

University of British Columbia - Vancouver
Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Report on the Pilot *Public Scholars Initiative* (PSI)
2015-2017



[The research university] should prepare for the service of society a class of students who will be wise, thoughtful, and progressive guides in whatever department of work or thought they may be engaged. Universities easily fall into ruts. Almost every epoch requires a fresh start.

- Daniel Coit Gilman, 1st President of Johns Hopkins University, 1876

Reimagining the PhD will require imagination from all of us, and an openness to new ideas, a willingness to change what has worked in the past for 5 centuries – to ensure that we remain accountable as institutions, to be sure that we deliver on our first responsibility, and that is to do our best, our very best, for current and future students in a changing world.

- Santa Ono, UBC President

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Executive Summary

Developed and funded by UBC's Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies in 2015, the Public Scholars Initiative (PSI) is an innovative program supporting doctoral pathways that encourage purposeful social contribution, mutually beneficial forms of collaborative research with partners from diverse economic sectors, and broader career readiness for students.

Why the PSI? The PSI was founded with a view to reimagine doctoral education in relation to two changing realities: 1) 21st century knowledge advancement increasingly involves intersectoral, multidisciplinary collaborative approaches that respond creatively and positively to society's needs and problems, and 2) Most PhD holders now prepare for and choose careers outside of academia. The PSI has sought to develop a unique model to acknowledge and respond to these realities and support new possibilities for connecting the power and rigour of doctoral-level research to a wide range of scholarly and career contexts.

What does the PSI do? The PSI offers funding, networking opportunities, and academic and professional development support for doctoral students seeking to engage in public scholarship as part of their dissertation research. It facilitates students' collaborative engagement and scholarship with partners beyond the academy while preparing them for broader career opportunities. The PSI is the only such pan-university initiative we know of, and purposefully includes doctoral students from a wide range of disciplines – from the humanities to engineering to social sciences and lab-based sciences. In its first three years, the initiative accepted 115 students to its network, funded their collaborative scholarship (approximately \$1 million awarded), provided academic support to help navigate the integration of non-traditional scholarly outputs into their doctoral work, and enhanced students' research, formation, and visibility through research talk events (*PhDs Go Public*), professional development opportunities, and the multifaceted [PSI website](#).

What has the PSI achieved? We believe the pilot was successful in its goal of testing and demonstrating the value of reimagined PhD pathways. It attracted outstanding doctoral students, and made it possible for them to carry out engaged scholarship that they would not have been able to do otherwise. The PSI also stimulated widespread interest and dialogue on the UBC campus and beyond on the future of doctoral education, and, we believe, contributed to improving the public relevance and perception of the university. Surveyed PSI students, supervisors, and external partners were highly positive about the initiative. Most students said that it contributed significantly to their growth as scholars, enhanced their research, and provided inspiration and confidence in their career pursuits. Many were thrilled with the legitimacy it provided their research, however some found it difficult to gain acceptance of the work as dissertation-relevant scholarship. The multiple award-winning program was featured in a number of national conferences and graduate education articles and reports; and has prompted interest and engagement with numerous external bodies, including the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, the David Suzuki Foundation, the BC Ministry of Health, and the Mindset Foundation. Now in its third year, the PSI is working to continuously improve its effectiveness and relevance for today's doctoral students.



It is one of the most exciting initiatives I have seen in graduate education, not only at UBC, but at all the institutions I have been at.

- Faculty supervisor of PSI Scholar



This is gold, this is the future.

- PSI scholar

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1. Background on the PSI

The fundamental approach to doctoral education has not changed significantly since the modern research PhD was instituted in the early 19th century as a means to regenerate the professoriate. Today, however, most doctoral graduates pursue careers other than the professoriate, where they contribute immeasurably to the public good through diverse forms and outputs of rigorous scholarship.

Conclusions from major projects on re-thinking the doctorate

There is a need to:

- Increase interdisciplinarity, emphasize versatility, avoid overspecialization
- Increase opportunities for team work
- Expand mentorship paradigm
- Increase **‘purposefulness in reaching out to partners and audiences outside of academe** in ways that connect academic work with the larger social context’
- Encourage **‘more flexible, integrated conceptions of scholarly work’**
- Provide more career information and experience, affirm non-academic pathways
- Move beyond ‘add on’ experiences: **‘serious structural and cultural changes are required’**
- Revisit the dissertation: **‘The time is right to break the dissertation mold and find forms better matched to the functions of scholarly life in diverse professional settings.’**

To address these changing realities, many institutions around the world, including UBC, offer doctoral students professional development curricula designed to enhance non-academic career skills.

The PSI has sought to move beyond generic and extracurricular ‘skills training’ to an integrative approach, which supports diverse forms of collaborative scholarship, a breadth of scholarly products, and interactivity with work environments beyond the academy as part of the doctoral research experience itself. This more fundamental re-envisioning of doctoral education¹ has gained momentum around the world in the last few years with increasing concerns about the relevance of traditional doctoral education in today’s world. It has also been recognized that students themselves often have deep desires to make an impact through their scholarship, and that universities should strive to develop ‘scholar-citizens, who see their special training connected more closely to the needs of society and the global economy’.²

At UBC, with the support of many interested faculty and students, we felt the time was ripe to reimagine potential PhD pathways. Through the G+PS office, we convened a university-wide [symposium](#) on the subject in 2014, and established a ‘Reimagining the PhD’ advisory group³ to explore possible next steps. Our publication, [Beyond Skills](#), placed these ideas in a theoretical framework and explored their pragmatic implications for graduate education.

The Advisory Group endorsed the idea of a pilot program to test the concept of actively supporting broadened forms of doctoral research that engage beyond academic circles. The pilot was meant to support dissertation research preferably involving a non-academic, or academic teaching, partner, that would be of mutual benefit to the university, scholar, and partner. The scholar’s work was expected to

¹ As promoted by the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate, 2008; The Responsive PhD (Woodrow Wilson Foundation), 2005; and a number of other studies/reports, from Australia, the UK, and Europe.

² Nyquist, J. [Re-envisioning the PhD](#) (Pew Charitable Trusts)

³ The Advisory Group consists of the provost, faculty members designated by their deans, graduate student representatives, and the Dean & Vice Provost, G+PS

Goals of the PSI

1. Enable broadened doctoral scholarship and connections to enhance graduate capabilities and career readiness
2. Contribute to the public good
3. Increase society's awareness of and enhance perceptions of the value of the university and of doctoral graduates

be communicated in traditional, academic, ways, but may also result in non-traditional, scholarly outputs (e.g., films, websites, policy briefs, public communications, reports, patent applications) that would be incorporated and assessed as part of the dissertation. This type of engaged, often applied, scholarly work has been termed 'public scholarship' due to its focus on partnerships and promoting public benefit. From this vision and with the support

of the provost and deans, the UBC Public Scholars Initiative was born.

2. The program

The PSI's components include:

1. **Financial awards**⁴ (up to \$10,000 for one year, renewable for one year) to support dissertation research which meets the broad definition of 'public scholarship'.
2. **Professional development** opportunities related to public scholarship (including workshops on communicating and translating research, ethics, film-making, career development, public policy, and various related panel discussions)
3. Required participation in *PhDs Go Public*, a series of public talks by the PSI participants. These are frequently held off-campus in the evening, and community members and organizations with interest in the theme of the event are invited. This is a way to engage the community and provide public speaking experience for the students. It also encourages networking among the community, students, and interested faculty.
4. Publication of **PSI Scholar Profiles** on the G+PS website. This has resulted in substantial publicity and connections for the students, and is another way of showcasing the breadth of possibilities of doctoral research.
5. Publication of **student blogs**. Students are provided extensive support and feedback on their writing, and the blogs are sometimes picked up by the media.
6. Regular **roundtables** to discuss issues of interest.
7. **Academic support** for navigating non-traditional dissertations and supervision.

PSI by the numbers (3 years)

- 115 PSI scholars
- More than 100 partners over 32 countries
- Over \$900,000 in research allowances or stipends
- 10 public *PhDs Go Public* events
- 13 workshops
- >10 media reports of students' research from *PhDs Go Public*, blogs, and profiles
- 8 successfully defended dissertations

Further additions, including the formation of working groups focused on particular societal challenges, are under development for the third year. Meaningful, long-lasting partnerships with other units at UBC have also evolved, and PSI scholars are regularly sought as participants and contributors in academic and non-academic gatherings such as workshops, roundtables, and orientation events.

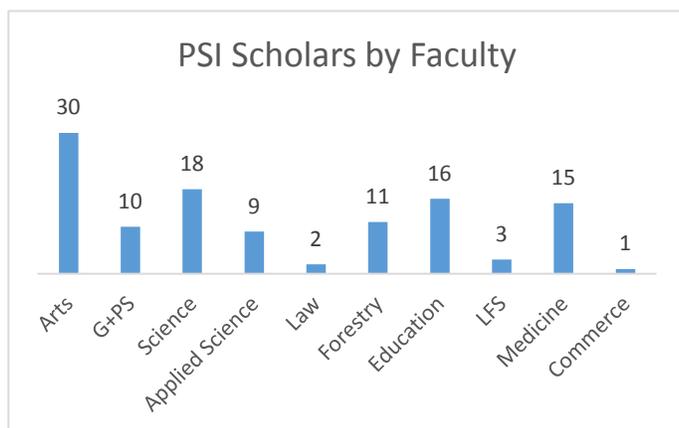
⁴ The one-time funding source was accumulated funds from endowments and residual Tri-Council scholarships, restricted to student support, and sufficient to support 4 years of the program.

Students, Partners, and Projects

A call for applications for Year 1 was issued in early 2015. From 98 applicants, 39 PhD students were selected, covering a wide range of disciplines. We received 130 applicants the second year, and 62 the third. Over all years, 115 students were selected for a year's support, and 32 of these successfully applied for a second year. More than \$900,000 in research funding and stipends was awarded over the three years. The students' research partners included NGOs; local, provincial, and national governments; private sector industries; think tanks; universities; indigenous and community groups, located locally and around the world. In all three cohorts, there was a higher percentage than average of major award winners, indigenous students, and those who had already led extraordinarily accomplished and publicly-engaged lives.

The students' projects encompassed a range of non-traditional methodologies and scholarly artifacts. Their methodologies assumed a wide variety of forms such as applied, community-engaged, interdisciplinary, and teaching and learning-oriented approaches. Their scholarly artifacts have included, or will include, film, policy briefs, community and technical reports, websites, curricula, and curation material. Students were encouraged to work with their supervisory committees to integrate these artifacts into their dissertations, and to place them in scholarly context. In some cases, additional supervisory committee members were invited to help mentor and assess the work. Eight students to date have successfully defended their dissertations.

As anticipated, a majority of the students were in disciplines where public scholarship is common, and many of the proposed projects were not far removed from the students' pre-established research



plans. In those cases, the proposed projects usually involved an additional knowledge translation element or a deeper investigation which the student would have been unable to do otherwise. We were pleased, however, to also support a number of students from more traditional academic disciplines, where the students' publicly engaged scholarship is truly breaking new ground. Many of these were seeking to enable applications of their research or expertise in the public realm (e.g. through public communication, teaching, enhancing practice, or contributing to policy). We anticipated this latter group to grow with increased visibility of the initiative, as more students from typically less applied academic disciplines became aware of unique pathways that the PSI supported. Applicants from some traditional disciplines (particularly the social sciences) did in fact increase in the second and third year, however, the less applied disciplines continue to be under-represented. The drop in application numbers in the third

| Partner Types | Examples |
|----------------------------|--|
| Government | BC, municipal, El Salvador |
| NGOs | David Suzuki Foundation, Sukhi Development Foundation |
| Civil Agencies | RCMP, Health Authorities |
| Private sector | Tech firms, Yahoo Research |
| Community groups | Farmer network, First Nations groups |
| Disciplinary groups | Genetics Society of America, Canadian Forum on Civil Justice |
| Academic | Teaching faculty |
| Think tanks | Sustainable Prosperity |

year may reflect the steady-state interest in the current context. As many are still unaware of the program, there is a strong need to further increase its visibility.

“ This thesis has been framed as an example of integrated knowledge translation which is, to my knowledge, a novel (and commendable) approach for a doctoral thesis and is likely to have an impact not only on the discipline but also, and perhaps more importantly, on practices within the study setting.

External examiner of Sarah’s dissertation

Sample Profiles

Sarah Munro (Interdisciplinary Studies; supervisors Patti Janssen and Jude Kornelsen): Partnering with health authorities, health services, and patients, Sarah addressed an important health question: How can women and their care teams make more informed, shared decisions for mode of birth after C-sections? Sarah’s PSI-funded work sought to facilitate mutual understanding among the stakeholders, through conducting policy dialogues and co-creating a policy brief. This applied work was integrated and contextualized in her dissertation, and was commended by her external examiner (see opposite). Sarah is the first graduate of the



PSI and is planning on pursuing an academic career.

Ajay Bhardwaj (Asian Studies, supervisor Anne Murphy): An independent documentary filmmaker, Ajay's cinematic explorations and research focus on post-partition East Punjab (India). His dissertation, integrating text-based research and film, will put a spotlight on the relationships and histories of two socially marginalized communities and musicians in the region. He sees his work as highlighting ‘a road map for a different kind of present of Punjab’, suggesting parallel paths in other post-conflict zones. PSI funding enabled Ajay to do preliminary field work and to explore institutional knowledge mobilization partnerships in India and Canada.



Janna Fabris (Materials Engineering, supervisor Anoush Poursartip): Building on her industrial experience in aerospace engineering, Janna's research at the UBC Composites Research Network seeks to address the growing disconnect between industrial practice and the knowledge obtained from basic research. She is working to establish a knowledge framework to advance composites manufacturing design practice and contribute positively to sustaining a vibrant composites industry. PSI funding enabled her to gain commercialization expertise, and as a result, a continuing collaboration with an innovation expert.



PhDs Go Public

The *PhDs Go Public* event series showcased the PSI scholars' work to broader audiences, and were largely organized by the scholars themselves. The events were organized by research themes, including innovation, health, social justice, sustainability, indigenous research, education, and culture. The first year health group formatted their event as a 'Dragon's Den', and invited 3 'dragons' (pictured) - Heather Davidson (BC Ministry of Health), Gayle Scarrow (Michael Smith Foundation), and Wendy Robinson



I've always wanted to connect more with UBC, and this is a fantastic way to do it! I plan to come to more of these.

- Community member attendee at a
PhDs Go Public event

(Faculty of Medicine) to challenge the scholars on their approach and impact. Events were held mostly at UBC-Point Grey the first year, but moved to off-campus venues (e.g., the Vancouver Public Library, UBC Learning Exchange, Robson Square) for evening sessions the following years to broaden community engagement. Numerous contacts and follow-up engagements for the scholars (and the PSI itself) have been made through these events.

Professional Development & Community

PSI professional development events were prioritized based on the needs voiced by the students during one-on-one meetings held at the beginning of the year. Most were done in collaboration with [Graduate Pathways to Success](#) and/or other campus units and colleagues.

Community among the PSI scholars was encouraged through the annual Kick-Off and ongoing events, and lunch roundtables were instituted the second year as requested by students. The students also created their own Facebook group.

3. Evaluation of the first two years

Evaluation was carried out by surveys conducted with students, partners, and faculty supervisors in the summers of 2016 and 2017, as well as by group and individual discussions held with students and faculty throughout the year.

Students

Students frequently expressed sincere gratitude and excitement to be a part of the initiative and the multidisciplinary network of publicly engaged scholars. Some said they had found an academic 'home' they hadn't experienced before, and were excited about the research made possible through the PSI. A very strong sentiment was that the PSI had provided much needed legitimacy to their work, affirming their own convictions of its merit and providing them credibility in working with their committees and partners. There was notable discouragement on the part of some, in the first year in particular, who faced barriers to acceptance of

PSI professional development offerings included:

- *Changing the World Through Research: A Panel on Public Scholarship*
- *Telling Stories About Your Research*
- *Integrating Film in Research*
- *The Socially Responsible University*
- *Individual Development Plans*
- *Non-Academic Career Paths*
- *Talking to the Media*
- *The Ethical Public Scholar*
- *Managing Professional Profiles Online*
- *Open Access: Making Your Research Matter*
- *Designing Knowledge Mobilization and Exploring Policy*

their work as academically valuable or appropriate, and who felt that the culture of the academy had not fully embraced the underlying philosophy of the initiative.

“The PSI supported...aspects of my research are becoming central to my research methodology in completely unexpected ways. Participating in the PSI has opened up a vast and rich research terrain that I never anticipated.

- PSI student

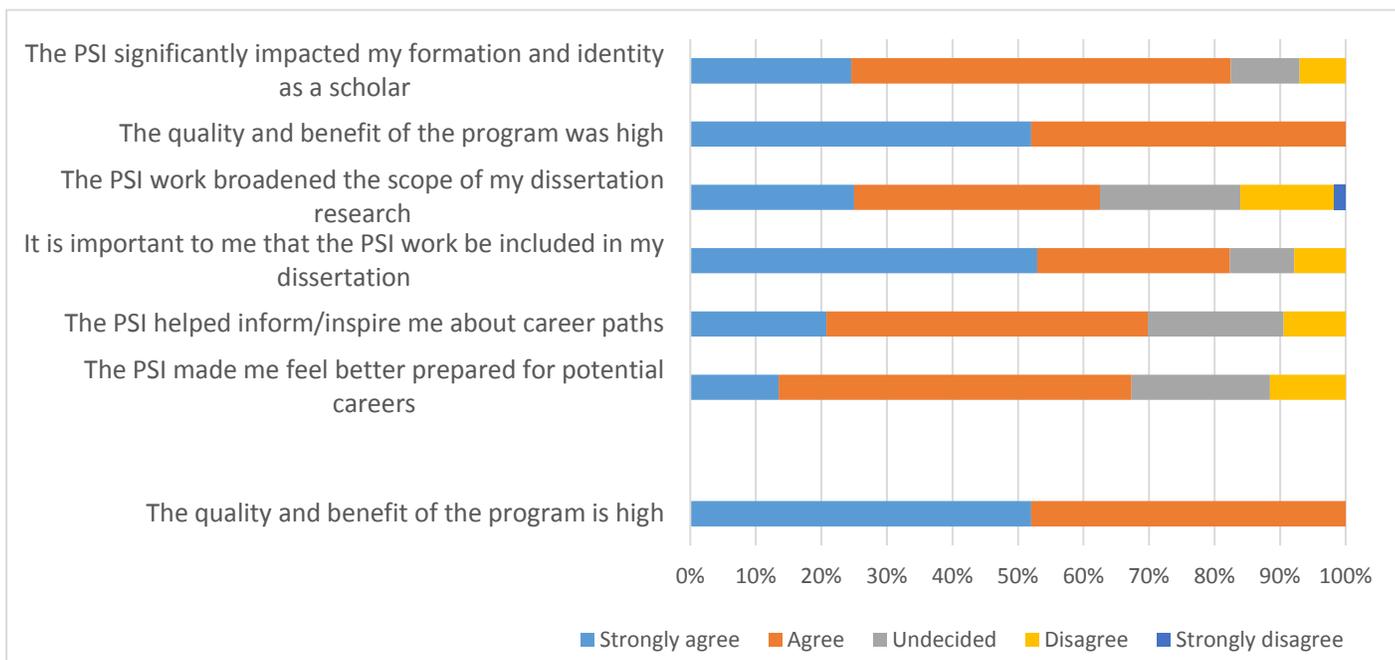
Some students described how, through engagement and application, the knowledge gained from their prior research was fine-tuned, and made more accurate and useful for the stakeholders. There was also a recognition that public scholarship can be ‘messy’, and that it may have extended timelines, making it challenging to undertake in the time frames of a doctoral program. This was especially problematic for those for whom the PSI work was an ‘add on’ to an otherwise full-length,

traditional dissertation.

We had intended that the PSI would positively impact the students’ formation and identity as scholars, broadening their conception of scholarship and what it means, or could mean, to be a scholar both in and outside the academy. More than 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that it had, with many saying the experience:

- increased their awareness of social responsibility and their desire to make a positive difference
- ‘inspired’, and gave them ‘courage’ and tools, to pursue impactful approaches to scholarship
- affirmed and legitimized their identity, gave them confidence to embrace being a public scholar
- broadened their skills (particularly in communication and research methodologies)

PSI students, Year 1 & 2 survey (n=57)



Those who disagreed or were undecided explained that they had already identified as a public scholar, or had not developed a different scholarly identity in part because their supervisory committees did not value their public scholar work. G+PS has responded to these concerns by broadening the criteria for dissertation structures and content on our website, and has also modified the letter to external examiners to acknowledge UBC's support for broadened scholarship, and the necessity of assessing it for rigour. Both of these changes were approved by the UBC Graduate Policy Committee.

Some PSI scholars had hoped for greater engagement within the PSI community, and we have sought to enhance such engagement in the second and third years. Most students felt the PSI had strengthened or allowed external collaborations, and were very grateful for the funding.

Most also felt the PSI experience helped inform or prepare them for potential careers. Many said it gave them inspiration and confidence to pursue pathways other than those in academia, but some were also re-energized to pursue research careers in academia, given their new confidence that such applied work was possible at the university.

The program itself was highly rated, and most of the suggestions for improvement have been implemented.

Selected student survey comments (anonymous):

Identity, inspiration:

I feel more strongly about this project than any other I have worked on in my dissertation, and to me it is the "crowning jewel" of my PhD

It is some of the more meaningful work I will have done during my PhD, and it may be the most valuable in terms of my future career.

Knowing that my project has the enthusiastic support of UBC has given me the courage to approach more difficult problems and employ creative solutions, where before I may have shied away.

It gave me an opportunity to even begin to imagine that my research might have impacts outside of the walls of academia

It's been the highlight of my PhD

Academic growth:

I feel as though the PSI greatly enhanced the quality of my research

My participation in PSI encouraged me to go beyond the collaborative nature of my research project and implement participatory action research methods.

The project allowed me to be creative and to ask questions which I did not think I would be able to address in my PhD.

Career Development:

Before PSI, I have never thought of a career in a non-technical context. But now I see I can also make an impact from a different front

I feel creatively empowered to engage in a variety of career possibilities

I always knew that I had lots of different career options available outside of academia, but being in the PSI gave me more confidence that those alternative routes would be enjoyable, valuable, and not "settling" for a non-tenure track career path.

External Partners

We surveyed all partners for whom we had contact information, and 38 responded over two years. Almost all said that they benefited from the collaboration with the students, and that the collaborative work would contribute to the public good. An undecided minority felt more time was needed to see outcomes. Respondents commonly said they welcomed the improved ability to bridge academic research and practice, and valued the work and joint scholarly outputs of the students.

“ This is an unprecedented and unique opportunity to benefit student growth and real social change. Thank you for offering this opportunity.

- PSI partner organization

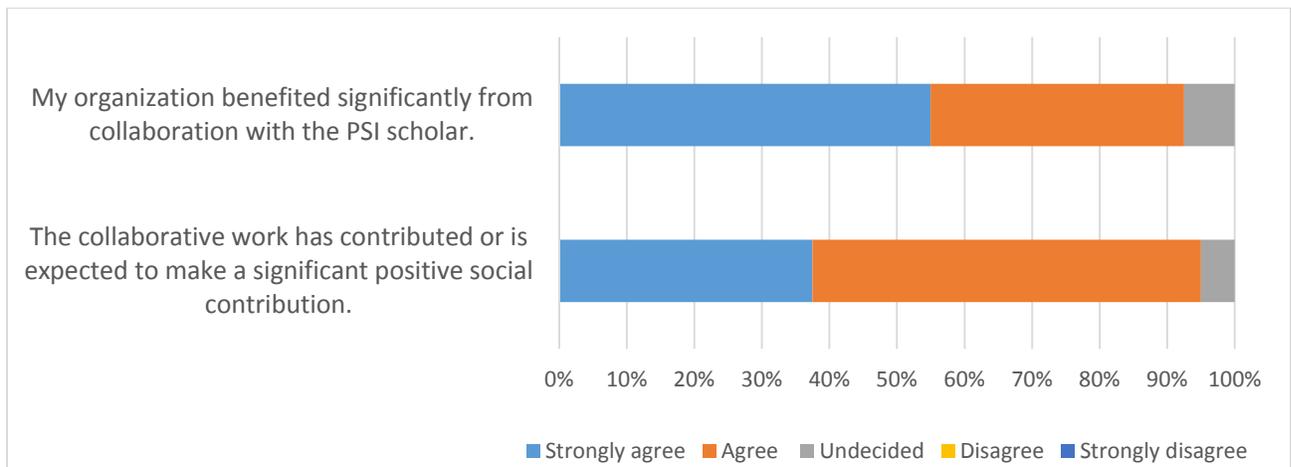
[The PSI project went] beyond what the majority of researchers undertake and provided a genuine opportunity for the communities to reflect and adjust their activities. – NGO CEO

[The PSI scholar] helped me identify things we can implement to advance our service, as well as data that would be interesting to track/learn more about the space. – Company CEO

I have many years of experience in academia, and have to say that often students of all levels find it hard to adapt to non-academic settings...The type of program you are running is fantastic!

– Company CEO

PSI External Partners, Year 1 & 2 survey (n=38)



Comments on the program itself included:

Wonderful!! – Community organization

The PSI is invaluable for helping bridge the gap between academic research and the 'real world'...we need to promote collaborations such as the ones supported by UBC's PSI – Professional Organization

Excellent! A good way to move scholarly pursuits into assisting with real life issues. Thank you! - NGO

These collaborations will help open new avenues of research, better understanding of field interventions and help further improve NGO's working in the field. - NGO

The initiative is timely and is needed to help integrate science and social developments, particularly in the area of policy developments for regulation of [environmental issues] – Government

Not surprisingly, when asked what they would recommend universities do to better prepare doctoral students for diverse environments, most responded that collaborative experience in these

environments is essential, and many noted that the collaboration should be mutually beneficial. One partner suggested that it would be worthwhile for collaborations to occur from the start of students' programs, so that the value of building 'tangible real-world outcomes...is embedded in their work rather than as an 'afterthought'.

When asked if their organization would partner with a PhD student in the future, 100% of the partners responded in the affirmative. This positive reaction from community partners is particularly meaningful to our objectives of bringing doctoral education into a more responsive and mutually beneficial relationship with the world outside the academy.



PSI Partner Locations, representing the number of partners in each country

Faculty Supervisors

Faculty supervisors were also surveyed (36 respondents over two years), and identified the following benefits of the program to their students:

- It gave recognition and legitimacy to the work, especially in dealing with community partners
- The funding was pivotal to the students' engagement and knowledge translation activities
- The connections made within the PSI community, and through external events and online visibility were invaluable
- Many recognized a broadened intellectual growth in their students, in part from being exposed to the multidisciplinary setting
- Several noticed substantially improved communication skills (gained through the *PhDs Go Public* events, the blog-writing, and some of the related workshops)

Faculty comments:

- *One of the most exciting initiatives I have seen in graduate education not only at UBC, but at all the institutions I have been at*
- *The PSI is a terrific initiative and it has certainly been good for my doctoral student. We appreciate...the commitment to putting research into action.*
- *Thank you for championing this important initiative and investing in promising young scholars!*
- *This is an exciting program. Well done!*
- *I hope it continues!*

Several supervisors felt the publicly engaged work added 'value', 'depth' or 'subtlety' to the students' overall scholarship. For others, it was seen as an 'add on' which extended time to completion, and they were concerned that the PSI work may not get taken seriously by some parties. Some supervisors were keen to have the PSI project or artifact integrated into the dissertation for rigorous evaluation. Others were less enthusiastic or unsupportive, but believed that the engagement and its outputs contributed to the students' formation regardless. Several supervisors and students added new committee members to the supervisory committee to help mentor and evaluate the work.

4. Recognitions

The PSI has been featured and recognized by multiple organizations, publications, and conferences:

- Received the **Promotion of Excellence Award** from the (US) Association for Graduate Enrollment Management, and the UBC **Helen McCrae Award** for exceptional contributions to the student experience and learning environment.
- Considered a **‘transformative initiative’** by the Conference Board of Canada’s 2015 report, *Inside and Outside the Academy: Valuing and Preparing PhDs for Careers*.
- Highlighted as an **exemplar of social innovation** by the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation’s, *Social Innovation in British Columbia*.
- **Reimagining PhD Paths at UBC** featured as cover story on the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) website.
- Highlighted in:
 - *Taking the doctorate in new directions*, **University Affairs**, Dec 9, 2015
 - *Sharp differences in career paths of PhD grads across fields, UBC study finds*, **Globe and Mail**, April 13, 2017
 - *Make your PhD outcomes transparent and be proud of where your graduates end up*, **University Affairs**, April 20, 2017
- Invited to join the (US) Council of Graduate Schools working group on **The Future of the Dissertation**.
- The **Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation** asked to collaborate with us, and co-presented with us



The innovative UBC Public Scholars Initiative is helping to strengthen connections between those inside and outside the academy, and to prepare our doctoral students to tackle today's complex problems.

- Dr. Heather Davidson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Sector Planning and Innovation, BC Ministry of Health (2016)



As for UBC – how else are they leading the field? As of now, the most impressive project is the Public Scholars Initiative which is set up to “support doctoral pathways that encourage positive social contribution” – sounds amazing, right? We’ll see where it goes, but what a wonderful way to view its PhD programs – the products are the people, not the data or the research. Well done UBC, well done.

- David Kent, *University Affairs*

at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2017.

- Other invited and selected presentations on the PSI in conferences and events:
 - CIHR/CHSPRA **Modernizing Health Services and Policy Research Training in Canada** workshop (Toronto, March, 2016)
 - **Society for Applied Anthropology** Conference (Vancouver, April 2016)
 - Simon Fraser University, **Researching the City** Event (Vancouver, October 2016)
 - **Canadian Association for Graduate Studies** (CAGS) Annual Meeting (Toronto,

Nov 2016)

- McMaster University Faculty of Engineering **Reimagining the PhD retreat** (January, 2017)
- UK Council for Graduate Education **3rd International Conference on Developments in Doctoral Education and Training** (UK, April 2017)
- **C2UExpo 2017** Conference (Vancouver, May 2017)

- **Strategic Leaders Global Summit on Graduate Education** (São Paulo, 2016 & Alaska, 2017)
- **Reimagining the PhD 2017** – UBC symposium, September, 2017 (see further information below)

5. Looking Forward

Through the PSI ‘experiment’, we have gained significant insight into the considerable potential for broadened doctoral scholarship, the challenges associated with it, and the barriers that hinder its uptake. Our efforts are directed at some of these barriers, as well as a continual improvement of the program. Our short-term goals include:

- Through CAGS, complete the national [consultation](#) on the dissertation (which one of us is co-leading), and expand resources on and advocacy for broadened doctoral scholarship.
- Intensify our efforts to increase awareness of the PSI and its concepts to the UBC community.
- Seek funding from external and internal sources, as the PSI currently has funding for only one more year.

The PSI figured prominently in the September 2017 UBC symposium on *Reimagining the PhD*, and the day-long event prompted further discussion and ideas for future focus. Among our long-term goals are developing more robust learning opportunities on topics related to broadened scholarship, facilitating mechanisms to ‘matchmake’ potential partners and students, developing a learning framework for students’ experiences, and exploring other avenues for reimagining the PhD.

6. Conclusion

The PSI has been a very affirmative experience for external partners, faculty, and students, where the latter expressed genuine excitement about being ‘pioneers’ in reimagining PhD pathways. Above all, the PSI offered validation of students’ work and desires, and supported them through funding as well as building community and connections. The pilot received considerable interest from communities internal and external to UBC, although continued effort is needed to make a lasting impact on the culture of the university and receive broader acceptance from across the disciplines.