600 faculty members, professional librarians and other academic staff at the province's five doctoral universities: Simon Fraser University, Royal Roads University, University of British Columbia, University of Northern British Columbia and University of Victoria.

¹ I am grateful to members of the CUFA BC Council for providing comments on an earlier version of this document. I am particularly indebted to Robert Clift, CUFA BC's Executive Director, for his comments and provision of data, and Angela Hold, CUFA BC's Executive Assistant, for her editorial and layout work.

1.0 Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the post-secondary education landscape in British Columbia has changed substantially. In the mid-1980s, like other jurisdictions in Canada and internationally, BC adopted the principle that all individuals who could benefit from a post-secondary education should be provided with the access to do so. This commitment, noble in its support of individual enrichment and strategic in its recognition of the changing and complex nature of post-industrial societies, has led to a sustained expansion in student enrollment over the past two decades.

With the commitment to providing accessibility in mind, the post-secondary education system has, likewise, expanded.

Twenty years ago a clear, dualistic structure existed. One part consisted of three universities: Simon Fraser University (SFU), the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the University of Victoria (UVic). All were located in the south-western part of the province. All provided bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees and had full research mandates. The other part consisted of colleges and provincial training institutes. Geographically spread throughout the province, the colleges provided vocational and trades education and some undergraduate university transfer courses at the first and second year levels. The Lower Mainland-based provincial training institutes provided specialized career and technical programs.

Far from the dualistic structure of the past, our present post-secondary sector is multi-layered. The sector now includes four research universities – the original three plus the University of Northern BC (UNBC) – which have full research mandates and continue to offer bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees. In addition, there are five “special purpose, teaching universities” created in the summer of 2008 (Fraser Valley University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Vancouver Island University, Capilano University, and Emily Carr University of Art and Design).

These latter universities offer academic, career, vocational, and adult upgrading programs and may grant degrees up to the master's level. All of these institutions are governed by the University Act.

There are also two specialized universities, governed by separate acts. Royal Roads University (RRU) offers predominantly executive-style programs, including those at the doctoral level. In offering doctoral degrees, RRU resembles the research universities and hence faces many challenges in common with them. Thompson Rivers University (TRU), which offers mainly bachelors level degrees as well as vocational programs, more closely resembles the new "special purpose, teaching universities", although it also has a provincial distance learning mandate as a result of the merging of the BC Open University with University College of the Cariboo to create TRU.

The remaining colleges and provincial training institutes are the final piece in the province's now multi-layered post-secondary sector.

These twin expansions – of students and institutions – has fundamentally changed the post-secondary system and brought in their wake many challenges. Included in this list of challenges are the provision of adequate funding for a growing sector, the changing nature of the university and degree-level education, the role of, and support for research, questions about appropriate governance structures, and the implementation of appropriate and effective accountability measures.

At this juncture, it is important to step back and analyze the implications of these changes and challenges as we look forward to the next decade and beyond. Responding to the lack of long-term visioning in our sector, CUFA BC has identified 20 key questions to which answers will be sought from our membership. As befits the membership of CUFA BC, the focus of these questions will be on the issues affecting those universities with full research mandates and degree programs at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels.

Many of the questions are specific to the research universities, others take a particular form when applied to the research universities, and some are also applicable to other institutions in the post-secondary system.

In the following sections, I identify the 20 questions, the answers to which will shape the evolution of the research universities and the post-secondary education sector in general to 2020. These questions are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather are intended to stimulate discussion and debate. Of course, some questions imply a shorter time horizon than others but, if we are taking them as a whole, it is reasonable to expect that the full implementation of answers to them will require a sustained effort by government and universities for the next decade or so.

Having identified the questions, the members of CUFA BC, as well as other individuals in the post-secondary sector, are invited to provide their answers.² Some of the questions are empirical, others are questions of principle and yet others involve trade-offs and require finding appropriate balance. Some faculty members and professional librarians will have specialized knowledge and perhaps have published on these topics, others will have personal experiences and opinions. All are welcome and encouraged as part of CUFA BC's process of stimulating debate on these important questions and charting a path for the future of our research universities. This process brings to the fore the expertise and experience and of those directly employed in research universities, a group that can make significant contributions to the public policy debate.

The responses provided to us by our membership and others will inform CUFA BC's strategic policy directions for the research universities for the next decade. This paper, by identifying issues, is only a first step in that process. It is my hope that the outcome of this process will be a resource for policy makers and a civil society White Paper in its own right.

² Readers are directed to the CUFA BC website, www.cufa.bc.ca/universities2020, where details of how to submit contributions are available.

2.0 Accessibility

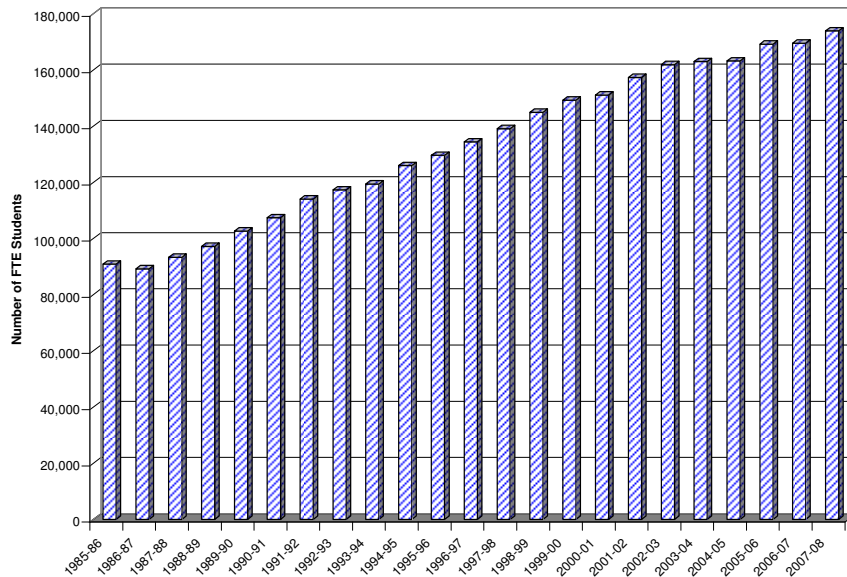
One of the main objectives of public post-secondary policy over the past 20 years has been to increase the accessibility of the system for all British Columbians. Accessibility has multiple dimensions. These include: increasing the proportion of high school graduates attending post-secondary institutions (i.e. overall participation rate); making post-secondary education opportunities available throughout the province (i.e. geographical accessibility); increasing participation rates amongst groups traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary education (e.g. Aboriginal peoples, students from low income families, students with disabilities); and ensuring affordability of post-secondary education for all students. As is evident, questions about accessibility have strong equity considerations.

2.1 Participation Rates

Since the adoption of the principle over 20 years ago that any student who could benefit from a post-secondary education should have access to one, successive governments have increased the number of seats available to students.³ This is, perhaps, the most successful of all government post-secondary education access policies, as the enrolment data in Figure 1 indicate.

³ In the mid-1980s, the government stated that "one of the aims of this government is to enable all students who would profit from a higher education to pursue that goal if they so chose, and to encourage the best students to make that choice" (quoted in Fisher, D., Rubenson, K., Lee, J., Clift, R., MacIvor, M., and Meredith, J., "The Development of a Postsecondary Education System in British Columbia: Transformation and Change", in Fisher, D., and Rubenson, K., (eds.), Higher Education Policy and the Development of Higher Education Systems in Canada: A Comparison between British Columbia, Ontario and Québec, McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming). In this respect, the BC government was following in the footsteps of the famous Robbins Report (1963) which led to the expansion of the university sector in the UK.

Figure 1:
Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment at BC Public Post-Secondary Institutions
1985-86 to 2007-08



Sources: Custom tabulation prepared by the Ministry of Advanced Education; Table 4.1 of the Research Universities' Council of BC Fact and Figures; Ministry of Advanced Education Service Plan Reports 2003-04 to 2007-08

Total full-time equivalent enrollment grew by 91% between 1985 and 2007. If current demographic trends persist, the rapid expansion of enrolment will slow, while the need for increased participation rates will continue.

As indicated in the introduction, increasing participation rates benefit individuals, generally, by increasing their labour market returns and quality of life, and further benefit individuals from some groups by increasing their social mobility. Increasing post-secondary participation rates also benefits the province as a whole because it ensures better economic performance.

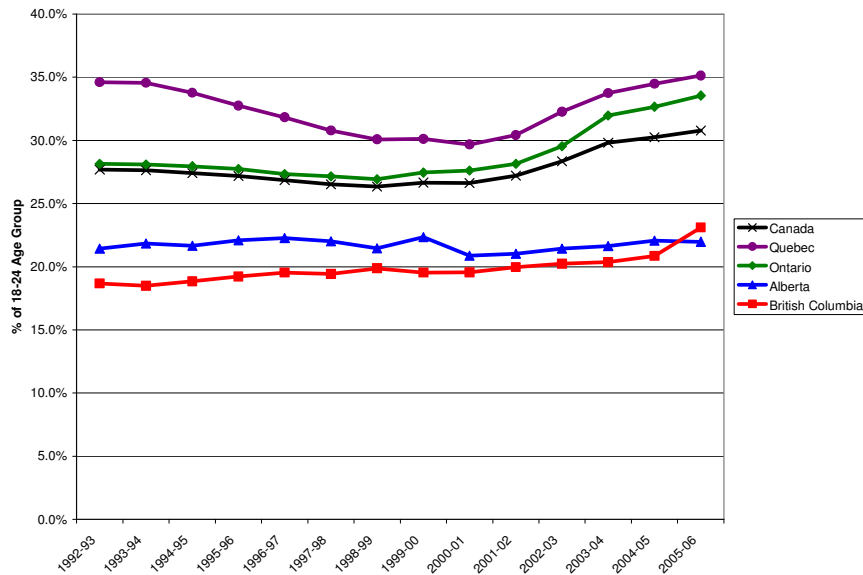
This latter aspect has recently been reaffirmed by the Business Council of BC which argued in its 2009 pre-budget submission that "a well educated population and work force is critical to developing and maintaining a prosperous economy".⁴ The economic benefits of a well-educated population have been universally accepted by the current and previous governments. Indeed, it is seen as a potential area of provincial competitive advantage.

Nevertheless, in comparison with other provinces and Canada as a whole, BC's university participation rate remains relatively low. As the Plant Report indicated, "university enrolment in BC on a per capita basis ranks the lowest on Canada." It concluded that "in general terms, we need to increase rates of participation and attainment within a population that will have fewer younger people, and in all likelihood more in-migrants."⁵

⁴ Business Council of British Columbia, Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services in Advance of the 2009 Provincial Budget, September 29, 2008, p. 12, available at http://www.bcbc.com/Documents/EC_20080929_Submission_ProvPreBudget.pdf

⁵ Plant, G. Campus2020 : Thinking Ahead : The Report, p. 24. Available at <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/campus2020/campus2020-thinkingahead-report.pdf>

Figure 2:
 University Participation Rate as a Proportion of the 18-24 Age Group
 for Selected Provinces 1992-93 to 2005-06



Sources: CANSIM Tables 477-0014, 051-0001 and 477-0013

Question 1: What explains BC's historically low university participation rate?
 How can it be increased?

BC's relative position notwithstanding, the increase in enrolment brings with it new challenges. Many of these are pedagogical challenges. As the pool of students expands, including more adult learners, new ways of teaching to meet the diverse experiences and abilities of the student population are required in order to provide an appropriate learning environment. The AUCC reports that, "universities are expected to provide more and better quality educational opportunities to a broader and ever-growing group of students."⁶ This requires additional resources and forms of support such as learning skills centres for students.

⁶ AUCC, *Trends in Higher Education, Volume 3: Finance*, Ottawa: AUCC, 2008, p. 8

Question 2: To ensure that the increasingly diverse student population attending the research universities is provided with a learning environment designed to maximize success, what support mechanisms need to be in place for students and faculty?

2.2 Geographical Accessibility

As enrolment has grown, the desire for students to be able to complete an undergraduate education close to their homes has also increased. This is desirable as a way of increasing participation rates – providing a university education in familiar surroundings as well as lowering the costs of attendance. The decision in 1990 to locate the province's fourth degree-granting institution outside of the south-western part of the province, in Prince George, was the result of such thinking. Since then, degree-granting authority has been extended to public post-secondary institutions across the province.

Local accessibility was one of the main justifications for the conversion of five existing public post-secondary institutions to universities in 2008. Studies have shown that local access to universities significantly increase the likelihood that students from low and middle-income families will attend university, but more research is needed to better understand this and related phenomena in BC's varied regions.⁷

Three of the research universities, SFU, UBC and UNBC operate as "multi-campus" universities; SFU has Burnaby, Vancouver and Surrey campuses, UBC has two Vancouver campuses and a Kelowna campus while UNBC has a campus presence in Quesnel, Terrace, Prince Rupert, Fort St John and Prince George. By virtue of its mixed-model delivery method, combining intensive face-to-face instruction with distance education, Royal Roads University also creates learning opportunities across the province and around the world.

⁷ See, for example, Frenette, M., Do Universities Benefit Local Youth? Evidence from University and College Participation, and Graduate Earnings Following the Creation of a New University, January 2007, Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper, Statistics Canada available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2006283.pdf>

All play an important role in increasing geographical access to university programs.

Though the implications need to be carefully considered, there may be possibilities for further geographic expansion by the research universities. Before branching out further, it is important to fully understand what the direct financial costs will be and also consider the extent to which regional campuses can offer the same quality and range of educational programming and research activities as the main campus. If the aim is provide students at multiple campuses with the same learning experience, the costs and organizational requirements of attaining this goal need careful evaluation.

Question 3: How do participation rates differ by region within the province? To what extent does the availability of universities locally reduce these differences? What are the challenges facing the multi-campus research university in providing more geographic accessibility and how can they best be addressed?

2.3 Social Inclusion

Universities aspire to be socially inclusive, to play a socially transformative role by increasing social mobility. This aspiration is undermined not only by a lack of adequate programs to help students overcome barriers, but also by a basic lack of information about key social groups. For example, one Canadian study found that young people from families in the highest income category were twice as likely as young people from families in the lowest income category to attend university.⁸ That same study found that young people from homes where one or both parents were university educated were three times more likely to attend university than young people from families where the parents' highest level of education was high school graduation or less.

⁸ Drolet, M. (2005). Participation in Post-Secondary Education in Canada: Has the Role of Parental Income and Education Changed Over the 1990s?. Ottawa: Statistics Canada available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2005243-eng.pdf>

As has already been noted, the analysis of barriers to access based on socio-economic status is further complicated by geographical location. We have no data that allow us to examine these factors in the BC context.

Question 4: What strategies do research universities need to follow in order to assess and increase the rate of participation in, and completion of, degree programs by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and first-generation students?

Participation by specific groups such as Aboriginal students remains low relative to the rest of the population. Data shows that Aboriginal people in BC are one and a half times less likely to earn a post-secondary credential and about four times less likely earn a university degree than non-Aboriginals.⁹ This finding raises questions about the barriers that Aboriginal students face in pursuing a post-secondary education. The importance of removing these barriers was alluded to in the Plant Report which linked the possibility of raising Aboriginal educational levels to meeting future skills shortages.¹⁰

Question 5: What strategies can research universities employ to increase the number of Aboriginal students entering into and successfully completing degree programs?

As well as specific mechanisms designed to increase the participation and success of Aboriginal students, there is also a broader issue to consider beyond accessibility. The relationship between the post-secondary education sector and Aboriginal communities has long been a contested one. In the absence of treaty settlements with many Aboriginal communities, the role of these communities in shaping the post-secondary education sector has been ambiguous at best.

⁹ Calculation using data from 2006 Census of Population, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 97-560-XCB2006028

¹⁰ Plant, G., *op. cit.*, p. 36

For example, Fisher et al. document that the 1990 Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners recognized: "(1) that First Nations have a right to self-determination in education, and therefore must be part of the decision-making process; (2) that because education is an inherent Aboriginal right, it is a federal responsibility that only can only be devolved to the province with First Nations approval; (3) that contemporary higher education reflects a holistic approach, consistent with traditional education, that enhances First Nations values; and (4) that the Province's responsibility to ensure Aboriginal access to higher education that is holistic requires cooperative planning by First Nations and post-secondary authorities."¹¹ In 2003, the Liberal government produced the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework Draft for Discussion which was considerably more restrictive in its enumeration of the rights of First Nations communities in the post-secondary sector.¹² The latest forum, Moving Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forward – Developing a Strategy, was more concerned with the functional issue of increasing post-secondary participation than with the creating the appropriate relationships with Aboriginal communities to bridge the deeper barriers to post-secondary participation.

But these relationship issues will not go away. The relations with Aboriginal peoples and their communities is important for research universities. These relationships are recognized in a research context by the special Tri-Council provisions governing research involving Aboriginal communities. Questions about governance, process, and how indigenous knowledge should be included in research and in university teaching remain important.

Question 6: What should the relationships be between research universities and Aboriginal communities?

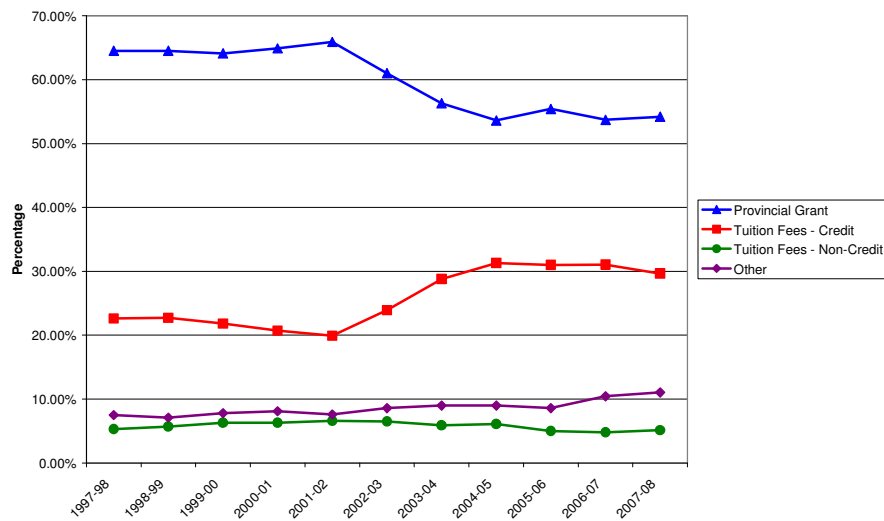
¹¹ Fisher et al., *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*

2.4 Affordability

The percentage of university operating funds which has come from student tuition has increased over the past 10 years. The University of Victoria exemplifies this in Figure 3.

Figure 3:
University of Victoria – Source of Revenue for Operating Budget
1997-98 to 2007-08



Source: University of Victoria Audited Financial Statements

Since a university education provides benefits to individuals in terms of higher future income, a good argument can be made that the individual should bear some portion of the cost of that education. However, since education has economic benefits beyond the individual that arise from a well-educated workforce, public funding has always been a significant and typically major share of funding.

In BC, the balance between individual tuition fees and public funding has changed as governments' priorities and financial circumstances have changed. In 1996, the NDP government imposed a tuition freeze. This was followed, in 2002, by tuition fees being set autonomously by universities in the initial years of the Liberal government. This resulted in tuition fees increasing by double digit annual rates with average tuition fees rising by 87% between 2001-02 and 2004-05.¹³ This was subsequently followed in 2005-06 by the (current) cap of a 2% per annum tuition fee increase. The cumulative result of these policies is that BC's tuition fees are slightly higher than the national average.¹⁴

The current level of tuition fees has changed the balance between student and public funding of universities and may act as a disincentive to potential students, particularly those from low-income households who may have to take on large debt to complete their programs. It has also meant that students increasingly hold part-time or full-time jobs while studying, a situation which tends to lengthen their degree completion time and decrease their quality of learning as they juggle the competing demands of paid work and course work.

At the same time, past tuition fee freezes and recent caps on increases have limited universities' financial planning autonomy and, in the absence of alternative funding sources, contributed to declining real per student funding for universities.

Question 7: How should post-secondary tuition fees be set to balance the burden between individual students and the taxpayers? What are the optimal tuition fee policies to attract students to the province, increase accessibility and maintain adequate funding levels for research universities?

¹³ Calculation based on Table 7E.1a from Statistics Canada's Survey of Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs

¹⁴ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/081009/t081009a-eng.htm>

3.0 Funding

The changing balance between student tuition fee revenue and government operating grants raises the question of what has been happening to the latter. University operating budgets have been subject to pressures from two main sources over the past twenty years. The first has been the expanded enrolments. Increased funding has been needed to provide the resources, physical and human, to accommodate the increased number of students. The second major pressure has been inflation. Universities have been particularly susceptible to inflation pressures because their costs – consisting of books, journals, hi-tech equipment and salaries – typically rise faster than the consumer price index. The United States and United Kingdom both calculate a separate Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) to track the inflationary pressures in the sector.¹⁵ This has not yet been done in Canada, although there are considerations in this direction in BC.

Even without using a HEPI, it is clear that university operating grants in BC have not kept pace with the dual pressures of rising enrolments and rising costs. As a result, real funding per FTE has decreased over time. This is a problem in many provinces. The AUCC reports that "despite recent increases in government funding, rapid enrolment growth and inflationary pressures have resulted in universities having significantly less resources to support teaching, learning and research than in the 1980s and most of the 1990s".¹⁶ The AUCC argues that this has led to a growing gap in funding for Canadian universities compared to their US counterparts¹⁷ and correspondingly lower student outcomes in important learning areas.

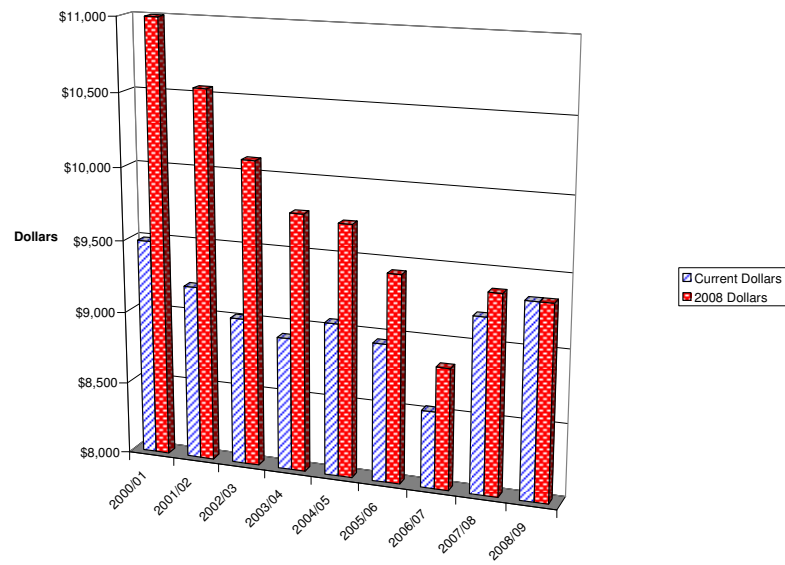
In BC, real funding per FTE has also fallen. Figure 4 shows the downward trend in real FTE funding since 2000-01.

¹⁵ See http://www.commonfund.org/Commonfund/CF+Institute/CI_About_HEPI.htm for details of the US HEPI

¹⁶ AUCC, *op. cit.*, p. 29

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10

Figure 4:
Actual BC Government Expenditures on Public Post-Secondary Institutions
per FTE Student



Sources: Ministry of Advanced Education Performance Report 2000-01; Ministry of Advanced Education Annual Service Plan Reports for 2001/02 to 2007/08; Ministry of Advanced Education 2008/09 - 2010/11 Service Plan; "Material Assumptions - Expense" Tables from Budget and Fiscal Plan for 2002/03 to 2008/09

CUFA BC estimates that funding would have needed to have been \$327 million higher in 2008-09 to have maintained the 2000-01 real value of funding per FTE. This would have required an 18% increase in public institution funding for 2008-09.

In addition to the pressures of increasing enrollment and inflation on university budgets, significant pressure has come from the construction of new buildings, financed under capital expenditures, but which have, upon completion, required support out of operating budgets. To this must also be added the additional costs of the resources needed to adequately support the greater diversity of student learners.

The AUCC reports that, "government and institutional policies aimed at broadening accessibility for these diverse student groups are certain to drive costs higher in the decade ahead."¹⁸ Furthermore, the changes in technology and accessibility of journals through electronic journals, for example, have substantially changed the ways in which the modern university research library operates. The changing role of the library – one of the central building blocks of any research university – needs careful examination, analysis and costing.

These pressures have taken place in an environment in which BC Liberal government policy has sought to reduce the role of government in the economy and has placed emphasis on reducing taxation, balancing the budget and reducing government spending. As a result, government expenditure as a percentage of provincial GDP fell to 15.9% in 2007-08 with expenditure as a percentage of GDP reaching one its lowest points in the last twenty five years.¹⁹

Nevertheless, some important changes have taken place in the funding mechanisms. For example, in 2006 the government agreed to cover the cost of negotiated four-year salary settlements through increased operating grants. There is no guarantee this will be repeated in the 2010 round of bargaining, but the precedent has been set.

Upon first taking office in 2001, the present government announced that the previous system of one-year funding arrangements would be replaced by a three year planning horizon. Budget projections covering this longer period would help to provide a stable framework within which universities could plan.²⁰ Regrettably, this commitment was broken in March 2008 when the government unexpectedly reduced all post-secondary institutions' projected operating grants for 2008-09 by 2.6%.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39

¹⁹ See Ministry of Finance, *British Columbia Financial and Economic Review*, 2008, p. 93.

²⁰ Although new, it had in fact been recommended 20 years earlier by the government appointed Provincial Access Committee in 1987. It had just never been implemented.

The provincial government's expenditure plans will be critical to ensuring that the funding crisis for universities is effectively addressed, but it's uncertain what those plans will be in the wake of the global economic crisis.

Question 8: What funding framework would provide research universities with adequate and predictable operating grants?

Of particular concern to the research universities is the funding of graduate students. Although the training of graduate students is a core mandate of the research universities, this has not been matched by core funding. In 2007, the provincial government, after a gap of over a decade, reintroduced core funding for graduate spaces. This funding was introduced for new graduate student places but did not provide for existing unfunded spaces.

Between 1994 and 2006 there was virtually no government funding to create new graduate student spaces. All the growth in graduate spaces was funded by the universities themselves from internal redistributions. As a result, in 2007-08 approximately 29% of graduate student spaces (4,370 spaces) were unfunded by the provincial government.

Not only does the lack of funding place an undue financial strain on the institutions themselves, it is also regrettable at a time when the competition for attracting the best graduate students is strong. In 2007, the BC provincial government introduced a new scholarship program for graduate students. Despite the introduction of this scholarship program, BC is not keeping pace with our neighboring province. For example, BC's graduate scholarship program funds 250 students at \$10,000 per year; Alberta's funds 1,000 students at \$15,000 per year. BC's scholarships are available to 2% of its graduate student population; Alberta's scholarships are available to 10% of its graduate student population.

Question 9: How should BC fund graduate student spaces at its research universities? How should BC provide incentives to keep the best and brightest graduate students in BC and attract students from elsewhere in Canada and around the world?

4.0 The Research University: The Research-Teaching Nexus and External Influence on Research Directions

The requirements and operations of the doctoral/research universities include some unique elements within the current multi-layered post-secondary education system. These arise because of the substantial role which research and graduate studies play in these universities. Because of the large role that research plays, it might be assumed that teaching is not as important in the research universities as it is in the "special purpose, teaching universities" or the colleges and institutes. This would, however, be a false assumption. In fact, the research universities have strong links between their research and teaching functions, links which are unique to research institutions.

These links are perhaps most apparent in the education of graduate students at both the doctoral and masters levels. Indeed, such is the importance of these links that one issue confronting universities is whether, and how, all faculty members are able to contribute to graduate-level education. Some research university administrators in BC (and elsewhere in Canada) have openly wondered whether the percentage of graduate students at their institutions should be increased to match that at research-intensive universities in the US.

The research-teaching links are increasingly being applied to undergraduate education as well. The nineteenth century liberal idea of the university as an institution dedicated to free inquiry and the recent so-called imperatives of the knowledge-based economy have converged to lend increasing support for the role of research-based learning in all degree programs.

The centrality of the research-teaching link was stressed by the Boyer Commission in the US (1998) and reinforced in subsequent reports in other countries.²¹

²¹ Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*. Menlo Park, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1998. See also Alan Jenkins, Mick Healey, and Roger Zetter, *Linking Teaching and Research in Disciplines and Departments*, April 2007, The Higher Education Academy.

The Boyer Commission focused on the links between research and teaching at large research-intensive universities, with the competition for faculty time suggesting a trade-off between the two activities. However, it became clear that research-based learning was, or at least should be, a critical aspect of the undergraduate experience and, as such, demonstrated the important link between research and teaching. Much scholarship has since been produced examining how, in practice, this translates into teaching pedagogies in different disciplinary and interdisciplinary settings. The influence of this approach was recently commented on by the AUCC: "studying in a research-intensive environment is a unique element of a university education, and one that students benefit from every day ... They do so because the inter-relationship between teaching and research is at the heart of the modern university, and faculty members are thus expected to conduct research as part of their employment and professional commitment."²²

The development of a research-based learning environment at all degree levels cannot be separated from funding issues. Providing a curriculum and resources (libraries, laboratories, faculty, etc.) which enable teaching pedagogies capable of ensuring that undergraduate and graduate students can take advantage of this environment requires adequate funding.

Issues for research-intensive universities include, therefore, the links between research and teaching, for whom, and at what cost.

Question 10: What is the role, and benefit, of further developing the link between research and teaching in research-based universities?

Because research activity is, by definition, a central function in doctoral/research universities, the ways in which research activity is directed is a pivotal issue. Should research be directed by the individual researcher alone? Or should government, at both federal and provincial levels, seek to influence the direction of research through its funding programs? Of course, the answer is somewhere in between but important questions of balance arise.

²² AUCC, *op.cit.*, p. 7

Public funders of research are quick to point out they have the right to direct their funding dollars. This has been the case for the major federal funding agencies which have identified strategic research priorities. Funding of Canadian Foundation for Innovation projects as well as direct provincial research funding is typically tied to meeting the government's priorities. The Canada Research Chair program has also led universities to prioritize areas of research within their institutions and to identify and build strength in selected research areas.

Government agencies have typically targeted funding towards those areas which they view as being of direct public need, such as health and the environment, as well as in areas of scientific knowledge which are believed to have important commercial and economic benefits. Research outside of these areas often receives relatively marginal funding since culture and literature, for example, are viewed as less valuable, or at least less directly economically productive, to society. Such is also the case with so-called "curiosity-based" research in the sciences, applied sciences and social sciences. The funding priorities of government imply a hierarchy of research activity. This places research universities in the position of having to decide how best to respond to government. Should the research universities seek to maximize government funding and allocate resources internally to those programs and faculty members with the best chance of securing such funding? Should the research universities hold government at arm's length and promote research in all areas, irrespective of its external fundability by government? How should these approaches be balanced?

The ways in which the universities respond to research directives inevitably result in judgments about whose research is valued and supported, and whose is not; what research is seen as most economically and socially beneficial, what research is seen as being of lesser utility.

Question 11: How should research universities respond to the government direction of, and implicit hierarchies within, research funding?

In addition to the pressures government places on general research direction and academic offerings, research universities are also increasingly encouraged to commercialize their research. This commodification of university research has intensified as universities have increasingly been seen by government, the private sector, and by the universities themselves as the incubators of research meant to serve as the basis for future economic prosperity.

The direct application of university research to the commercial environment has therefore been a focus of universities' claim for relevance in the contemporary world. This has resulted in significant investments in infrastructure to support commercialization activities; for example, the creation of University Industry Liaison Offices.

This focus on commercialization has also provided a source of revenue to universities through the licensing of patents and other intellectual property. While the trend towards commercialization has provided an avenue through which the universities can demonstrate their significance to society, it also raises a series of complex issues.

To what extent should university research being shaped by the need for applied, as opposed to basic, research? To what extent should university research be shaped by the imperatives and concerns of private donors rather than the unconstrained pursuit of knowledge? Are the links with the private sector and the commercialization of research leading university researchers and institutions themselves to be compromised, to be less critical of corporate practices and society in general than they should be?²³

Question 12: How should business-directed/funded research and the commercialization of research be managed in contemporary research universities?

²³ The well-publicized case of Dr. Nancy Oliveri at the University of Toronto provided compelling evidence of the issues at stake.

5.0 Governance and Accountability

An essential and central component of the research universities' governance structure is the bicameral structure of a Board of Governors and a Senate. The former, responsible for financial and administrative issues, is typically made up of government appointees and some members elected by faculty, staff and students at the university. Academic issues, such as program offerings and academic standards, are the responsibility of Senate, a body which typically has a majority of elected faculty representatives, supplemented by elected student representatives and ex-officio administrators. These two bodies provide direction to the administration of the university on financial and academic matters.

The directions given by the Board of Governors and Senate must be placed within the context of overall government policy. It is government which decides the total funding for universities, and can exert considerable influence on Board financial planning through public bodies such as the Public Sector Employers' Council in the case of BC. With regard to academic planning, governments have used their funding power to establish and promote specific programs, such as medical programs (e.g. the Northern and Island Medical Programs) and computer science (through the Double the Opportunities funding initiative) among others. Although, some portion of government funding is tied to particular programming choices, it is ultimately up to Senate to approve those programs and monitor their academic credibility.

In the past two decades, the bicameral governance system has come under increasing strain as the provincial government has sought to limit the powers of Senates. This was obviously the case with Royal Roads University (1995) and the Technical University of British Columbia (1996), institutions set up by the NDP government without a Senate to oversee academic matters. More recently (2008), the Liberal government granted university status to several public institutions without endowing them with Senates with comparable powers to those of the four research universities.

In these new universities, as well as Thompson Rivers University (2005), the governance structures are more akin to the Education Councils in place before these institutions received university status. In addition, the Ministry of Advanced Education can, and does, dictate which programs are offered at the new universities. This raises critical issues concerning how institutions whose quality and social value is directly attributable to their historical autonomy should be governed.

Question 13: What governance structures will ensure universities will continue to offer high-quality educational programs and advance the frontiers of knowledge?

The concerns over the infringement of academic autonomy arise from an environment where government, as the provider of the bulk of funding for public institutions, is keen to ensure that universities are accountable for that funding. The 'accountability wave' has swept through much of government and it is not surprising that it is also being applied to universities. However, the forms which this accountability should take are open to question.

The so-called 'new public management' methods introduced in the public sector in many countries have promoted the use of 'key performance indicators' and these are increasingly being used in government-university relations. These indicators often amount to little more than crude 'people in seats' measures and miss questions about the quality of education being delivered as well as wider social mandates that universities may have. The Plant Report took up this issue and argued that "we need more tangible expressions of our goals than qualitative terms like *excellence*, *accessibility* and *affordability*"²⁴ and proposes that we should measure, "outputs, outcomes and impacts".²⁵

²⁴ Plant, *op. cit.*, p. 13 emphasis in original

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.14

Intentionally or otherwise, the initial version of the 2008 Government Letter of Expectations (GLE) re-opened the question of accountability by the unprecedented extent to which they intruded in universities' internal operations. These letters were, after protest by CUFA BC and others, eventually withdrawn and replaced with revised letters for the research universities. Nevertheless, how universities, as autonomous institutions, should be held accountable to government remains an enduring issue.

Universities view themselves as learning communities with the mandate and freedom to explore how to implement this vision of community in practice; the language of the new public management increasingly adopted by governments tends to view educational institutions more as service providers, accountable to their clients and funders. The tensions are evident not least in the faculty employment contracts which are compatible with each of these visions; the former stress the importance of continuity and community through tenured faculty appointments, the latter emphasize the benefits of more flexible arrangements typified by limited-term and per-course faculty contracts.

All of this raises complex questions concerning how governments, responsible for the wise management of public expenditure, can be assured that the recipients of public funding are accountable without interfering with institutional autonomy and imposing operational forms upon the recipients that undermine the core values and quality assurance mechanisms of the institutions.

Question 14: What accountability mechanisms will ensure public universities spend public money for its intended purpose and are fulfilling their legislative mandates without government directly or indirectly violating institutional autonomy?

Underlying the questions raised in the past two sections is the more fundamental question of how academic freedom can be protected from the pressures emanating from public and private sources.

In many cases, these pressures are legitimate and encourage university teachers and researchers to be responsive to society's priorities. They form an important part of the implicit social contract between funders and research universities. But this contract must have embedded within it appropriate limits and protections for researchers and teachers. Academic freedom – the need to provide an intellectual environment in which research and teaching can be undertaken without prejudice or fear of reprisal – must be protected if universities are to fulfill their mandate to advance the frontiers of knowledge and to equip students with the tools and dispositions to think critically and search for their own answers in an increasingly complex world.

Question 15: How should academic freedom be protected in the contemporary university?

5.0 What Type of Education?

As well as trying to influence the direction of university-based research, governments of all political persuasions have sought to influence the types of education that should be provided in the post-secondary sector and, by implication, by the research universities. For the most part, the debate has centered on the extent to which skills training should be the priority within the sector and the need for education to be relevant to the provincial economy. This can readily be seen by the titles of various government documents such as the NDP's Skills Now! initiative in 1993 and the BC Labour Force Development Board's Training for What? report in 1995. The Plant Report indicates that "in the future, 74 per cent of the employment openings will require post-secondary education"²⁶ again emphasizing the links between post-secondary education and labour force needs. The emphasis on the need for economically relevant education and training was also recently voiced by the OECD's Tertiary Education project.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22

²⁷ The proposition that universities need to be more responsive to the needs of government and society can be found in reports such as the OECD report Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education: Synthesis Report, April 2008.

These developments raise questions about what types of education programs research universities should be offering and what role these programs play in the larger post-secondary sector.

With respect to the university colleges (as they were then), the colleges and the institutes, the Plant Report pointed to the perceived “mandate creep” illustrated by the desire of a number of these institutions to expand their degree-level programs offerings and gain university status.²⁸ Although government eventually conferred university status on five of these institutions, it attempted to constrain any ‘academic drift’ by providing the Minister of Advanced Education with the authority to intervene in their educational programming and ensure that they remain comprehensive institutions offering a wide variety of trades and vocational programs.

Despite their autonomy, the research universities have not been immune to these developments. This is evidenced by expanded offerings of professional programs in response to student demand for more vocationally-oriented courses and to government incentives to provide such programs through envelope funding. The increase in numbers of continuing studies courses also reflects a change of mandate in this regard.

Programs seemingly most at risk as a result of this trend are the traditional liberal arts programs as typically found in social science, humanities and arts faculties. The liberal arts ideal remains, nevertheless, central to the idea of a university itself and the learning outcomes which it creates in terms of the literate, communicative and analytical graduates highly valued by many employers and invaluable as citizens of an advanced democracy.

The use of envelope funding to expand some educational programs, most notably professional programs in the area of health, together with the government direction of research funding discussed above, has led to shifts in the balance of research university programming and resources.

²⁸ Plant, *op. cit.*, p. 62

This has changed the nature of many university campuses with semi-autonomous professional units sometimes sitting uncomfortably with the more traditional academic units.

From pressures to justify program offerings in terms of their contribution to specific labour market needs, to the expansion of continuing education courses, to the role of large, well-funded professionally-oriented units on campus, research universities are faced with tough questions about how to best manage the relationship between their programming and the labour market.

Question 16: In the research university context, how should the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake be balanced with the needs of the labour market and of society as a whole?

6.0 Internationalization and Internationalism

As the world has become globalized, so has the realm of post-secondary education. There are over 28,000 international students studying in BC's public post secondary institutions.²⁹ Many universities have sought to internationalize themselves, which has included ensuring that the curriculum reflects diverse views and offering voice to non-Western authors and scholars. This has been matched by efforts to internationalize the student body so that it too is more reflective of the global population. Such internationalization enables BC's universities to become diverse and multicultural learning communities where students are exposed to, and can engage in dialogue with, students from around the world. It is perhaps this vision which led to the Plant Report preferring to use the term 'internationalism' rather than the more common 'internationalization' in order to emphasize the global solidarities which can be fostered by the process.³⁰

²⁹ See RKA Inc., Economic Impact of International Education at Public Post-Secondary Institutions, March 2006, p.4 available at <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/publications/documents/int-ed-report060405.pdf>

³⁰ Plant, *op. cit.*, p. 59

Internationalization is also associated with the effort to market Canadian universities overseas.³¹ In the face of competition from other countries, especially Australia, the US and the UK, Canadian universities have sought to raise their profile as a destination for overseas students. In tight financial times, which are common for universities, overseas students provide an attractive source of additional tuition revenue, especially given the fee differential for international undergraduate students. The business case for increasing international student numbers may be strong, but faculty have sometimes questioned whether the business case is leading to a lowering of academic standards and a degree mill mentality being introduced to the university.

Internationalization contains many complexities as universities seek to balance the desirability of having a 'global classroom' and fee-paying international students with the concerns over the ethics of encouraging a 'brain drain' from developing countries as well as the costs of providing new ranges of student services to international students.

Question 17: How should universities seek to internationalize?

The perceived lucrative international student market has also led to the aggressive marketing of BC private universities and colleges abroad. Although private universities accept domestic students, many are geared to attracting overseas students, using BC's natural beauty and hard-earned educational reputation as their primary marketing tools. There have been instances in BC where private universities and colleges set up for this purpose have demonstrably failed to provide the educational services for which students had paid.

³¹ The mix of motives which Canadian post-secondary institutions report for their engagement in international activities are documented in AUCC, (2007), Knowledge Exports by Canadian Universities, available at http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/knowledge_exports_2007_e.pdf

The most infamous cases are those of Kingston College (2006), which was illegally offering degree programs in BC in partnership with a UK-based degree mill, and Lansbridge University (2007), which was authorized by the BC government to offer degree programs but was found to be in violation of a number of government directives. In December 2008, the World Trade University, which was established by an act of the BC Legislature in 2005, quietly discontinued its operations in BC after failing to submit a viable degree program for approval. This has tarnished the reputation of BC's educational institutions abroad and has led to questions about the worth of BC degrees. Clearly, this situation requires much stronger regulation from government to ensure students are being offered high-quality degree programs by BC private post-secondary institutions — a requirement made all the more necessary by the prevalence of private institutions in BC compared to other provinces. By doing so, this will also help to remove the shadow cast over BC's public post-secondary institutions.

Question 18: How should BC's degree programs and degree-granting institutions be regulated to ensure students are being offered legitimate and high-quality educational programs?

The global competition for students is not the only facet of the increasingly competitive environment within which research universities now operate. There is also international competition for faculty. As the AUCC reports, "the global competition for faculty, students and researchers is certain to escalate ... That competition is also certain to drive cost increases on university campuses in Canada."³² These pressures are already being felt; "the resurgence in salary competition for new faculty is a clear indicator that universities are facing stiffer competition for highly qualified personnel than was the case in the late 1990s".³³ In BC it is already the case that approximately 60% of faculty at one of the province's research universities are receiving "market differentials" in recognition of the professorial shortage. This shortage is also evident from the inclusion of university professors in the government's provincial nominee program for new immigrants.

³² AUCC, *op. cit.*, p. 33

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 35

Question 19: How can BC research universities become more successful in retaining the best and brightest faculty and recruiting new faculty from elsewhere in Canada and internationally?

7.0 The System

This discussion paper started with the observation that BC's post-secondary education sector has undergone substantial change over the past 20 years as it has expanded. Many of the issues raised subsequently concerned how high-quality education could be maintained in a system which has moved, desirably, from being one which drew its students from a narrow socio-economic and geographic base to one which provides access to a much broader range of British Columbians. Paralleling this expansion has been the transition from a binary system – with universities and colleges – to a multi-layered system with a range of institutions offering different educational opportunities.

Numerous reports over the past 20 years have identified the need for "system coherence", the most recent of which was the Plant Report (2007). In this report, it was argued that "BC cannot have a system of higher learning in which all institutions aspire equally to undertake all responsibilities with an equal measure of success. We must be willing to give our diverse institutions distinct responsibilities, and to maximize the possibility that we can achieve both the widest reach of opportunity and the highest levels of excellence."³⁴ Further changes to the system have been made in the wake of the Plant Report, but it is too early to say if these changes will result in "system coherence".

In part, this doubtless arises from the ways in which new universities were created. When Okanagan University College made the transition to university status in 2005, it was required to do so by partnering with UBC to create UBC-Okanagan, and splitting off its vocational and career programs to re-create Okanagan College.

³⁴ Plant, *op. cit.*, p. 4

Simultaneously, Thompson Rivers University was created by merging the BC Open University with University College of the Cariboo. The transition to full university status for UBC-O and TRU was over a year in the making. In contrast, the 2008 move to create five new universities took place rapidly and appeared to be driven more by political considerations and local lobbying than by a clear vision for a 'system' of post-secondary education.

In many ways, the system is less 'coherent' now than it was 20 years ago under the binary structure—this is certainly the case for the university sector. Many jurisdictions have grappled and experimented with stratified post-secondary education systems. In California, for example, the 'research intensive' universities – UCLA and UC-Berkeley — co-exist with the 'teaching intensive' California State universities. Both types of universities have research mandates but with resources and expectations for research concentrated in the former and teaching loads for faculty higher in the latter. In the UK, where large numbers of polytechnics were given university status in the 1980s, new funding mechanisms were introduced to allocate research funding. Funding for teaching and funding for research were separated, and the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was introduced to rank university departments for research productivity with funding distributed on the basis of this ranking. The RAE proved contentious and time-consuming and is to be phased out.

In BC, the University Act now includes the four full research-mandated universities (SFU, UBC, UNBC, and UVic) as well as the five new "special purpose, teaching universities" which have restricted autonomy and which may undertake research only as "time and resources permit". This restriction brings into question the concept of a university itself and raises the question of whether the new institutions might be better conceived as 'teaching intensive' universities which would still allow a mandated role for research. The two specialized universities, Royal Roads University and Thompson Rivers University, are governed under their own separate acts and in terms of legislative mandate occupy a space between the research universities and the new universities.

The University Presidents' Council, which previously consisted of the presidents of the four research universities, Royal Roads University and Thompson Rivers University recently reformed itself as the Research Universities' Council of BC consisting only of the presidents of the four research universities. CUFA BC's membership includes faculty, professional librarians and other academic at the five doctoral universities (RRU, SFU, UBC, UNBC, and UVic). For provincial bargaining purposes, the four research universities, Royal Roads University and Thompson Rivers University all bargain through the University Public Sector Employers' Association (UPSEA) with the other post secondary institutions bargaining as part of a separate unit, the Post-Secondary Employers' Association (PSEA).

As the post-secondary sector evolves, it is perhaps understandable that the position of institutions and the differentiation within the sector has some ambiguous elements. However, greater clarity over mandates and responsibilities as well as consideration of appropriate governance and coordinating structures are required before the sector can move ahead in a 'system coherent' way.

It is fitting, therefore, that our final question for consideration should take a broad look at the system as a whole.

Question 20: What would a 'coherent post-secondary education system' in BC look like?

Summary:

20 Questions for 2020

Question 1: What explains BC's historically low university participation rate? How can it be increased?

Question 2: To ensure that the increasingly diverse student population attending the research universities is provided with a learning environment designed to maximize success, what support mechanisms need to be in place for students and faculty?

Question 3: How do participation rates differ by region within the province? To what extent does the availability of universities locally reduce these differences? What are the challenges facing the multi-campus research university in providing more geographic accessibility and how can they best be addressed?

Question 4: What strategies do research universities need to follow in order to assess and increase the rate of participation in, and completion of, degree programs by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and first-generation students?

Question 5: What strategies can research universities employ to increase the number of Aboriginal students entering into and successfully completing degree programs?

Question 6: What should the relationships be between research universities and Aboriginal communities?

Question 7: How should post-secondary tuition fees be set to balance the burden between individual students and the taxpayers? What are the optimal tuition fee policies to attract students to the province, increase accessibility and maintain adequate funding levels for research universities?

Question 8: What funding framework would provide research universities with adequate and predictable operating grants?

Question 9: How should BC fund graduate student spaces at its research universities? How should BC provide incentives to keep the best and brightest graduate students in BC and attract students from elsewhere in Canada and around the world?

Question 10: What is the role, and benefit, of further developing the link between research and teaching in research-based universities?

Question 11: How should research universities respond to the government direction of, and implicit hierarchies within, research funding?

Question 12: How should business-directed/funded research and the commercialization of research be managed in contemporary research universities?

Question 13: What governance structures will ensure universities will continue to offer high-quality educational programs and advance the frontiers of knowledge?

Question 14: What accountability mechanisms will ensure public universities spend public money for its intended purpose and are fulfilling their legislative mandates without government directly or indirectly violating institutional autonomy?

Question 15: How, should academic freedom be protected in the contemporary university?

Question 16: In the research university context, how should the pursuit knowledge for its own sake be balanced with the needs of the labour market and of society as a whole?

Question 17: How should universities seek to internationalize?

Question 18: How should BC's degree programs and degree-granting institutions be regulated to ensure students are being offered legitimate and high-quality educational programs?

Question 19: How can BC research universities become more successful in retaining the best and brightest faculty and recruiting new faculty from elsewhere in Canada and internationally?

Question 20: What would a 'coherent post-secondary education system' in BC look like?