



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



**UBC Vantage College  
Annual Report 2021**

# UBC Vantage College Mission Statement

*We seek to further establish Vantage College, at the University and among Canadian post-secondary institutions, as an interdisciplinary hub, where applied linguistics and disciplinary faculty, staff and students collaborate to mobilize and create new knowledge regarding international student language learning trajectories and academic outcomes. With the Vantage One programs, our mission is to offer an enriched student experience that incorporates and develops innovative pedagogies, interdisciplinary approaches, and transformative learning opportunities to ensure that Vantage students are academically successful and thrive at UBC throughout their undergraduate degrees.*

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# Message from the Principal

What a year! It's impossible to articulate all the impacts the global COVID-19 pandemic has had on our students, staff, and faculty. I am incredibly proud of how everyone has worked together, each in their own respective roles, to continue to achieve excellence in teaching and learning as we delivered all Vantage One programs remotely.

Many hours were spent on Zoom, incredible energies went into thoughtfully redesigning learning experiences, and spaces were created for intentional connection (ranging from online coffee socials to delivering a fully remote academic conference). Everyone at Vantage navigated incredibly complex scenarios, all while working and teaching remotely, with every process and environment needing to be adapted in some way or other. Increased time demands, patience, and creativity was required from everyone. The ways in which the Vantage community came together was truly inspiring.

Keeping everyone safe was our first priority and care and compassion for each other were our guiding principles. I would especially like to highlight the innovative leadership shown by our staff, faculty, teaching assistants, course coordinators, curriculum manager, program chairs, and directors in not just maintaining, but actually improving, teaching and learning experiences at Vantage. An embodied empathy in teaching and advising at Vantage brought us through these incredibly difficult times together.

It is with tremendous admiration and gratitude that we acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of all Vantage students, staff, and faculty in presenting our annual report highlighting achievements 2020-2021. Achieving this level of excellence took tremendous energy, commitment, and adaptability. More than ever before, the summer break after the conclusion of the Vantage One programs in July, was an essential time to recharge.

Finally, I cannot understate the incredible resilience, commitment, engagement, and leadership shown by our Vantage One students. Staying up all night to complete classes across different time zones, connecting and making friends remotely, working in groups using new and varied technologies, keeping their families safe, contributing to peer programs, staying involved on campus, and reaching out for help when needed. Vantage students navigated, achieved, and thrived under very difficult conditions. We are so inspired by their dedication and by their achievements.

Warm regards,

Joanne Fox  
Principal, Vantage College



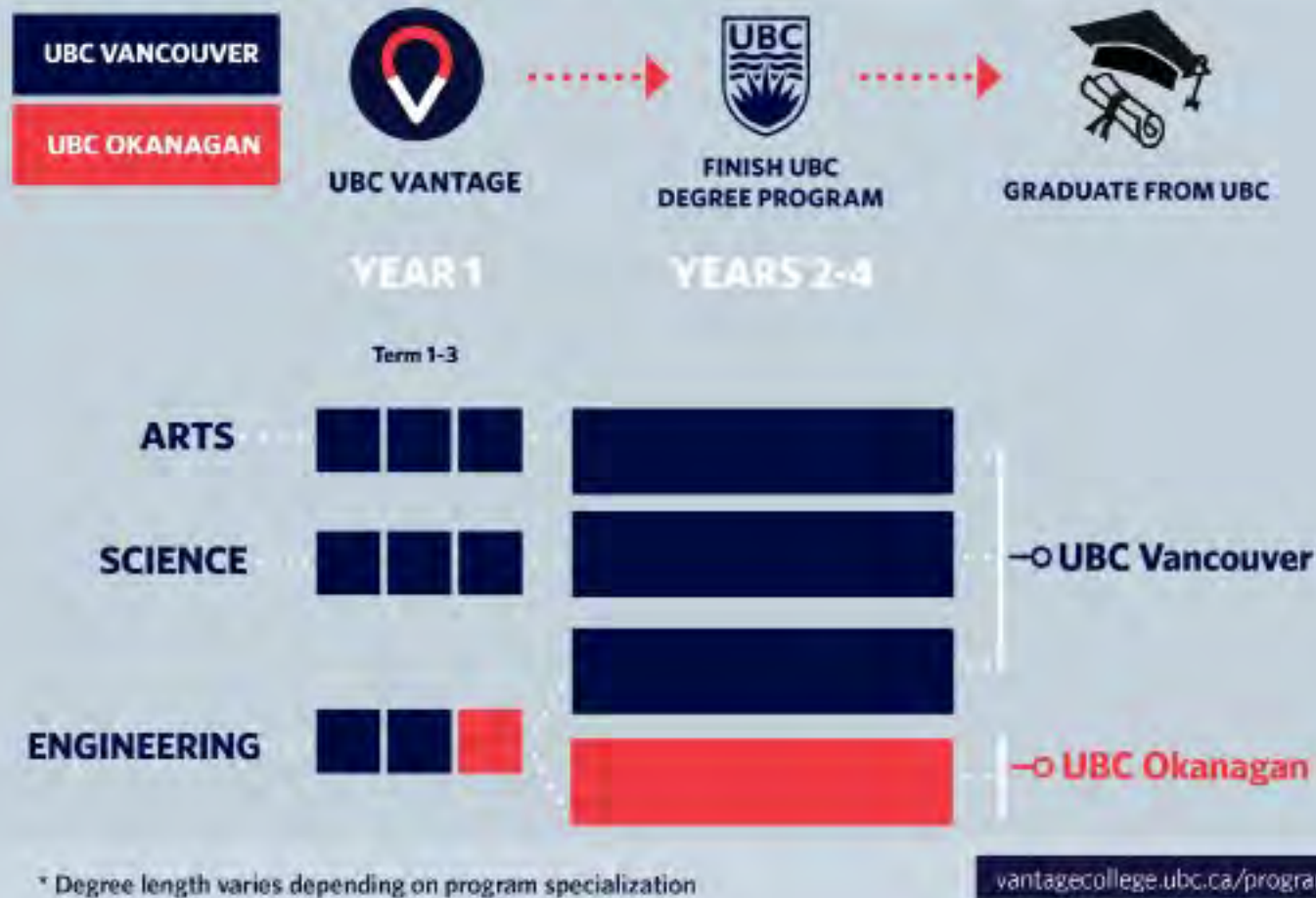
**ORCHARD COMMONS: Location of Vantage College at the UBC Vancouver Campus**

*We would like to acknowledge that UBC Vantage College is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>mə0k<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) people.*



# Vantage One Programs, Enrolment and Progression

## streamed degree paths



## THREE DEGREE PROGRAMS

**Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science:**

For all three terms, students study at the **Vancouver campus**.

**Bachelor of Applied Science:**

For terms 1 and 2, students will be studying at the **Vancouver campus**

For term 3, students will be at the **Okanagan campus**.

## Dual campus

UBC Vantage College offers specially-designed pathway programs for international students. In addition to the UBC Vancouver Campus, the Vantage One Engineering program also extends out to UBC Okanagan. The award winning Vantage One programs are customized to offer students an enriched first year experience that is 11-months long in duration.

While all Vantage students complete Term 1 and Term 2 at UBC Vancouver, where they study throughout Term 3 will depend on their chosen program.



# 2021 VANTAGE ONE PROGRAM ENROLMENTS

## Vantage One Programs for Cohort #7

**172**  
Students

Arts

**111**  
Students

Science

**47**  
Students

Engineering

**84%**  
Progression into 2nd  
Year  
(of 330 Students Total)

## 2021 Capstone Virtual Conference

Research Theme: "Aspire to Inspire"

**300+**  
Students

**65+**  
Research  
Posters

**50+**  
Academic  
Talks

Vantage students will  
graduate with degrees from:

**UBCV**

**198**  
Different  
programs

**UBCO**

**13**  
Different  
programs

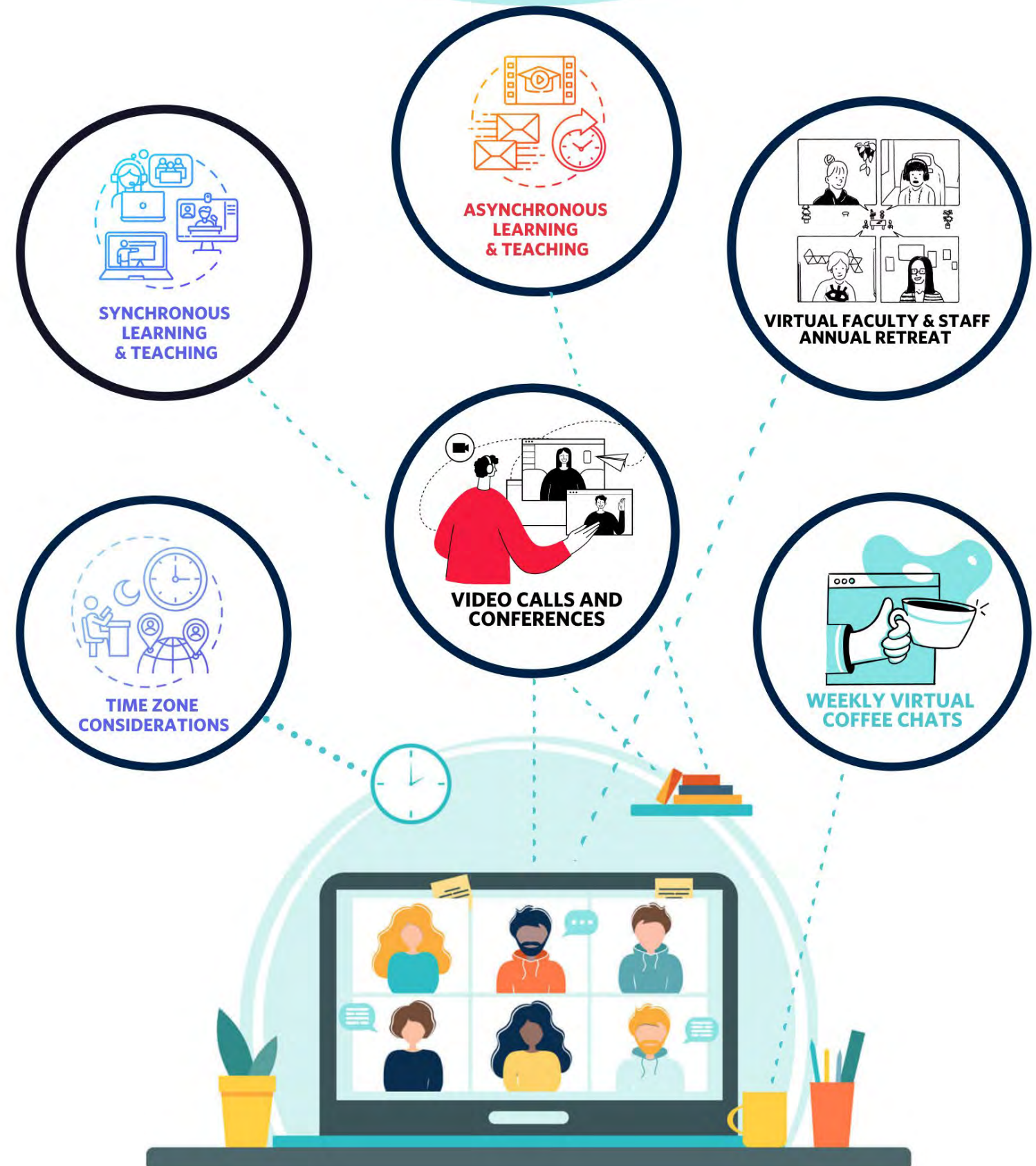
## Vantage Scholarships & Awards 2021

**\$1M**  
Award Amount  
Offered

**40**  
Awards  
Offered

**25**  
Nationalities  
Represented

# Adapting to Online Teaching and Remote Work



# Faculty Adaptability and Innovation

## Academic Speaker Series

The [Academic Speaker Series](#) provides a forum for dissemination of work generated by faculty and staff at Vantage College. Like many UBC Faculties, Vantage College had to shift its course delivery fully online in March 2020. The below two events showcase reflection and adaptation for COVID-19 challenges and changes.

### Evolving Adaptability in Instructional and Institutional Practices



This UBC Vantage College (VC) 2021 Speaker Series Event featured two invited International Scholars as well as three Vantage College (VC) faculty members, and a VC alumnus and current TA, providing a forum for learning about and reflecting on emerging practices in education one year after the initial pivot to online teaching. Organized by the VC Professional Development Committee, this event follows up on last year's speaker series on "Pivoting to Online Teaching" with the theme of "Evolving Adaptations", a concept that captures the (potential) normalizing of the adaptations, innovations, and other practices of the last year, including but not limited to changes instigated by the pandemic.

This event was organized by members of the VC Professional Development Committee—Dr. Alfredo Ferreira, Dr. Eva Zysk, and Dr. Sandra Zappa-Hollman.



### Pivoting to Remote Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges, Opportunities, and Insights



In this previously recorded event of the 2021 Academic Speaker Series, three short talks by experienced UBC Vantage College instructors reported on their experience over the summer months as they adapted to remote teaching contexts.

#### Pandemic Teaching: Designing UBC's COVID-19 & Society course By Katherine Lyon, PhD

This presentation details the development of a new online sociology course, COVID-19 & Society, delivered summer 2020 at UBC. Course design considerations to be discussed include the strengths and challenges of teaching and learning about an ongoing crisis, the facilitation of digital course learning communities, and the rapid and collaborative development of thematic course content.

#### Adapting to new circumstances: Recounting the experience of Engineering program instructors at UBC-O By Ernest Goh, PhD

Under normal circumstances, the Applied Science (Engineering) stream of UBC Vantage College conducts its summer term in UBC's Okanagan campus, in the city of Kelowna. Arising from the COVID-19 situation, this past Vantage summer term was conducted online. Instructors taught from home, while none of the students were in Kelowna. At the start of the term, 19 students were in East Asia, 41 in North America, and 4 in other parts of the world. More students returned to their home countries during the term.

#### Key Design Considerations and Implementations for Teaching Chemistry Online By Anka Lekhi, PhD

As Dr. Lekhi prepared to transition a first-year Chemistry course online, she identified four key elements to help her design the course. These key elements included: making content easily accessible, building community among learners and between learners and the teaching team, incorporating peer learning, and having opportunities for feedback on student learning. In this presentation, Dr. Lekhi outlined specific strategies implemented in Canvas and Collaborate Ultra which facilitated these four key elements.



# Flexible Approach to Teaching & Learning Online

Vantage One instructors adapted and aligned their courses for online delivery to support students to engage in the material. Due to having to accommodate students over several Time Zones, portions of the course were delivered synchronously, and others asynchronously. This [YouTube video](#) details some of the unique and innovative ways our Faculty adapted their course work for a more flexible approach.



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## Inclusive Teaching and Learning Symposium

On June 29th, 2020, Vantage College Intercultural Communication Committee (ICC) organised and hosted a symposium focusing on inclusive teaching and learning to better include, engage, and support English language learners, international students, and first-year students. 80 UBC educators registered for the symposium.

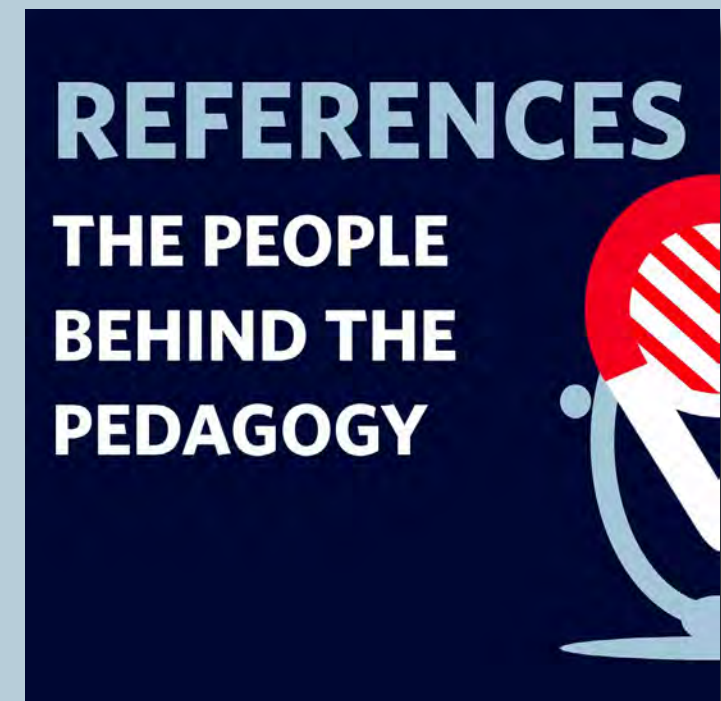
The online symposium consisted of a Keynote Speaker Panel Discussion with invited speakers and Roundtable Discussions led by Vantage College educators. Roundtable Discussion topics included accessibility, encouraging English language learners to use office hours, group work in classes, and self-regulated learning.

The goal of the symposium is to engage in dialogue with the UBC-wide educators community around strategies, experiences, and reflections on creating more inclusive learning spaces and enriching the student experience.

Resources from the symposium are available: [symposium.vantagecollege.ubc.ca](https://symposium.vantagecollege.ubc.ca).

This initiative was supported by Vantage College and the Equity Enhancement Fund.

## The Vantage College Podcast



### References: The People Behind the Pedagogy

This [podcast series](#) explores how to make language your superpower. Hosted by AEP Lecturer Jodie Martin, we bring you the latest and greatest news from UBC Vantage College where we have English language experts working side by side with discipline-specific faculty to help our students power up their communication and academic literacy skills so that they can thrive in a rigorous academic setting.

Over the 2020/2021 year, the podcast team published four episodes:

- "Transitioning to online learning in the middle of a pandemic" (Part 1)—featuring Curriculum Manager Brian Wilson
- "Transitioning to online learning in the middle of a pandemic" (Part 2)—featuring Assistant Professors Gabriel Potvin & Katja Thieme
- "Why can't I just copy/paste?" —featuring AEP Lecturer Alys Avalos-Rivera & Academic Director Suzie Lavalley on academic integrity
- "Making the mechanics of paraphrasing more explicit through grammatical metaphor" —featuring AEP Lecturer Jennifer Walsh Marr

# Program Social Media Engagement

With the move to online-learning for the 2020/2021 academic year, the Vantage Marketing and Communications Team was tasked with reaching out and engaging with students in a widely-accessible way. Since recruitment and information sessions were unable to be fulfilled in-person, the Communications team developed several social media campaigns. This included the below YouTube series, designed to introduce prospective students to their future instructors and degrees.

***“Professor Brett “GeoDude” Gilley answers your questions about Geology”***



UBC Vantage One Geology instructor Brett Gilley answers common questions from his students and the internet in general. Is Mount Everest truly the tallest mountain on earth? How were the rainbow mountains in Peru and China formed? Can you make any money as a geologist?

***“Professor Jodie Martin answers your questions about English”***



UBC Vantage One English instructor Jodie Martin answers common questions from her students and the internet in general. What is the difference between the academic English program at Vantage and a general English class? How can you increase your English abilities quickly?

***“Professor Gabriel Potvin answer your questions about Engineering”***



UBC Vantage One Engineering instructor Gabriel Potvin answers common questions from his students and the internet in general. What are some common misconceptions about Engineering as a field? Why are chemistry and math important for the study of Engineering? Why don't we have flying cars yet?



# Featured Faculty Publications

Numerous published examples of transformative teaching and learning are showcased in this section, over the span of 2020-2021. They illustrate the range and diversity of projects, as well as the high level of interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary collaboration that characterizes much of the work at Vantage. This research is published in a variety of journals, both domestic and international, with a focus on dissemination of teaching practices.

## [Investigating the effects of reducing linguistic complexity on EAL student comprehension in first-year undergraduate assessments](#)

by **Daniel Riccardi, Jennifer Lightfoot, Mark Lam, Katherine Lyon, Nathan D. Roberson & Simon Lolliot**



Academic writing across disciplines is often linguistically complex, characterized by abstract ideas densely packed into nominal groups (Biber & Gray, 2010; Halliday & Martin, 1993; McCabe & Gallagher, 2008), along with infrequent lexis and content requiring specific cultural knowledge. This linguistic complexity presents a significant comprehension challenge, contributing to an increase in the performance gap between English as an additional language (EAL) students and their non-EAL peers (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). This study presents the outcome of a collaborative project between Psychology, Sociology, and EAP instructors teaching within a pathway program at a Canadian university combining first-year university courses with language-linked EAP courses. One key outcome of this collaboration has been greater awareness of the comprehension challenges that assessments pose for students, particularly in the case of multiple choice question (MCQ) exams. To investigate the effects of linguistic complexity, the research team analyzed whether unpacking MCQs by reducing the linguistic complexity. Since this study was published, the team has recently piloted a training program for faculty from across campus interested in revising their MCQs to be more inclusive for students with EAL.

For more information on this study and its findings, visit the [Journal of English for Academic Purposes website](#).

## [Pomp and Circumstances: From Research, in Practice, for Students](#)

by **Jennifer Walsh Marr & Jodie Martin**

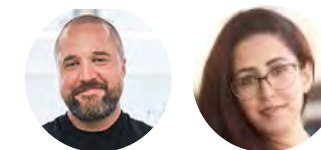


Circumstances are powerful grammatical tools for representing precision and specificity in the clause, and they add contextual factors necessary for nuanced disciplinary discourse. This type of detail expressed through circumstances is significant in academic discourse, yet it is often neglected in favor of attention to participants and processes. Drawing on their experiences teaching embedded, discipline-specific EAP to multilingual students at Vantage College at the University of British Columbia, Doctoral Candidate Jennifer Walsh Marr and Dr. Jodie Martin demonstrate how circumstances, and more broadly circumstantiation, generate crucial insights for both comprehension of complex academic materials and generation of student texts .

For more information on this study and its findings, visit the [iKala journal website](#)

## [Experimenting with labs: Practical and pedagogical considerations for the integration of problem-based lab instruction in chemical engineering](#)

by **Gabriel Potvin & Roza Vaez Ghaemi**



In the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering (CHBE) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), the senior laboratory course was designed using a Problem-Based Laboratory (PBL) approach to shift part of the responsibility for the learning experience from the instructor to the students, with the aim to improve learning outcomes. In this course, student teams perform 10-week open-ended labs in which they design and execute unique experimental plans to address industrially relevant problem statements. This course leverages student autonomy and ownership of their work, the flexibility of deliverables, and low-stakes opportunities to make and fix mistakes to increase student engagement, which in turn facilitates the development of critical thinking and decision-making skills and increases student confidence in their engineering abilities. This paper synthesizes student feedback, performance data, instructor observations, and logistical experiences over several iterations of this course to identify the key elements required for the successful implementation of PBL instruction.

For more information on this study and its findings, visit the [Canadian Journal of Chemical Engineering website](#).

# New Appointments and Faculty Awards



## Appointment of Academic Director: Dr. Suzie Lavallee

On July 1, 2020, Dr. Suzie Lavallee was appointed as the Academic Director of UBC Vantage College, for a three-year term.

Dr. Lavallee is a Professor of Teaching in the Department of Forestry and Conservation Sciences in the Faculty of Forestry, where she is an experienced and passionate educator with expertise in experiential learning. Her teaching has involved running field courses with integrative curricular approaches. She was awarded the Killam Teaching prize in 2012. In recognition of her contributions to program and curriculum development, Dr. Lavallee holds an adjunct professorship at Fujian Agricultural and Forestry University.

Dr. Lavallee is a champion of learning technology adoption at UBC and currently is the project lead for a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) project that aims to generate libraries of interactive, virtual, and 3D resources for learning in online and classroom settings. As a long-time Faculty Fellow, she has served on the Senior Faculty Fellow for Jump Start, UBC's first-year orientation program.

Dr. Lavallee's enthusiasm for experiential learning and pedagogy aligns with Vantage's mandate to provide transformative learning opportunities through innovative pedagogies, interdisciplinary approaches, and an enriched student experience. She looks forward to working with all faculty, staff and students involved in the Vantage One programs.

## 2020/2021 Killam Teaching Prize: Vantage One Instructors



**Jennifer Gagnon**



**Katherine Lyon**



**Gabriel Potvin**

In 2020, Dr. Jennifer M. Gagnon, Dr. Katherine Lyon, and Dr. Gabriel Potvin each received the Killam Teaching Prize. This annual award to faculty is nominated by students, colleagues and alumni in recognition of excellence in teaching. Successful award winner(s) are exemplary role models who have and will continue to have significant impact on the culture of teaching and learning.

Awardees demonstrate evidence of engagement in all of the following pillars of teaching:

- Activities to facilitate and support learning (Delivery)
- Course and/or program design (Design)
- Scholarship of Teaching (Dissemination)
- Community engagement (Community)
- Scholarly reflection and enhancement (Development)

Many winners would have already received prior awards in recognition of teaching excellence and/or innovation in any of those pillars.

# Student Adaptability During Shift to Online Learning

## Vantage Peer Mentor Program

The Vantage Peer Mentors are a group of Vantage alumni students, passionate about fostering social connections and providing peer support to the Vantage One cohort. This includes event planning, peer-led communications campaigns, and working with staff and faculty members for student engagement initiatives.

During the 2020/2021 the Peer Mentors took extra initiative to ensure students were able to build connections with their peers, despite the challenges with online-only learning. They held various events focused on socializing, wellness, and studying resources—all virtually and through social media.



## The Student Perspective: Year One During Covid-19

In a series of interviews, we asked our 2020 Excellence and Entrance Scholarship winners about their experience with shifting their studies to an exclusively virtual learning environment:



**Makafui Hortense Amouzouvi, from Lomé in Togo, West Africa**

On the challenges with virtual learning:

*"Online learning is an interesting and quite challenging way of learning. Personally, I was ready to experience this new method of learning and brave through it but it doesn't prevent me from challenges such as weak internet signals, lack of appropriate devices or simply the nostalgia of in-person learning. My first week of school was the most difficult one because as I move forward I become better. One particular challenge was working as a team online. We are all located in different time zones so it is a bit difficult to schedule team meetings that suit everybody. It is also difficult to work out subjects like Math or Physics if there is no appropriate device. However, as days go by, I am also learning how to use the resources I have and still make this year a fantastic one. Online learning is a whole new system that we need to adapt to and get the best of it."*



**Elisa Pan Huang, from Panama**

On how students can embrace virtual learning:

*"Try to organize yourself to have good time management. Even though I mentioned before that this was my challenge with virtual learning, some recommendations I would say is to try using this app called "My Study Life" it has literally been a life savior. This app can be used in both phone and computer, it keeps track of any task, exams or assignments, and it also gives you notification reminders. The first 2 weeks of university were really difficult for me to keep track because I needed to search the syllabus or the canvas page to see what assignments were due, with the app I didn't need to do that. Everyone is facing the same problem; you are not alone!"*



**Visal Saosuo, from Kampong Chhnang, Cambodia**

On pushing through challenges and finding resources:

*"This term one really hit my confidence as a student. After my mid-term season ended, I thought I might drop out of college since most of my grades were really low. That did bring me down, but one of my seniors guided me to some resources available and I did follow his advice. I met with my advisors and professors to figure out strategies to better prepare for the finals. I think, I made a right decision and I got so many good advice from each person. That advice gained back my confidence and I do feel like I did well on my finals. From this experience, I learn to always reach out to people for help, there is nothing hurt from getting people advice."*

ASPIRE TO INSPIRE

# CAPSTONE VANTAGE

2020  
BCCIE  
AWARD

## Celebrating Student Excellence Virtually

The 7th annual Vantage College Capstone Conference was facilitated online this year, welcoming over 300 students from the 2020/2021 cohort.

This year's conference theme was "Aspire to inspire". The presentations and projects students shared at the Capstone Conference are inspiring due to the breadth, depth and diversity of the work, the innovation and ambition they represent, and the collaboration and team work they demonstrate.

Through the Zoom and Gather.town platforms, students, faculty and staff were given access to view 65 presentations from Science and Arts with four team projects in Applied Science. Students were also encouraged to socialize with their peers in Gather.town, a 2D interactive virtual social space.

This year's conference Chair was Academic English lecturer, Jodie Martin. The Capstone Conference Committee was comprised of both Faculty and Staff members, including, Brian Wilson, Luiza Andrade, Suzie Lavallee, Susanne Schmiesing, Eva Zysk, Peyman Yousefi, Tina Chan, Laila Ferreira, Fok-Shuen Leung, and Oscar Tsiu. In addition to the presentations, the conference included video submissions from students on their experience, as well as a reflective look at the last year from Faculty and Staff.

The [Vantage College Capstone Conference](#) is held annually to showcase the incredible work from all our students over the course of their first year at UBC. The conference was honoured to receive the 2020 BC Council for International Education Award.

## Academic Advising



The Vantage College Academic Advising Team is an integral part in the success of all Vantage One students. In addition to providing resources for students to succeed in the Vantage One program, they also contribute to setting students up for success well into their UBC undergraduate experience. Our Academic Advisors also provide extensive assistance when students require mental health resources.

This last year, more than ever, the Advising team was tasked with remaining connected with students under difficult circumstances. This required our team to remain accessible to students in a new way. Advising was now offered through various channels, including: email, phone calls, and Zoom calls. This was especially adaptive due to different Time Zones. They found that due to the lack of in-person connection that some students had with their instructors and other students, consistent communication was very important to ensure student needs were met.

Various workshops, advising office hours and student focused events were held by the Advising team, in collaboration with the Vantage Peer Mentors. This collaboration led to a better understanding of just how online-learning can affect students, especially in their first year, and what new resources are required to ensure student success.

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## Improved Access and Perspective Through Online Resources



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges especially as related to the rapid transition to remote learning. While much of the discourse has focused on the barriers to effective teaching in online spaces, less attention has been given to the ways in which remote teaching has actually made education more accessible for particular learners and educators. The pandemic is also an opportunity for academia to learn from the disabled community. As a disabled educator, and Vantage One instructor, specializing in disability studies and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Dr. Jennifer Gagnon sees colleagues and students adopting disability-hacks, like zoom for meetings, work from home, flexible schedules, calendar tools as memory aids and more. Innovations in online teaching during the pandemic, such as virtual classrooms, text-based participation, online office hours, recorded video lectures, and live captioning, are all examples of accommodations that many disabled folks, language learners, and culturally diverse learners struggled to access prior to COVID-19. Now that all learners and educators require such technological "hacks" to continue to work and learn, accessibility and inclusion for those often on the margins of education has been centred.

Dr. Gagnon, creator and Chair for the Disability Affinity Group, presented on this topic at the 2021 Academic Speaker Series. Entitled "We Are All Disabled Now - Towards a Crippled Pedagogical Future," her applied perspective gives us a new look at just how things have improved for the disabled community in terms of access because of online-learning. It also details some of the areas where we can improve. To read more on Dr. Gagnon's presentation, visit the link here: [vantagecollege.ubc.ca/academic-speaker-series](https://vantagecollege.ubc.ca/academic-speaker-series).

vantagecollege.ubc.ca



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