



Summary Report for the Cyclical Program Review of the Bachelor of Arts in Business Communications Program at University Canada West

April 24, 2023

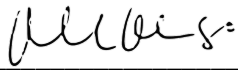
Office of the Vice President Academic

Territorial Acknowledgement

*We acknowledge that the territories on which UCW and its campuses are situated are the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm** (Musqueam), **Skwxwú7mesh** (Squamish) and **Selilwitulh** (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We thank them for having cared for this land since time immemorial, honour their graciousness to the students who seek knowledge here, and iterate our dedication to valuing the ongoing contributions of Indigenous peoples and communities.*

Introduction

This public summary report for the Cyclical Program Review of the Bachelor of Arts in Business Communications (BABC) program at University Canada West provides a summary of the cyclical review process, the executive summary from the Report of the External Program Review Panel, and a list of the recommendations made by the panel. A summary of the program's response to each recommendation made by the External Program Review Panel has also been included, which provides details on how the program intends to implement the recommendations made. The Summary Report was prepared by the Office of the VPA and approved by UCW's Senate.



Dr. Maureen Mancuso

Vice President Academic

Summary of the Cyclical Review Process

The cyclical program review of the BABC program took place between April 2022 and March 2023. The review process was initiated with a Cyclical Program Review Orientation session for all Program Chairs; following that, the BABC program struck a Self-Study committee, comprised of four continuing faculty members appointed to the program. Over the course of several months, the Self-Study Committee met to plan their approach to the cyclical program review, collect relevant data, consult with, and collect information from relevant program and institutional stakeholders, and complete the Self-Study document.

The External Program Review Panel was selected by the Office of the Vice-President: Academic and was comprised of two external reviewers with disciplinary expertise, program administration experience, and an understanding of the provincial context in which University Canada West operates. The review committee membership included:

- Dr. Mark Wallin, Associate Dean of Arts, Thomson Rivers University
- Dr. Iain Macpherson, Professional Communication Program Lead, and Interim Chair, Department of Arts and Cultural Management, MacEwan University

The site visit of the External Program Review Panel took place in person at the University Canada West campus in Vancouver on March 9-10, 2023. During the two-day site visit, the External Program Review Panel met with relevant university and program stakeholders, including the VP: Academic, the Director of Institutional Accountability, the BABC Program Chair and Vice-Chair, members of the BABC Self-Study Committee, program

faculty, BABC students, and representatives from UCW's Academic Leadership Team and Academic Support Services.

The External Program Review Panel used the information presented in the program's Self-Study and accompanying materials (e.g. course syllabi, faculty CVs), and the perspectives obtained from the site visit, to prepare the Report of the External Program Review Panel, which includes their assessment of the program's operations across all required categories for the cyclical program review, along with related recommendations to improve the quality of the program and the student experience. The Executive Summary of the External Program Review Panel has been provided below, along with the list of recommendations made in the report, and the BABC program's response to each.

Executive Summary of the External Program Review Panel

Reviewers Mark Wallin (Thompson Rivers U) and Iain Macpherson (MacEwan U) received the BABC Self-Study Report and supporting documents in good time for review before being hosted by Vancouver House during March 9 and 10. During that site visit, the reviewers had a campus tour and program- assessment discussions with UCW and BABC leadership, the Self Study committee and other program faculty, administrators and students. Based on such examinations, this report expresses our findings and recommendations for BABC in the coming years. Some recommendations are repeated across review sections, where they involve more than one issue that the Self Study highlights. We've worked to reduce such reiterations, and what remains, we think, is reinforcement of key propositions rather than redundancy.

Many of our recommendations center on or relate to a BABC challenge, one of its foremost, that we came to call during our site visit 'squaring the pyramid' (Mark's coinage) – stemming the attrition of students midway through the degree, often due to them having completed the two years' study they believe to be sufficient for permanent residency. Our major proposals here are (1) to consider a combined BABC and MBA degree option; (2) to consider a post-baccalaureate to attract other student demographics; (3) shaping more of a two-tier or upper-lower structure, perhaps with smaller curricular cores and more electives; (4) seizing the moment of high enrolment rates to raise academic and English-fluency standards; and (5) creating cohort intakes, through culture-building and structural clustering. More 'tactical' suggestions include an information campaign to ensure students realize an undergraduate degree is needed in Canada for most career pathways, and the introduction of hollow- shell 'special topics' courses and independent studies in the upper tiers to increase their appeal (and help organically settle the program's right mix of applied, theoretical and creative courses).

That latter suggestion also addresses perhaps the other most major pain point for BABC, stemming largely from UCW's recent enrolment-numbers surge – the struggle of administrative systems to keep pace with student needs, from program information to mental-health support. Leaving unsaid such obvious (but easier said than done) solutions to this as hiring more staff, our main recommendation here is to increase the flexibility of curriculum (e.g., through independent studies) to help reduce the incidence rate of scheduling snafus, these perhaps being students' chief administrative complaint. They equally impact instructors and administrators, so that scheduling might be the administrative issue for BABC to concentrate on most intently.

The other foremost report recommendation regarding students, derived chiefly from our in-person session with their representatives, is for BABC/UCW to concentrate on building connections between them and their



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surrounding communities, cultures, and country – both in practical terms (e.g., internships, job hunts, assistance with housing or medical concerns), and in the sense of belonging (e.g., community partnerships, competitive student societies or varsity sports).

Aside from the aforementioned suggestion of rotating ‘special topics/seminar’ shell courses and independent/directed studies, we have several other chief curricular (and curriculum-adjacent) recommendations. Research methods should be restored to the BABC core, as this is a communication-degree standard that’s translatable to the work world and grad school both, as well as being a common venue for Indigenization. Some Indigenous study should be mandated, in response to the TRC Call to Action #86 for communications education. The curriculum should integrate some coverage of organizational communication theory alongside more treatment of strategic communication, these being the most prominent academic and applied subfields of professional/business communication. We affirm BABC’s stated intentions to develop a public relations concentration and CPRS certification, and suggest also outreach to the BC chapter of IABC, with a view to program alignment, perhaps graduate discounts with their certification programs, and networking opportunities. Finally, some mandatory WIL component is a must, which may well involve thinking creatively about what could constitute this field placement, from non-profit volunteerism to research assistantships.

BABC’s staff is its strength. During our meetings with leadership, instructors and administrators, commitment to program and student success was palpable and confidence-instilling. Faculty CVs comprise an impressive and interesting panoply of academic and business experience, sometimes both together. The newly implemented DoE is a sea change presaging deep impacts on the university’s culture and structures, about which everyone seems knowledgeable, enthused, and determined to meet its challenges. We note with approval that faculty tripartite-duty percentages (Self Study 36) are flexible enough to avert a contractual rigidity widespread at post-secondaries. Future faculty recruitment, given BABC’s applied/professional mission, should target that rare specimen – candidates with successful and professional or entrepreneurial comms experience, to which they remain connected, but who have attained advanced degrees in pursuit of the scholarly life. Our report’s last ‘human relations’ observation worth here underscoring offers no recommendation, just the point that UCW’s four-semester academic year leaves everyone with comparatively little time for research, institutional reflection and revamping, and work/life balance.

The final report recommendation to highlight appears more than once in the report – our encouragement to proudly embrace BABC’s essence, student demographic, and pioneering potential, as Canada’s most truly global communication studies program. Mark’s knowledge of BC’s post-secondary terrain suggests that any quest for a breakthrough boost in domestic enrolment will prove quixotic. Build your cosmopolitan comparative advantage, and the locals will likely come of their own accord. Moreover, your communication-department comparators, in BC and beyond, will look to you with inspiration (and envy).

List of Recommendations and Program Responses

The following section provides a list of the recommendations made by the External Program Review Panel, the responses and suggested actions provided by the BABC program, and a proposed timeline for implementation of the recommendations.

Recommendation #1: Put on the back burner aspirations to attract more domestic students, to maintain focus on perfecting the program for its present demographic and market – as your self-report conclusion’s program

identity section puts it, “a celebration of the cultural diversity represented in our students” (Self Study 65). Build BABC’s comparative advantage as Canada’s most truly global communications program, and domestic students may well be drawn to it.

Response and Suggested Actions: UCW’s competitive advantage is our diverse student population and instructors with wide-ranging backgrounds. Some possess doctorates in communications from universities globally, while others bring a combination of post-graduate degrees and significant industry experience in journalism and communications. We agree with the recommendation to focus on global communications to leverage the lived experiences of our students and teaching staff, which could see graduates ultimately work as communications practitioners internationally, in their home countries, or domestically in their native languages.

Recommendation #2: Cohort incoming BABC students more, both through ‘culture building’ (branding, events, etc.) and more structurally (e.g., clustering them in courses/classes). Students strongly expressed to us a desire for the creation of official BABC/UCW societies in various areas (debate, sport) that could compete with other post-secondary students. This would both build esprit and be very effective marketing.

Response and Suggested Actions: We agree that our students would benefit from the establishment of additional clubs and societies. We will support the formation of several student-led clubs, for example, such as the Entrepreneur club, green club (environmental, sustainable focus), cultural club, etc., to help connect students and the community together.

The Covid-19 pandemic limited UCW’s ability to increase these student interactions and experiences, but as our student enrollments continue to increase, the department is keen to expand the network of forums and additional communications streams (eg., UCW newsletter) to garner further interest and ideas. This includes an increased emphasis on highlighting various clubs during the New Student Orientations sessions every term. That said, the University will be challenged to find sufficient classroom space within its two campuses at West Pender and Vancouver House. Similarly, access to athletic facilities is limited, though there may be the potential to work with the Roundhouse Community Centre nearby as it maintains a gym and several meeting areas conducive for clubs.

It is worth noting that UCW entered the BC MBA games this past October for the very first time and finished in 2nd place, thus qualifying for the Canada MBA games. Recently, UCW’s MBA team finished 4th in Canada and exhibited prowess in the various case study, athletic and school spirit competitions. While not specific to the BABC, the success of the MBA team could inspire students within the undergraduate programs, BABC included, to enter similar competitions.

Implementation Timeline: Work to establish clubs and societies is ongoing and will be largely driven by the interest of its students. However, the BABC/ UCW will continue to explore and offer opportunities for its students to engage with each other to ensure their experience to the University are rewarding.

For the student-led club, initial conversations with Student Affairs and Service will start as early as Winter 2024 to explore the mechanisms for establishing these communities. The VP Academic’s office will consider the appropriateness of adding new space, though it is beyond the program’s authority to make a decision.

Recommendation #3: Consider increased connections between BABC and the MBA, perhaps the option for students to enter and complete both programs simultaneously.

Response and Suggested Actions: We are currently exploring opportunities for accelerated dual degree programs whereby students who enroll within the undergraduate programs may be able to complete their MBA at UCW within a reduced time period. The fast tracking of a second graduate degree may be afforded to students taking a specialized program of studies.

Implementation Timeline: Given the regulatory complexities and required internal processes within UCW, these initiatives will require a significant investment in time and resources. However, the due diligence for exploring the aforementioned programs is already in progress. This would include health sciences and technology.

Recommendation #4: Either add writing skills to the Program Learning Outcomes, as a standalone, or include it in one or more existing outcomes.

Response and Suggested Actions: We agree that writing skills should be included as a standalone PLO and the program will consider adding it to the list of BABC program Learning Outcomes.

Implementation Timeline: This addition will be presented at the UCC meeting and once approved, will have to be approved by DQAB to be reflected in future academic calendar updates.

Recommendation #5: Replace 'basic issues' in PLO #1 with something like 'important issues'.

Response and Suggested Actions: We agree with the suggested replacement and will implement it into the BABC program learning outcomes.

Implementation Timeline: After the changes is internally approved, it will have to be approved by DQAB to be reflected in future academic calendar updates.

Recommendation #6: Return a research methods course to the core curriculum and teach both academic and professional research methods.

Response and Suggested Actions: Upon reviewing the courses, we agreed to return Research Methods to the core curriculum and remove one of the electives from Tier 3.

Implementation Timeline: After the suggested change is internally approved, we will seek DQAB's approval for its implementation for our future academic calendar updates.

Recommendation #7: Persist in current efforts to develop inter-institutional relationships with grad school Communication programs, including but not limited to gathering letters of support. You could also host grad-school recruiters or recruitment fairs.

Response and Suggested Actions: The department will look to reach out to the leading institutions in BC for guidance and support. The University may seek a budget to hire program advising specialists to assist in our recruiting efforts.

Implementation Timeline: We will be working on these outreach efforts over the coming year, and utilize the resources of the Director, Curriculum and Quality Assurance (Academic Affairs) to build out the required relationships.

Recommendation #8: Identify students suited to graduate studies and mentor them.

Response and Suggested Actions: The Academic Department is working on adding program advising specialists to our recruitment plan, so that faculty who identify strong MBA candidates in ACSS will be able to refer them to Advising for guidance.

Implementation Timeline: We will be working on piloting this process by end of 2023 and fully implementing by 2024.

Recommendation #9: Connect with IABC to discuss program alignments, possible alumni discounts for certification, and networking opportunities.

Response and Suggested Actions: Three of our faculty members with connections to the industry will contact IABC, the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), and the Canadian Institute of Investor Relations (CIRI) about UCW PR student membership and involvement with the local chapter (for volunteering and further opportunities, etc.). There are paths toward certification. There may only be a handful of dedicated/interested students at the outset, but we foresee considerable student engagement with this opportunity.

Implementation Timeline: Discussions and feasibility analysis have already started and depending on the in-house review, we will be able to implement the recommendation by early 2024.

Recommendation #10: Disseminate communications ensuring students know that a baccalaureate degree is required for nearly all career-track jobs in Canada.

Response and Suggested Actions: This recommendation will be passed on to Career Development Centre.

Recommendation #11: For the sake of stanching senior-year attrition rates, consider more of a two-tier arrangement with smaller core curricula in each tier, thereby increasing student choice in (elective) course selection.

Response and Suggested Actions: We agree with this recommendation. Our faculty are enthused about increasing student choice in elective course selection. Currently, our third and fourth tiers require completion of 300 and 400 level electives. In a two-tier arrangement, the range of possible electives would be less prescriptive, which would also address issues raised by students about scheduling difficulties.

Implementation Timeline: We will aim to implement this new curricular arrangement in the 2024 Academic Calendar.

Recommendation #12: Reinstate a Research Methods course into the core curriculum. It's an 'industry standard,' the skills are translatable both to grad school and work, and it is a widely recognized vehicle for curriculum indigenization.

Response and Suggested Actions: Please see Recommendation #6, where we have responded to this recommendation.

Recommendation #13: Integrate some coverage of the organizational communication comm-studies subfield into the curriculum.

Response and Suggested Actions: Our faculty have the expertise, industry experience, and motivation to implement this. COMM 312 already includes aspects of organizational communication and interpersonal communications, which we can expand on by considering: audience perspectives, messaging and choice of messaging distribution options, direct personal interactions and skill building in conflict management, collaboration, effective meetings, non-verbal communications, and active listening.

Implementation Timeline: Developing this course can begin as soon the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) approves the proposal. We should be able to offer it starting Winter 2024.

Recommendation #14: Remove semiotics as the theoretic basis for COMM410: Communication Strategy. Instructors can draw upon that theory to teach 'strat comm,' but they certainly don't need to.

Response and Suggested Actions: After discussing this suggestion with the subject matter experts, we agreed with the recommendation to removed "semiotics" as the theoretic basis for COMM410.

Implementation Timeline: The change will be presented at the UCC's May meeting.

Recommendation #15: While videography is an excellent skill for BABC students, keep the idea of any 'film' program on low flame, next to plans for boosting domestic-student enrolment.

Response and Suggested Actions: There are no intentions to offer any film-related programs.

Recommendation #16: Introduce 'special topics' courses and independent/directed studies, to help alleviate current scheduling-inflexibility problems and also test waters to determine the right mix of theoretic, creative, and workplace-skills courses.

Response and Suggested Actions: Some of the courses that faculty members are keen to take on are listed below:

- **Introduction to Creative Writing** - an introductory survey course that gives students the opportunity to develop a portfolio of creative writing in various forms and genres, including poetry, short story, graphic novel, and scripted media (stage play, screenplay, teleplays, podcasts).
- **Special Topics in Creative Writing** - an intermediate course in *one* specific form, to be determined by faculty with the requisite expertise: poetry, fantasy, YA, science fiction, scripted media, and graphic novels.
- **Directed Studies in Creative Writing** - an advanced course with a prerequisite (instructor approval based on the student's portfolio from either the introductory or intermediate course). Within the context of a small group of peers, each student proposes and completes an independent project.
- **Special Topics in Literature** - a “shell” course to be proposed by individual faculty, based on areas of expertise, in topics such as: the Gothic, Speculative Fiction, Futurisms, Graphic Novels, Magic Realism; Shakespeare and Leadership, Introduction to Theatre; Postmodernism, Ecological literature; Canadian literature, Latin American literature, South Asian literature, and Indigenous literature.
- **Special Topics in Philosophy** - a “shell” course to be proposed by individual faculty, based on areas of expertise, in topics such as: Indigenous Ethics, Indigenous Knowledges, Posthumanism, Process Philosophy, Eastern Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind and Body, Environmental Ethics, Philosophy of Technology, Comparative Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, and Philosophical Methods: Logic and Reasoning; Technology in Society (AI Ethics).
- **Introduction to Film Studies** - a course that focuses on the critical analysis and interpretation of films, including the study of film history, genres, aesthetics, cultural context, and theoretical frameworks, as well as film theory, film criticism, and film as an art form.
- **Special Topics in Scripted Media** - a “shell” course to be proposed by faculty, with the requisite expertise, in topics related to film, television, and other scripted media, such as: History of Cinema (since the 1960s), Film Business and Management, Documentary Filmmaking, Media History and Television, Canadian Television History, Television Industry and Business, Television and Popular Culture, Television and Social Change, and Television and Audience Studies.
- **Special Topics in Writing** – Life Writing as Scholarship, Narrative Writing as Research.

Implementation Timeline: We have begun the process of asking faculty to propose special topics courses. We anticipate beginning to offer three or four special topics courses each term, starting with the Fall term. The new incorporations can be reflected in the 2024 Academic Calendar.

Recommendation #17: Ensure that BABC students complete a mandatory WIL placement, while thinking ‘outside the box’ about what constitutes it (e.g., faculty-directed projects, research assistantships, nonprofit volunteerism, or entrepreneurial efforts).

Response and Suggested Actions: If an internship were to be pursued, it would need dedicated personnel to forge appropriate relationships with businesses and not-for-profits. Faculty with industry relationships value those relationships deeply. Placing students who are not qualified for professional environments may be costly to the UCW brand, the faculty member with the business relationship, and, ultimately, student experience. We

believe that highly networked faculty know this and would hesitate to risk their business relationships in this way.

Employers often complain about the calibre of international students placed in their organizations. The students did not have the language skills to contribute. Instead, they made work for the employer. Relationships were exhausted and there was a great deal of frustration experienced by all parties.

On the other hand, many students have found jobs in companies that might benefit from them conducting a report, analysis, or communications project, in addition to their regular work. Here the relationships are established, and the student knows the business, somewhat. So, for example, a student working as a cashier at Tim Horton's could do a guided study analysis of their social media and make recommendations of creative ideas and areas for improvement. Trying to PLACE students is where the difficulties come in, but creating an opportunity out of where they are already working (a place they found for themselves and, presumably, care about) might be a win-win. In other words, in contrast to the recommendation in the report, this should be less of a faculty responsibility to "place" students and one that is student-led and faculty facilitated (faculty guiding and reviewing the research project to completion). This is doable and leans towards the Capstone concept.

Non-profit is not atypical. This is a widespread and established component of the profession. Developing WORK 498 is a starting point towards WIL.

Implementation Timeline: This course will be offered in the Fall term.

Recommendation #18: Make indigeneity a mandatory curriculum component, in line with the TRC's Call to Action #86 for Canadian postsecondary communication programs.


Response and Suggested Actions: Some of our SJCI courses already use indigenous content (510 in particular). Having said that, an important principle of developing Indigenous content is *ensuring that Indigenous people are paid for knowledge we would not normally be entitled to*. A course composed of Indigenous content may require Indigenous faculty, which may lead to challenges in recruitment. However, highly competitive compensation and the freedom of UCW's non-unionized environment are a competitive advantage in some ways. If we incorporate a small component of content into a course, it will not have to be taught by an Indigenous faculty member. Faculty have identified some courses that can devote sections to indigenization (e.g., COMM 205, ENGL 105). New special topics courses, and electives, such as Indigenous Knowledges (Philosophy) and Indigenous Literature, have been proposed by faculty qualified to teach them. With ongoing training, non-indigenous faculty should be able to do justice to these courses.

Implementation Timeline: The new incorporations can be reflected in the 2024 Academic Calendar.

Recommendation #19: Involve BABC students in the design of EDI programs and policies.

Response and Suggested Actions: This recommendation is very much aligned with broader developments in Canadian/BC universities and we would like to consider it in our future course developments or revamps of our

current courses. Having said that, in courses like COMM 312, students work on developing DEI strategy for UCW.

 [COMM312_GroupOne_Presentation_Video.mp4](#)

Recommendation #20: Consider carving out time, perhaps during exam period, to allow faculty to engage with professional development opportunities outside the classroom. Many institutions use their midterm breaks to provide such opportunities. In lieu of cohort-based opportunities, the Magna Educational Services should be highlighted as opportunities for PD on faculty's own time.

Response and Suggested Actions: We have started to host a department level professional development sessions in week 12 of every term. Faculty will be given the platform to present "best practices" on themes of most interest. With the new Distribution of Effort (DOE) system in place, and the mandatory non-teaching term, continuing faculty will have the time to dedicate to PD opportunities.

Recommendation #21: Reconsider curricular and assessment structures within classes to take advantage of the portfolio applications, moving students through large and small-scale projects, all with an eye on what can be showcased to employers. Consider portfolio additions for all assessment structure--certainly final assessments, at least.

Response and Suggested Actions: The new Learning Management System (LMS) that we are switching to affords more frequent, efficient, and varied means of engaging with students outside of the traditional classroom setting. One of the reasons for making this switch was the portfolio feature that students can build as they navigate through courses and later can download and present to their employers.

Implementation Timeline: The switch to the new LMS will take place in Fall 2023.

Recommendation #22: Some institutions wrestling with AI issues have moved many assessments to "in-class" or at least into situations where work can be observed. This move makes traditional forms of cheating more difficult and contract cheating impossible.

Response and Suggested Actions: We agree that we should move to more "in-class" assessments. AI is a useful tool, even as it presents new challenges to academic integrity. Beyond the shift to in-class assessments, we are also fostering ongoing, robust faculty conversation about specific orientations and support systems for instances when the designed assignments fail to assure academic integrity. Some courses require papers; even when we structure them in class, cheating will continue to occur. For that, we need resources and policies in place. No platform detects AI-based text clearly, so reporting Academic Misconduct can be difficult. That said, AI-based materials can be used in class for fact-checking, outlines, and in class debates. We are exploring these ideas as we polish our courses and prepare to make the switch to the new LMS.

Implementation Timeline: This will be a long-term project, with faculty working and sharing the lessons learned from various approaches to these new challenges.

Recommendation #23: Explore with institutional planning the implications of a move to a competitive entry program –perhaps after seeing the attrition levels of students who have recently joined the BABC.

Response and Suggested Actions: For students intent on securing a credential, there should be a preparatory program of at least three months to ensure their English is at a level where they can function as a student, fully participate, and write at a competent level. This could be pursued online from their home countries but taught by UCW faculty and first piloted in the countries where the proportion of students with limited English is at its highest. We can consider reviving ENGL080 and/or suggesting higher language proficiency requirements for admission for students in the BABC program.

Implementation Timeline: The suggestions above will be discussed with the Registrar's Office. Starting in 2024, we can start understanding the attrition levels of newly joined students, then moving to generating solutions, running pilots, and implementing recommendations.

Recommendation #24: Reach out to other BC colleges with communication, journalism and AA programs to develop articulation agreements to ladder students into 3rd year.

Response and Suggested Actions: Led by Anna Lee Bolton, UCW is preparing for the upcoming annual articulation meetings. These articulation committees provide opportunities to discuss transfer-related issues in various subject areas, and to provide updates on broader topics and trends in their relevant disciplines, including communications and public relations agreements.

Implementation Timeline: While the aforementioned meetings are taking place in April/ May, this process is ongoing. Representation at these meetings help to build community, and increase awareness about discipline-specific transfer matters, and UCW will be looking to continue its engagement with the various institutions. This suggestion overlaps with the imperative to have programs that ladder into 4-year programs at public institutions for planned AA concentrations/specializations.

Recommendation #25: It may help program retention to have a BABC cohort approach to at least some of the general education courses, not only from a retention perspective, but also from a planning and faculty allocation perspective. In other words, it may make sense to, in courses with multiple sections, assign those faculty who most align with the BABC program to BABC cohort sections.

Response and Suggested Actions: Faculty see benefit in being able to distinguish the students on the BABC track, to identify and encourage them with extra effort, guiding them towards additional opportunities that most AA students are not motivated by. We are considering offering **special office hours** dedicated to BABC-track students. Modest bursaries at the BABC level (for costs such as textbooks or professional memberships) would help present the benefits of being part of the special BABC cohort.

Recommendation #26: It is challenging to recruit and retain professional communicators with robust industry profiles, as the financial realities of teaching in post-secondary environments is unappealing when compared to industry compensation packages. Nonetheless, student demand for communication industry experience should prioritize hiring of faculty with industry experience to balance out faculty with academic portfolios.

Response and Suggested Actions: We concur with these findings. Instructors with industry experience bring contemporary communications practices and contacts to the classroom. The challenge has been to find communications practitioners with post-graduate degrees, plus industry and teaching experience. While it may be difficult to attract such individuals to continuing positions with UCW, due to the compensation piece, they can be brought in as adjunct faculty, with supervision and guidance from continuing instructors. Such individuals can be identified by faculty who possess communication connections in the community – a resource we currently have.

Recommendation #27: Where possible and appropriate, faculty with scholarly profiles should be able to teach upper-level courses. Shell courses (or hollow courses with rotating topics such as “special topics” or “studies in...”) could be used to allow scholars to expose students to their research and allow active researchers to integrate their fields into the professional communication landscape. Many of the research interests of the full-time faculty, while not directly business communication focused, could easily be intersected with the industry. Given the interdisciplinary range of scholarly activity of the BA faculty, such shell courses might also be of interest to students in other areas of the institution to fill out enrolments.

Response and Suggested Actions: We concur with this recommendation. Please see our response to Recommendation #16.

Recommendation #28: Perhaps develop a facilities and pedagogical technology subcommittee of senate where faculty and admin can work together to address ongoing resource and space issues, including faculty offices.

Response and Suggested Actions: The University has hired a consultant to review the space planning needs within its two campuses. In response to the expanding enrollments, several classrooms within West Pender, for example, were recently reconfigured and combined with other classrooms to enable larger cohorts. This will also provide greater opportunities for case studies and student interactions within the classroom. While there are safety and engineering limitations to reconfiguring a larger number of classrooms, facilities management along with the consultant have also been looking at improving the efficiency of its classroom space usage to ensure the growing student enrollments can be comfortably managed and allow for maximum classroom engagement.

Implementation Timeline: This process is ongoing and has been a high priority for the University leadership, particularly in recent terms.

Recommendation #29: Consider developing a library consortium with other private universities in BC, and potentially BC and Alberta.

Response and Suggested Actions: The UCW Library has been an active partner (through formal and informal channels) in the academic libraries sector in British Columbia for several years. We are members of the [BC Electronic Library Network](#), a consortium of private and public postsecondary libraries, which allows us to benefit from advantageous commonly-negotiated licensing agreements (such as EBSCO's Academic Search Ultimate and Business Search Ultimate) and shared services agreements (such as AskAway – the provincial-wide virtual reference chat service – and the InterLibrary Loan service). We have regular meetings with our peers from private postsecondary libraries, which provide an opportunity to discuss issues of common concerns and develop our common advocacy interests. We are also members of the [BC Libraries Cooperative](#) – a group of public and academic libraries in BC that provides a suite of services to libraries in BC (our Integrated Library System is supported by the Co-op). We are continuing to explore participation in other consortia agreements (although some of them – such as COPPUL, the Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries) are not available to us (because of our private status).

Recommendation #30: We recommend that the institution continue to work toward more effective scheduling (ideally, one year ahead) to help advisors and students and reduce rushes and graduation problems. The additional value of an annual scheduling process is that faculty workload is anticipated and hiring can be strategic rather than tactical.

Response and Suggested Actions: The Registrar's Office is already working on a 2-year plan that would address this recommendation.

Recommendation #31: Simplification of all faculty resources in a single location with clear and direct labels and identifications of presented material would help faculty rushing between terms. With so little "downtime" between teaching terms, the efficient bundling of faculty resources should be prioritized.

Response and Suggested Actions: All faculty resources are currently bundled in the portal with regular training sessions communicated to faculty throughout the term. An Important Contacts page has been added to alleviate some of the issues that were raised. The Academic Operations team will be adding additional training sessions, resources, and info pages relevant to updates in operational practices. **Implementation Timeline:** The leadership is working on a "Tips Sheet" to make access to key information more efficient for faculty.

Recommendation #32: There are several additional ideas to improve retention within the program.

1. Build a BABC cohort system to seclude the tier one and two students from the AA ones to offer an early sense of academic identity and belonging within the BABC.
2. Consider moving the BABC to a competitive entry program by raising admission requirements.

3. Build direct connections and student memberships with CPRS and IABC Canada to ensure that graduating students leave credentialed and transition directly into a professional community of practice, as well as have access to the myriad resources both of these organizations offer with their student memberships. No other program in Canada (to our knowledge) offers this service and would therefore present a competitive advantage.
4. Explore the prospect of bundling the BABC and MBA into a single-entry credential, where students could be admitted into the MBA out of high school, move through the BABC program and transition directly into the MBA and then graduate with both credentials at the end.

Response and Suggested Actions: Please see our responses to recommendations #25, #23, #9, and #3.

Recommendation #33: If upper-level enrolment is a concern for the institution, the program might consider a postbaccalaureate in Business Communication program designed to ladder students into the 3rd tier of the program who have achieved bachelors degrees elsewhere in a different discipline. These students would have significantly more academic experience than existing program students and potentially have valuable work experience.

1. Postbac students would add a demographic profile to the upper-levels that is currently missing in your current student makeup.
2. Postbac students, if handled well and integrated into the program structure, could help and mentor program students.

Response and Suggested Actions: We concur with the Panel's recommendation that a multitude of degrees/certificates/diplomas aimed at different demographics of potential students could be leveraged as a recruitment and/or retention strategy for the institution. As the reviewers suggested, it is an excellent way to tap into interest in the Communication field and bring in students through non-traditional channels. As the consideration of these types of degrees/certificates/diplomas requires an institutional commitment and additional regulatory oversight by the [Private Training Institutions Branch](#), the recommendation will be forwarded to the VP Academic for consideration.

As the enrollments of our BABC student increase, the enrollments within the upper level tiers will improve organically. That said, articulation agreements with other institutions may provide significant opportunities to enhance student enrollments. To accommodate this growth, the ACSS will need to introduce additional curriculum, including electives in emerging communications specializations, and hire additional faculty.

The nature of the Canadian Government's Comprehensive Ranking System to attain their preferred immigration status may restrict the incentives for those with degrees to attend UCW at the undergraduate level. Typically, those with degrees from outside Canadian universities will choose to apply for UCW's MBA program to attain maximum points for their immigration applications, though domestic students may find this pathway beneficial.

Implementation Timeline: The challenges of hiring new faculty and developing new curriculum will need to be met concurrently while the University pro-actively engages articulation agreements with institutions both locally and internationally. Additional resources will be required to execute on this strategy.

Recommendation #34: Work hard across all levels to communicate to students the limitations of an Associate of Arts degree, especially in terms of Permanent Resident applications, but also in terms of employability.

Response and Suggested Actions: Please see our response to Recommendation #10.

Recommendation #35: The experiential education and work placement piece represents a significant challenge to the BABC for the reasons identified in the self-assessment: students come in with no experience and therefore have difficulty finding gainful employment. Additionally, work regulations limit hours available for work. Nonetheless, we see this piece as key to reputational shift and student satisfaction. Successful industry-oriented programs prioritize building connections with community partners that experiential education offices use to make placements. We recommend that the institution prioritize and resource faculty to build those workplace connections and forge relationships that can turn into student positions.

1. It is possible to connect industry connections to professional development whereby when faculty receive funding to engage in professional development (in the form of conferences, etc.), there is an expectation that they will also make some sort of connection either with a post-secondary institution (for program articulation) or potential industry partner to bring back to the department to explore, and are rewarded for successful connections made?
2. We also recommend that given the parameters and limitations placed on student employment both structurally and based on lack of experience, that the program broaden its scope of approach to involve not only traditional commercial and for-profit contacts but also non-profit organizations, and emphasize to students the value of unpaid practicum experience to building portfolios for future employment.
3. UCW could also leverage the student interest in broader organized extracurricular activities by connecting portfolio-building opportunities into clubs. For example, for every club, offer formal, titled positions to help promote and manage those clubs that students can use for resume-building.

Response and Suggested Actions:

Below are some examples from courses that incorporate experiential education.

COMM 304: Students develop a 2 min video resume.

Example 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xfk3ziY7gBY>

Students have the option to pursue optional Hootsuite certifications, which can strengthen their portfolio and job readiness. Students will often post about the completion of their certifications. This helps to enhance their personal brands and industry visibility.

COMM 410: Students develop a comms audit and strategy; both students added to YouTube/SlideShare/posted on LinkedIn to strengthen their portfolio. Sometimes, [instructors will amplify such content](#) to help students build industry connections.

[Integrated Communications Strategy Presentation](#)

[Bank of Canada Communications Campaign](#)

By bringing in expert guest speakers, we can help students understand what the job market looks like, as well as help them build valuable industry connections. Students will often use these guest speaker opportunities to create/curate/post content which in turn helps to enhance their personal brands and visibility, particularly on professional networks like LinkedIn.

Recent Examples:

COMM 304: Social Media Manager at Mavi Jeans [posted by BABC student on LinkedIn](#)

[PUBR 300: Account Manager at Talk Shop Media](#)

<https://www.cprs.ca/Certifications/Post-Secondary-Programs>

Business simulations are common components of capstone courses in undergraduate business programs. Consider replacing BUS 497 with a simulation – perhaps one that involves a competition with students in other university business programs.

We are also in the process of replacing BUSI 497/ 498 Business Capstone courses with the WORK 498 Capstone Project. The goal of this development is to better prepare our graduates for the workforce by providing them real life projects and/ or business simulations, the former led by faculty or the student's own experiences. For business simulations, students will be able to utilize external resources provided by UCW such as RIIPEN, SAGE, and Harvard Business Cases and similar to the MBA games, students within the BABC may be able to organize or join undergraduate case competitions with other institutions.

Implementation Timeline: Development of WORK 498 is nearly complete and is scheduled to be introduced within the BABC curriculum by Oct 2023. UCW also recently created the [Business Case Study Faculty Resource](#) which is now live on the faculty resources page of the portal. Here, Harvard Case Study How-to-Guide, a link to the SAGE business cases, and supplementary teacher resources are provided.

The Library Services Department is currently speaking with Harvard Business Publishing about a new subscription package called the Harvard Discovery package. While more expensive, it effectively gives full, unlimited access to expanded cases, simulations, student and instructor supplementary material via the [Harvard Education](#) site. Similarly, the department has been speaking with SAGE publishing for their new [SAGE Skills Business package](#). This includes resources to build upon essential business skills, such as: data analytics, organizational communications, leadership, and professionalism, and included a number of exercises that focus on the soft skills and include self-directed student assessment.

Recommendation #36: While we recognize the desire to broaden the variety of classes offered within the BABC to take advantage of the skills and talents of the faculty associated with the program, as we have indicated above, we strongly caution the program to take very careful stock of what courses are program, what courses are elective and what courses are service. While creating these clear categories do indeed run the risk of making distinctions between faculty members, the risk in not making clear distinctions is that the program could fall victim to “mission creep” where elements connected to business communications tangentially or tertiarily end up as central parts of the program.

Response and Suggested Actions: We agree with broadening the program, while remaining wary of not allowing courses that should be electives to creep into the core courses. The project that considers the PLO updates/program structure will necessarily address the right mix of core/elective courses as well.

Implementation Timeline: The work on this long-term plan will start in 2024.

Recommendation #37: That said, the development of attractive electives that could draw students from inside and outside the BABC are excellent ideas (film studies and creative writing courses would figure prominently on this list) – particularly to help defray the costs in other low-enrolled and small, applied sections.

Response and Suggested Actions: Please see #16.

Recommendation #38: Perhaps the most important element in all of these concerns identified above is the one students expressed most clearly about communication and consultation. Everyone at UCW, from Administration, to Students, to Faculty, to Staff, all see the strain that the institution’s explosive growth has placed on every element. Everyone is working hard to address all these elements with goodwill and open hearts. But all the moving pieces and breakneck pace of UCW make it very challenging to pause, assess, develop a communication strategy between the areas, align tasks, and rowing in the same direction. We strongly recommend that the institution continue to strive toward collegial and consultative processes where information is shared and feedback is solicited and space created for that feedback to be provided and assessed.

Response and Suggested Actions: Although we regularly collect opinions from our students through various forums such as the Donuts for Chairs, we will explore opportunities to formalize the process by creating a BABC student advisory council. This council could meet every term, and direct recommendations to the appropriate department. Issues beyond the program’s control, are referred to VPA.

Implementation Timeline: The Student advisory council may be created by Winter 2024.

Next Steps

The Report of the External Review Panel praised the cyclical program review of the BABC program, noting that it is “thoroughgoing, rigorous, systematic, and appropriate to its purpose. We were impressed with the commitment to this review, and to BABC and UCW, of all participants – leadership and frontline administration, faculty and students” (Report of the External Program Review Panel, p.5). The External Program Review Panel provided the BABC program with 38 recommendations to consider, many of which spoke to similar themes, such as strategies for improving the program’s retention rate, developing mechanisms to help international students feel well-integrated into the UCW and Vancouver communities, and ensuring that the program’s growth is appropriately resourced to be sustainable. In their Program Response, the BABC program has embraced the recommendations that were made, indicating how and when those within their control will be implemented.

Over the course of the next 12-18 months, the BABC program will work to implement those recommendations identified as priorities and submit a Progress Report in 2024 that provides an update on the actions taken to implement these recommendations. A Renewal of Consent for the BABC program will be submitted to the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) in June 2023 and the program’s next scheduled cyclical program review will take place as scheduled in accordance with Ministry guidelines.

The BABC program has engaged in the cyclical program review process authentically, using it as a mechanism for identifying what is working well in the program, as well as confronting its challenges and seeking input from university stakeholders and the review committee to find solutions to address them. Both the program and the university will benefit from the thoughtful and future-oriented recommendations made by the External Program Review Panel, and will seek to use these recommendations, and the other learnings obtained through the cyclical program review process, to make positive changes to the program and the BABC student experience that will fulfil what the external reviewers noted as the program’s “pioneering potential, as Canada’s most truly global communication studies program” (Report of the External Program Review Panel, p. 3).