

WHAT'S NEXT: YEAR 1 IN REVIEW

MAY 2024

In Spring 2023, we launched [What's Next: The SFU Strategy](#), following several months of consultation with students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners on where we should go next as a university and how we want to get there.

The strategy establishes a current shared vision, purpose, and values, and four priorities that represent our collective focus: uphold truth and Reconciliation, engage in global challenges, make a difference for B.C., and transform the SFU experience. Each priority includes efforts in teaching, research, and operations to centre the academic mission.

In our first year of implementation (2023/24), we established a framework to translate strategy to action. We identified Co-Leads to propel each of the four priorities forward, developed an annual implementation plan to articulate the actions SFU will pursue, and created a reporting approach to celebrate accomplishments and foster accountability.

Throughout the year, we learned a lot about what it will take to effectively embed the strategy in the university, and the effort required to maintain momentum. Moving forward, we intend to open more regular channels of communication between the implementation action leads and the SFU community. We are committed to engaging deans and faculty members. And we continue to evolve our planning ecosystem to create a more coordinated set of plans and processes, including the Academic Plan, Strategic Research Plan, and Equity Compass and People Plan, each of which explicitly supports and is supported by *What's Next*.

We also acknowledge the challenges faced in implementing the actions we aspired to deliver in Year 1. These include budget pressures, faculty and staff vacancies, and a lack of time and capacity for meaningful cross-functional collaboration and stakeholder consultation.

Recognizing these barriers, the implementation plan for Year 2 (2024/25) will emphasize actions that strengthen our foundational practices and activities, while highlighting work already resourced and underway. Development of an Academic Plan will be a key area of focus, crystalizing and further integrating our education and research aspirations, while strengthening faculty engagement with *What's Next*.

We have made great progress since introducing *What's Next*. The community ambitiously committed to advancing 46 actions in 2023/24, and the contributions of faculty and staff to move most of them ahead have been remarkable.

UPHOLD TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

We have a responsibility to help uncover the truth of Indigenous people and chart a path towards meaningful Reconciliation. This includes authentically partnering with Indigenous communities to honour the land on which SFU campuses are located, mentoring the next generation of scholars, and creating welcoming spaces.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM YEAR 1

Enduring effort is required to advance Reconciliation, particularly given the importance of building relationships and trust. While sustainable funding and staffing hindered efforts, we made significant progress across several areas.

- Continued construction of the 15,000-square-foot [First Peoples' Gathering House](#), which will provide space for Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and community members to gather, learn, and share cultural traditions.
- Strengthened critical **leadership capacity**, with the appointment of an inaugural [Indigenous Executive Lead](#) and a director, Indigenous Initiatives within People, Equity and Inclusion.
- Signed an agreement with [Tseil-Waututh Nation \(TWN\)](#) to advance shared interests, including representing TWN content in SFU materials, strengthening services, and implementing recruitment and retention initiatives.
- Enhanced the [Peer Cousins Mentorship](#) and [Student Ambassadors](#) programs, hiring six mentors and 10 ambassadors to support students, offer input, and participate in events.
- Delivered [RESPECT cultural safety training](#) to 28 faculty and staff over 11 weeks, and adjusted programming in response to feedback, with a plan to extend training to an additional 40 learners in 2024.

OUR FOCUS IN YEAR 2

As we move into 2024/25, we look forward to creating a renewed Indigenous strategic plan to clarify our path forward, opening the First Peoples' Gathering House, completing the [Indigenous naming](#) project at SFU Burnaby, and launching an Indigenous caucus to facilitate student, faculty, and staff connections.

ENGAGE IN GLOBAL CHALLENGES

At SFU, we leverage our experience, approach, and relationships to help address humanity's most complex problems. We are committed to creating a sustainable future through innovative research projects and interdisciplinary and intercultural collaboration with students, researchers, faculty, and partners from around the world.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM YEAR 1

In 2023/24, we progressed several projects, helping maintain our status as **Canada's top university for innovation**¹ and improving international partnerships. We were recognized as the **world's top university for global impact on sustainable cities and communities**, and **fifth in the world for climate action**², reflecting our efforts in key areas.

- Realigned the Provost portfolio to include the International Office, and developed an **enrolment strategy for undergraduate international students** to ensure SFU remains a university of choice in strategic markets.
- Established an SFU-wide **minimum income for research PhD students**, increasing equity across graduate programs and strengthening SFU's reputation as a university that enables researchers to focus on their studies.
- Partnered with the Aga Khan University (AKU) on the [Arusha Climate and Environment Research Centre](#) to enable research partnerships on global issues and deepen SFU's engagement in Africa.
- Appointed an inaugural executive director of [community-centred climate innovation](#) (C3I), better enabling SFU to establish partnerships to co-design climate action solutions and sustainability pathways.

OUR FOCUS IN YEAR 2

We will continue to progress the international enrolment strategy; lead the transition to a greener future through the C3I and [hydrogen hub](#); pursue the SFU Innovation Precinct; and advance our [Strategic Research Plan](#).

MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR B.C.

While SFU's impact is global, we reinforce our role as B.C.'s university, using our capacity for social and economic change to help strengthen the province.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM YEAR 1

This year, we made important strides in advancing areas critical to meeting the emerging needs of British Columbians.

- Advanced the proposed [Medical School at SFU](#), securing provincial funding, progressing efforts to hire a founding dean, confirming space requirements, and creating a highly credible curriculum advisory team.
- Worked closely with the Ministry to be awarded [500 new tech-relevant seats](#) to meet provincial demand.
- Continued to mature SFU's understanding of and approach to **micro-credentials**, attracting almost \$800k in provincial funding, and delivering a workshop to more than 50 participants from every faculty.
- Completed the design and began construction of the [Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum](#), which will be a 12,000-square-foot LEED Gold Building that will feature free exhibits, programming, and events.

OUR FOCUS IN YEAR 2

In 2024/25, in addition to establishing the Medical School and opening the Marianne and Edward Gibson Art Museum, we look forward to refreshing our [Centre for Dialogue](#) vision, mission, and direction, informed by community consultation.

¹ 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation

² Times Higher Education 2023 Impact Rankings

TRANSFORM THE SFU EXPERIENCE

To achieve the priorities of *What's Next*, we recognize the need to put students at the heart of all we do, while creating the conditions for faculty and staff to flourish and embrace possibilities and new ways of doing things.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM YEAR 1

This priority area was perhaps the most ambitious in 2023/24 and, while not all actions were completed, a focused effort on supporting students, faculty, and staff resulted in meaningful outcomes.

- Released two institution-wide strategies, the [People Plan](#) and [Equity Compass](#), to align our people strategies, equity office and faculty experience at SFU over the next five years.
- Created a pan-university [Accessibility Committee](#) to assist in identifying and addressing barriers to accessibility at SFU, raise awareness, and inform a new Accessibility Plan.
- Opened the new [Courtyard Residence](#), featuring 369 single-occupancy rooms for first-year students and amenities to support student life, including gathering spaces, a lounge and kitchen, and 24/7 front desk support.
- Achieved [Living Wage](#) status with SFU's major employee groups, including extending non-wage benefits and a tuition waiver to contracted workers, and contracting with companies who meet SFU's Living Wage criteria.
- Implemented a new **budget model**, including multi-year planning and the appointment of a Chief Budget Officer (Provost), to strengthen ties with academic priorities and provide long-term financial sustainability.
- Aligned **Athletics and Recreation** within the Provost portfolio and created an executive director position to clarify vision and priorities, and better enable an exceptional experience for the SFU community.

OUR FOCUS IN YEAR 2

Our ambition continues in the year ahead as we strive to transform the SFU experience. We will open the Black Student Centre, establishing supports and a welcoming student space for Black students. We will create an Accessibility Plan to set a course for SFU to remove or mitigate barriers to access for people with disabilities. And we will launch a [demographics and diversity survey](#) to support equitable and accountable decision-making. In a continued effort to evolve our campuses, we also aim to confirm plans for additional student residences and childcare expansion at the Burnaby campus. SFU's Surrey and Vancouver campuses have also significantly grown and we will continue to strengthen academic leadership and long-term decision-making for those campuses as we work towards the development of the three-campus model.