

**The Impact of a Community-University Collaboration:  
Opening the “black box”**

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**ABSTRACT**

Within the Social Economy, universities are working with community representatives to undertake research projects, service learning opportunities, and increasingly, academic program development, all with the objective of addressing social challenges. As many are quick to caution, the community is actually a sum of its various actors, interests, accountabilities and needs, which university staff and faculty must work to understand. Like the community, the university is a complex organization with politics, conflicts, tensions, and competing goals and objectives. Within this larger context, these various components, focusing on government, academic and administrative stakeholders, will impact and may even limit aspects of a collaboration between the university and its community partners. Through examination of a case study related to a graduate program, which was collaboratively developed between the university and community representatives, this article will identify and explore those accountabilities and the resulting impact on the collaboration. It will conclude with recommendations for similar partnerships.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Dans l'économie sociale, les universités travaillent de pair avec des représentants de la communauté pour lancer des projets de recherche, créer des occasions d'apprentissage par le service et, de plus en plus, développer des programmes d'études universitaires; tout cela dans le but de régler des défis sociaux. Beaucoup s'empressent de formuler une mise en garde : la communauté est en réalité la somme des divers acteurs, intérêts, responsabilités et besoins qui la composent, ce que les membres du personnel et les facultés des universités doivent tenter de comprendre par leur travail. Au même titre qu'une communauté, une université est une organisation complexe constituée de politiques, de conflits, de tensions ainsi que d'objectifs concurrents. Dans ce contexte large, ces diverses composantes, en particulier les intervenants gouvernementaux, universitaires et administratifs, auront des conséquences sur la collaboration entre l'université et ses partenaires communautaires, et peuvent même en limiter certains aspects. Cette étude définit et analyse ces responsabilités et leurs conséquences sur la collaboration par le moyen d'une étude de cas liée

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à un programme d'études supérieures développé grâce à la collaboration de l'université et des représentants de la communauté. L'étude se termine par des recommandations visant des partenariats similaires.

**Keywords / Mots clés :** Community based partnerships; Collaboration; Social economy; Graduate programs; Case study, University of Victoria / partenariats communautaires; collaboration; économie sociale; programme d'études supérieures; étude de cas; Université de Victoria

### INTRODUCTION

As communities, organizations and individuals strive to address the challenges and opportunities that face them, they are partnering with universities to accomplish their goals (Baum, 2000). These collaborations range from participatory research projects (BALTA, nd; Hall, 2011; Lesser & Oscos-Sanchez, 2007) and service learning activities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002) to curriculum development and delivery (Centre for Sustainable Community Development, nd). This trend is likely to continue as universities strive to align their academic programming and research closer with community needs and issues (Savan, et al., 2009).

Challenges abound with these kinds of collaborations given universities' and communities' differing cultures and contexts. Each must make an effort to learn about the other to ensure effective working relationships (Baum, 2000; Lefever-Davis, et al., 2007; Prins, 2005). According to many papers on community-based research, responsibility for this rests with researchers and others associated with the university. These individuals must approach the community with cultural humility and ensure that they understand its culture and context before undertaking activities with them (Lefever-Davis, et al., 2007; Minkler, 2004; Prins, 2005). For a partnership to be successful, all parties must understand the other, meaning that community members should undertake activities to learn about the university's context. Like a community, the university is comprised of various constituencies with different responsibilities and priorities. Within the realities of this type of partnership, the community may in fact need to develop a series of relationships within the larger university context (Bringle, et al., 2002). Ultimately, a two way engagement between the university and community partners needs to be developed through mutual understanding (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Relatively little is written about the university context and its component parts and the impact these may have on projects with the community. Some reflection has been conducted on the nature of research within the university and its interaction with community-based research projects. Freeman and his colleagues (2009) explain the tenure and promotion process and make the argument that community members need to understand and care about supporting this process to ensure that community-committed researchers can continue working with their partners. Hollander (2011) explains the need for university researchers to gain peer reviewed publications as part of a community-university research collaboration and the impact that this can have on the shape and outcome of the research project itself. This type of articulation about the university context has not extended further to other parts of the organization, such as administrative and academic decision-making nor to joint academic program planning. The end result of this lack of knowledge is often frustration between the parties. The university partners tend to feel that the community does not understand their concerns or the type of research outcomes that the faculty need as part of their reward systems while the community perceives that the university partners have access to larger amounts of resources that could be applied to the collaboration than is at the disposal of the community (Buckeridge, et al., 2002). Overall, the university remains a "black box" to outsiders (and many insiders) and subject to criticism and misunderstanding (Anyon, et al., 2007; Howard Hughes Medical Institute & Burroughs Wellcome Fund, 2006).

This article contributes to the development of an understanding and appreciation of the university context by those outside through the examination of the experience of a community-university collaboratively developed graduate program. In particular, the impact of the university's multiple, complex and often contradictory accountabilities on the partnership's goals and objectives will be explored. By articulating this context and its potential impact, it may be easier to form a collaboration between the university and community to achieve their joint and individual goals and objectives.

First, the university context will be described, with particular focus on stakeholder involvement and accountabilities within government, academic and administrative contexts. Then, the case study will examine the specific impact of these contexts on the community-university partnership's goals, objectives and outcomes as they relate to joint academic program planning. The article will conclude with recommendations for other community-university partnerships, particularly those engaged in joint academic planning.

### **The University Context**

As a starting point in explaining the university and opening the "black box", it is important to describe the university context and understand that it is complex and full of multiple accountabilities to stakeholders both inside and outside the organization (Jones, et al., 2001). The university is in many ways an organizational form unto its self. In some respects, it functions like a public sector organization and shares many characteristics and accountabilities with a government department. In other ways, it is similar to any large organization with rules and procedures. Finally, and perhaps most confusingly to those outside, the university has its own distinctive form of shared decision-making.

### **Involvement of government stakeholders**

Within Canada, universities can be considered a type of public sector organization for several reasons. First, provincial governments create universities and colleges through legislation and must approve all degrees, diplomas, a certificate and other forms of academic programming. These acts also establish an university's organizational structure, notably a Board of Governors, Senate and different Faculties (Jones, et al., 2001). As an example, within British Columbia, the University Act creates a Senate, which is responsible for setting the criteria for academic standards, qualifications for student admission, faculty hires and establishment of new programs, and the various Faculties, which are responsible for their own graduate and undergraduate programs and the hiring of qualified faculty and instructors (Government of British Columbia, 1996). The Senate is comprised on university faculty, staff, students and alumni (University of Victoria, 2011b). Public universities in the United States and Australia are created in similar ways (Carnegie & Tuck, 2010; Duderstadt, 2000).

Second, provincial governments are the single largest funder of post-secondary education and tend to fund a larger proportion of a university's budget as compared to student tuition. Operating grants are provided based on student numbers. Further, provincial governments set tuition fee policies which limit the tuition level and the amounts by which they can increase; the latter are usually capped at the rate of inflation (Ministry of Advanced Education, nd). Perhaps not surprisingly, these policies influence the types and size of programs that universities can offer (Duderstadt, 2000).

Third, as public institutions, universities are subject to many of the same policies and laws as government bodies (Duderstadt, 2000). In British Columbia, these include limitations on salary and benefit increases (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2010) and the application of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, 2004). This act defines the

nature of personal information and the manner in which it can be shared and with which parties. Essentially, personal information can only be accessed and shared with those who need it to undertake their duties, regardless of whether they are inside or outside the university (Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, 2004; University of Victoria, 2010b, 2010d).

### **Involvement of academic stakeholders**

Universities, by reputation and often in reality, are seen to be slow and steady in their decision-making (Horowitz Gassol, 2007; Meyer, 2007), to the point of sometimes being described as glacial (Duderstadt, 2000). Good reasons exist for this reputation. Collegiality, debate, consensus and multiple points of approval are at the heart of university decision-making. This process is further complicated by the compartmentalization that has occurred as academic departments are formed on the basis of disciplines. It may be difficult to convince individual academic units to support larger institutional goals (Carnegie, et al., 2010; Duderstadt, 2000). Decisions are made as recommendations at the lower levels and then progress to encompass additional academic units for approval and confirmation. The process ultimately culminates with the Senate, which has ultimate responsibility for academic matters, and the Board of Governors, which represents the public interest. In those cases of new programs and degrees, final approval is given by the provincial governments (Duderstadt, 2000; Johnston, 2003; Jones, et al., 2001). Within this context, key academic decisions include instructor hiring, academic quality and integrity, and curriculum and academic planning (Duderstadt, 2000; Hamilton, 2000; Johnston, 2003).

The nature of standing determines who plays a role within the larger governance structure. Within the university, faculty are seen “to be the academic institution” (Henkin & Persson, 1992, pg 53, italics in the original). A distinction is then created between faculty and staff, with the faculty having the primary role in university governance. Staff are generally limited to making decisions in administrative areas such as finances, physical plant, and human resources and tend not to have a voice in academic matters (Henkin, et al., 1992). Generally, contract instructors do not have any role in the larger academic decision-making of the institution.

### **Involvement of administrative stakeholders**

It is with the consideration of the administrative realm that a university might be most recognizable by those outside. Staff are responsible for budgets, building and other physical infrastructure, human resources and other functions which support academic programs. They also develop and implement administrative policies, rules and processes. In this context, a staff member generally “takes direction” from the academic side (Adams, 1976; Foster, 2006, pg. 49).

The end result of these various accountabilities is a large and very complex environment. Duderstadt (2000) argues that the modern university is “one of the most complex social institutions of our times” (p. 2). It is also one that may not be easily understood by those outside the organization, despite being impacted by this context when working in collaboration with faculty and staff to undertake research and service learning projects and increasingly academic planning. Given these dynamics, it is important to understand the nature of these impacts and determine ways for universities and community partners to effectively work together. An examination of a case study involving a jointly developed graduate program will provide insight into this issue.

### **Methodology**

This analysis was explored within the context of a case study research methodology as defined by Yin (2003) and Stake (1995, 2000). By considering a single case, one can explain a situation, explore the dynamics that are at play within that particular setting, and develop recommendations for others who face a similar situation (Eisenhardt, 2002; Stake, 1995,

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2000; Yin, 2003). This case study may provide insight and understanding into some aspect of this “black box” that is the university (Bracken & Oughton, 2006; Nason & Pillutla, 1998; Parker, 2007).

The data are drawn from the author’s role as participant-observer in the development and implementation of the graduate program under consideration (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Yin, 2003). Early on, the author served as academic lead for the School of Public Administration, the sponsoring academic department. Her responsibilities included serving as co-chair of the Masters of Arts in Community Development (MACD) Working Group, and chair of the MACD admissions committee. She collaborated with the community partners to develop the program blueprint and ensure a community perspective was represented in instructor selection, coordinated the development of curriculum and marketing materials, and admission of students, and managed the selection and hiring of course developers and instructors according to the program’s principles and university guidelines. For this paper, the author also drew upon meeting minutes and other documents, emails, conversations and her own observations. As a disclaimer, other frustrations with the process that were not exhibited in these public ways or ones that might have been perceived only by the partners may not be reflected within this article (Labaree, 2002).

### Context

Offered through the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, the MACD is focused on developing the leadership and management skills of individuals involved in the non-profit, co-operative, community economic development and international community development sectors (School of Public Administration, nd-c). Designed for the working student based in Canada and beyond, course work is delivered through distance education and several summer residency sessions (School of Public Administration, nd-a). This program was designed in deep collaboration with a variety of university stakeholders and representatives from community development organizations from the target sectors (School of Public Administration, 2009, nd-c). Comprised of representatives from the university and larger community, a working group eventually came together to design the overall curriculum and wrote the program proposal for university and provincial government approvals. This commitment to partnership and collaboration was further extended to program delivery, where instruction is provided by both community practitioners and university faculty.

From the outset, this relationship was guided by principles of collaboration and partnership between the university and community, which has been evidenced in the role that community representatives have played in the program development, individual course development and delivery, and ongoing advice and oversight provision (School of Public Administration, 2009). During the program planning stages, community representatives of the working group played an active role in decision-making within the parameters set by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. As seen below, this role was mediated to active consultation and advice during the program implementation stage with regards to curriculum, instructor qualifications, student recruitment and other operational issues. This change in role and input has led to tensions between some community representatives and the university as it raises the question of the meaning of the term “partnership” and corresponding extent of control and formal decision-making that can be exercised by community representatives within this type of collaboration.

The two-and-a-half year timeframe for program development, approval and implementation was relatively quick by university standards, where it can often take five years or more to develop and start new programs. After an unsuccessful attempt to develop a master’s degree in community economic development at another university, some community development representatives approached the School about the possibility of a similar degree at the University of Victoria. An initial scan of various university stakeholders confirmed that this was an idea that was worth pursuing. An initial meeting of community development representatives and interested university

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stakeholders was held and a working group with representation from both sets of stakeholders was formed to develop the program. A first meeting should be held shortly thereafter and work began on MACD program development.

### **Program Development and Approval Stage (Development – 1 year, Approvals – 9 months)**

During the one-year program development stage, the working group focused on designing overall program principles, structure and individual course descriptions. This group determined earlier on that the MACD would be a part-time program with a combination of distance education courses, delivered over the internet, and summer residency programs for several reasons. First, the target market was individuals already employed in the broad community development sector who thus would not be able to relocate to Victoria for full-studies. Second, the School of Public Administration has a long history designing and delivering graduate programs through distance education (School of Public Administration, nd-b).

During this time, a Master of Public Administration student was hired to conduct a scan of similar academic programs in Canada and a series of consultations and a survey to gather input from community development employers and potential students on the type of program and content would best meet the sector's needs was undertaken (Broadbent, 2009). Using these results plus its own expertise, the working group developed a 2 ½ year part-time program with a focus on three sectors, community economic development, co-operatives and non-profits. Significant portion of course design and instruction would be provided by community practitioners in addition to university faculty members (School of Public Administration, 2009). University stakeholders on the working group, including the author, worked with the community representatives to ensure that the proposed program reflected similar professional graduate programs at the university. At that point, the School of Public Administration submitted the proposal for approval from the appropriate decision making bodies in the university and provincial government. During this process, the School's Director and the author guided the proposal, answered questions and addressed concerns as they arose. All approvals were granted **nine** months after submission.

### **Program Implementation Stage (Implementation – 10 months)**

Once all approvals had been received in September 2009, the university directed the School of Public Administration to work towards a May 2010 launch of the MACD program, as outlined in the program proposal. To accomplish this objective, marketing materials needed to be developed and distributed, students recruited and admitted, course developers and instructors recruited and hired, and course material developed and uploaded to the course management website. This stage brought additional approval and oversight actors from within the university context. The School of Public Administration program staff and the author, as lead faculty member, provided the interface between these various university stakeholders, the School and the working group in regards to decisions that needed to be made.

During this stage, the working group's role shifted from active decision-making and influence to advice. This change was formalized with the reconstitution of the working group into the Program Steering Committee with additional membership draw from the community. The core community members from the working group were carried over to this committee. With acknowledgement to the university's administrative and accountability frameworks and policies, its primary role is to provide

advice on the design and implementation of the MA in Community Development, monitoring of the implementation of the program overall, and formulation of the competencies and

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knowledge requirements that should be addressed by the program, and the practitioners and scholars who might teach in the program (School of Public Administration, 2009, pg. 25).

The working group provided advice on potential instructors and students, course content and other issues. The first cohort with 25 students was admitted and started course work as planned in May 2010. The Program Steering Committee held its first meeting in April, just before the MACD started.

The program development process took approximately two and a half years from the initial meeting to start of classes (see Table 1) and involved a wide range of decisions and actors from within the university context (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Timeline for MACD development and implementation**

Time Period	Activity
<b>Program Development</b>	
Summer/Fall 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community representatives approached the School of Public Administration about the possibility of a graduate degree in the social economy and civil society</li> </ul>
December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial meeting of interested community and university representatives to discuss possibility of graduate degree in the social economy and civil society</li> </ul>
January 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MACD Working Group is formed and work begins on overall program structure and individual courses</li> </ul>
December 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MACD Working Group finalizes the MACD program proposal</li> </ul>
January 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MACD program proposal is submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for approval (See Table 3 for an outline of the approval process)</li> </ul>
May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The university's approval process for new degrees culminates with approval from the UVic Senate and Board of Governors</li> <li>The MACD program proposal is submitted to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market for approval</li> </ul>
<b>Program Implementation</b>	
September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market approves the new degree after public consultation</li> <li>The university directs the School of Public Administration to start implementing the MACD program for launch in May 2010</li> <li>The MACD Working Group begins the development of marketing materials and a call of expression for recruitment of qualified instructors and course developers</li> </ul>
December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing material is approved by the Deans of the Faculties of Human and Social Development and Graduate Studies and student recruitment begins</li> <li>The School circulates the call for expressions of interest from those qualified to develop course material and teach in the MACD and begins to receive resumes</li> </ul>
January 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admission packages begin arriving at the Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>The School of Public Administration Curriculum and Staffing Committee approves an initial pool of qualified instructors and course developers</li> </ul>
February 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course developers are hired and course materials development begins</li> </ul>
March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invitations are made to the MACD Program Steering Committee, which replaced the MACD Working Group</li> <li>The MACD admissions committee makes offers to the first cohort of students</li> <li>Course developers submit their first draft of course materials</li> </ul>
April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum and Staffing approves first term course materials</li> <li>The first term course materials was uploaded to Moodle, the course management system</li> <li>First MACD Program Steering Committee meeting is held</li> </ul>
May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first cohort starts the first term of course work</li> </ul>

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A series of decisions needed to be made through the program development and implementation stages (see Table 2). Each of these involved multiple government, academic and administrative stakeholders who had a significant ability to shape, influence, and make significant decisions that impact the MACD program. The role of each stakeholder will be examined in turn.

**Table 2: Decisions to be made in the development and implementation of the MACD**

Decisions	Involved Parties from the University Context
<b>Program Development Stage</b>	
Program Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration (Faculty and Staff)</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Faculty of Human and Social Development</li> </ul>
Individual Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Faculty of Human and Social Development</li> </ul>
Admission Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Faculty of Human and Social Development</li> </ul>
Program Proposal Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Faculty of Human and Social Development</li> <li>• Other Faculties (See Table 3 for approval process)</li> <li>• Senate</li> <li>• Board of Governors</li> <li>• Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market</li> </ul>
<b>Program Implementation</b>	
Development of Marketing Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration (Faculty and Staff)</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Faculty of Human and Social Development</li> <li>• UVic Communications</li> </ul>
Hiring of Qualified Instructor and Course Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration (Faculty and Staff, Curriculum and Staffing Committee)</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Faculty of Human and Social Development</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Provincial Government (Legal Framework)</li> </ul>
Admission of Qualified Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration (MACD Admissions Committee)</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> </ul>
Development of Individual Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School of Public Administration (Faculty and Staff, Curriculum and Staffing Committee)</li> <li>• Faculty of Graduate Studies</li> <li>• Distance Education</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Bookstore</li> <li>• Provincial Government (Legal Framework)</li> </ul>

### Impact of the University Context on the Partnership

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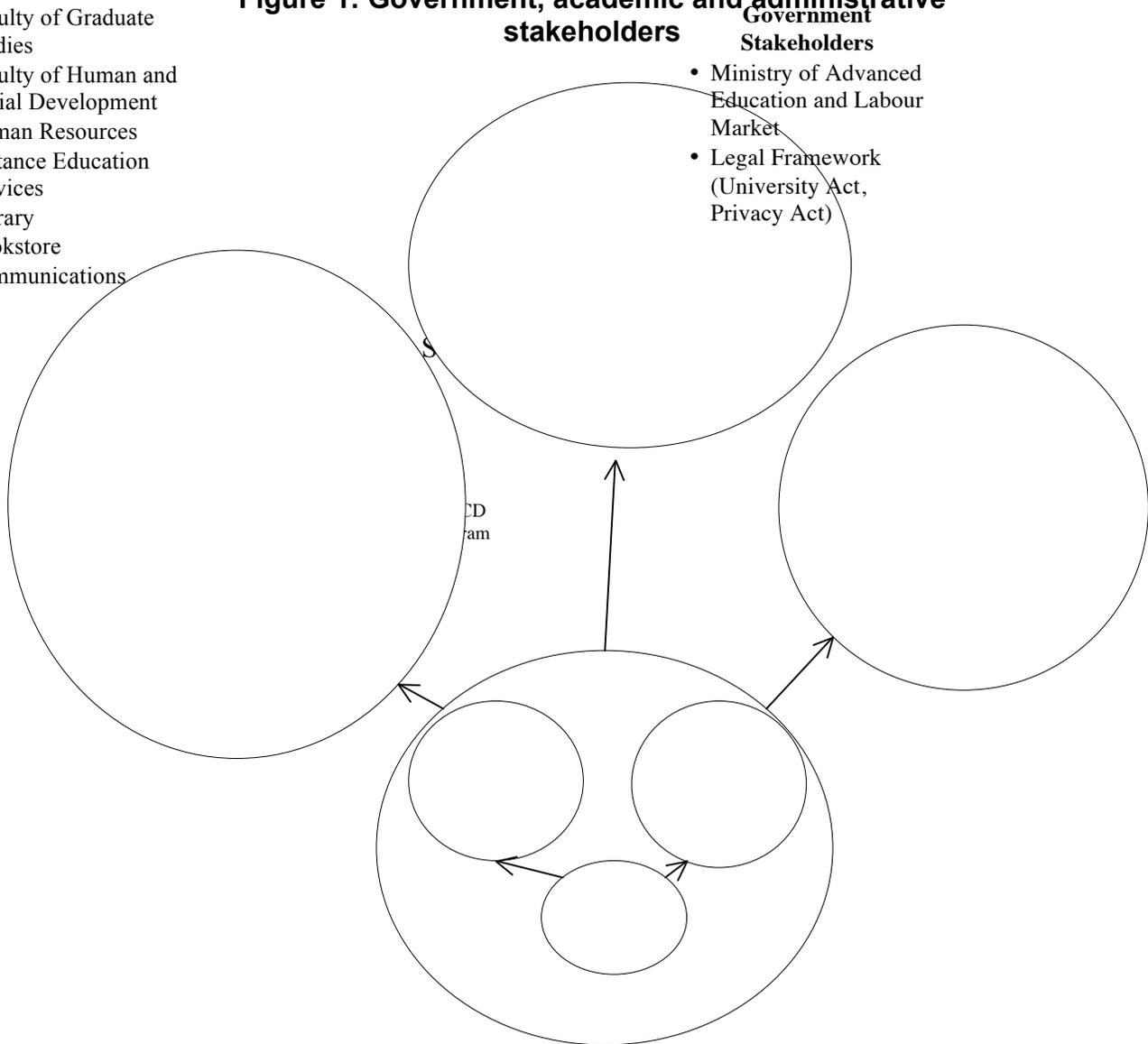
- Faculty of Graduate Studies
- Faculty of Human and Social Development
- Other Faculties
- Senate/Board of Governors

This section will explore the impact of the various accountabilities within the university on the partnership with a focus on government, academic and administrative stakeholders. Figure 1 provides an overview of these relationships.

**Administrative Stakeholders**

- Faculty of Graduate Studies
- Faculty of Human and Social Development
- Human Resources
- Distance Education Services
- Library
- Bookstore
- Communications

**Figure 1: Government, academic and administrative stakeholders**



**Involvement of government stakeholders**

Accountabilities to provincial government stakeholders created a certain set of parameters within which program design and implementation had to occur. As previously noted, the provincial government has legislated the approval process for new degrees, which includes steps for both the university and itself. As outlined in the University Act (Government of British Columbia, 1996), the Senate and Board of Governors are ultimately

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responsible for ensuring academic governance within the institution and must approve any new programs, upon recommendation from the university Faculties (University of Victoria, nd-a). Further, on behalf of the provincial government, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development reviews and approves new degrees to ensure academic quality, minimized competition with other post-secondary institutions in the province, and a link to government priorities. Within this process, the public and other post-secondary institutions have an opportunity to comment on the proposed program (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2008).

Given their responsibility for final oversight, a government can deny a university's request for a new degree program if the former judges that the program duplicates others already in place elsewhere and/or does not meet provincial priorities. It is important to note that provincial approval is not automatic as demonstrated by several recent government decisions to place and then lift moratoriums on new degree and program applications in British Columbia and Ontario (Bradshaw, 2011; Stubbs, et al., 2011). In response, the working group needed to ensure that the proposed program was sufficiently different from other potentially similar ones offered at other institutions and supported provincial government priorities. The program was also clearly linked to the provincial government's strategic goals for a quality education system and the provision of skills and knowledge needed to address shortfalls in key labour markets, such as non-profits (School of Public Administration, 2009).

Second, as public institutions, the university is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia, 2004; University of Victoria, nd-b). By implication, the amount of personal data about students, applicants and potential instructors that can be shared with those inside the university, but who are not connect in some way with the program, and community members is limited. Given the deep collaboration and decision-making in many aspects of the program's development and implementation, the working group was interested in extending this level of involvement to participation in student admissions. For example, they wanted to learn more about the first cohort of students, including a list of names and other personal information. Unfortunately, given the privacy laws, this could not be shared. In response, MACD program staff was able to provide aggregate data on the cohort, including background, undergraduate degrees and other similar information, to the working group.

### **Involvement of academic stakeholders**

The university's academic decision-making process greatly influenced the MACD's development and implementation and ongoing operations on several levels and introduced rules and procedures and new stakeholders which were not involved in earlier stages of program development.

First, the university approval process for any new graduate programs is complex, time consuming and open to comment, review and even rejection by other academic units on campus. As outlined in Table 3, a new graduate program must receive approval from ten different bodies within the university, starting with the sponsoring academic unit and culminating with the Senate and the Board of Governors, as per the University Act (Government of British Columbia, 1996). Each of these steps involves a review by faculty members in other departments. (Administrative staff are not allow to participate in these types of decisions.) Consequently the sponsoring academic unit, the School, needed to be specifically aware of the particular sensitivities expressed by various academic units and communicate these back to the working group for incorporation into program design.

**Table 3: UVic new graduate degree approval process**

1. Consultation with the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning
2. Meet with Dean of Graduate Studies to review process, timelines, and proposal guidelines
3. Develop drafts of proposal
4. Proposal approved by academic unit
5. Proposal approved by Graduate Executive Committee
6a. Proposal approved by Disciplinary Faculty
6b. Proposal approved by Faculty of Graduate Studies.
7. Proposal approved by subcommittee of Senate Committee on Curriculum
8. Proposal approved by Senate Committee on Planning
9. Proposal approved by Senate
10. Approval by Board of Governors
11. Proposal posted on the Ministry's Degree Granting Authorization website for 30-day Peer Review.
12. Comments on proposal collected by the Vice President Academic's (VPAC) Office and forwarded to the Deans and the VPAC for review
13. Submission to Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development for approval
14. Approval by the Ministry VPAC's office is notified Deans and the Academic Unit will be notified by VPAC's office The program may be officially started
15. Submit entry for next UVic Graduate Calendar

(Faculty of Graduate Studies, 2010)

This approval process directly impacted the program's name. The working group had proposed several degree names that would accurately and comprehensively capture the program's intentions; some of which were rather lengthy. However, the university as a whole prefers shorter degree names which eliminated some from immediate consideration. Further, given the approval process, other academic units had an opportunity to comment and even influence the words used in the title. For example, because one Faculty has a program in a similar area, its Dean would not support the use of "leadership" in this program's name. In response to these two factors, the working group shortened the proposed name and incorporated a by-line in marketing material that more fully reflected the program's intention (School of Public Administration, nd-a). Another academic unit had also expressed some concerns that there might be confusion with the term "community development" since it had a different meaning in their field; however, they chose not to block the term's use in the program's name.

Even though it is within the Faculty of Human and Social Development, because the MACD is a graduate program, the Faculty of Graduate Studies has primary responsibility for its academic quality, including instructor and potential student qualifications, and for approving any marketing materials on a particular graduate program. The School of Public Administration, as the home administrative unit, is accountable for implementing these standards.

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In terms of instructor qualifications, the Faculty of Graduate Studies sets minimum standards, which includes a PhD from a recognized institution. However, in the case of professional schools, such as the School of Public Administration, the Faculty is prepared to accept individuals with master's degrees and significant professional experience. Further, the Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies approves all sessional instructors, based on recommendations from the Faculty of Human and Social Development and School of Public Administration. Occasionally, they will ask for clarification on a particular instructor's credentials to ensure that this person was in fact qualified to teach in a graduate program (Faculty of Graduate Studies, nd-c). While there was an agreed commitment to have community practitioners teach within the program, the School of Public Administration had to ensure that these sessional instructors met the Faculty of Graduate Studies' requirements of at least a master's degree (School of Public Administration, 2009). Consequently, some community members with significant professional expertise but no graduate degree remain ineligible to teach in the program.

Second, given the Faculty of Graduate Studies' responsibility for graduate education, it sets the minimum standards for admission to a graduate program, which is a "B" average from a recognized undergraduate program, and conducts the first screening of all applicants, after which a potential student is considered by the School of Public Administration's admissions committee, composed of faculty members from the School, for acceptance to a specific program (Faculty of Graduate Studies, nd-a). The Faculty also sets the minimum education requirements from other countries (Faculty of Graduate Studies, nd-b). Since the university does not have a policy of granting admission to graduate programs based on the assessment of prior learning or work experience, it has shown little flexibility for individuals who do not possess a recognized undergraduate degree<sup>1</sup> (University of Victoria, 2010a). Consequently, the working group could not meet an important objective for a prior learning assessment and recognition policy which would provide credit for previous work experience to those potential students who lacked traditional academic credentials<sup>2</sup> (School of Public Administration, 2009).

While the Faculty of Graduate Studies is responsible for course curricula within graduate academic programs, the Faculty of Human and Social Development also has obligations related to its academic programs, including approval of instructors and marketing materials. In these cases, these are delegated to committees within the School of Public Administration for recommendation with final decisions resting with the Dean. In terms of course material development and instructor selection, the Curriculum and Staffing Committee plays the primary role. This committee reviewed and approved all course material, provided comments, requested changes when appropriate and ensured consistency with other courses offered within the School and graduate programs in general. Part of this role involved ensuring the course material reflected the course description, as expressed in the graduate calendar (University of Victoria, 2010e). Instructors must ensure that a course matches its description.

This group also screened potential instructors into a pool of qualified candidates from which specific individuals were selected for teaching and course development. The Curriculum & Staffing Committee is comprised of faculty who, for the most part, were not involved in the development of the MACD. As result, they had to be educated in the program's goals and objectives and the partnership's intention. Further, course developers and instructors had to ensure that the new courses reflected the School's larger objectives and vision of academic quality. This became a balancing act between the goals and vision of the new graduate degree as expressed by the working group and program proposal and the larger vision of the School, as expressed by the Curriculum & Staffing Committee. Subsequently some course material had to be revised in order to better incorporate the School's overall vision approval.

## Involvement of administrative stakeholders

The number of stakeholders involved in new program development and implementation increases with the consideration of the university's administrative realm. These parties introduce a variety of rules, policies and procedures for human resources, course development, marketing, and other areas that must be followed, but which often conflicted with the working group's intentions for deep collaboration and involvement in program decision-making.

Given the desire for community practitioners to be among the pool of eligible instructors as outlined in the program proposal (School of Public Administration, 2009) and the short time frame for implementation which did not allow an opportunity for the hiring of permanent faculty<sup>3</sup>, the MACD relied (and continues to do so) on short-term temporary instructors, also known as sessionals. Thus the MACD program staff needed to follow several rules and policies that limited the working group's involvement in this process. The first set of rules and procedures flow from the fact that sessionals are unionized (University of Victoria, 2008). According to their collective agreement, the hiring process must be both open and transparent, meaning that potentially qualified individuals must be provided an opportunity to express their interest in course development and instruction. Several members of the working group were interested in teaching in the program and thus a potential conflict of interest was created because they had anticipated playing a role in hiring these instructors. This situation was further complicated by the fact that privacy laws only allowed those individuals within the School with responsibility for hiring to view these applications (University of Victoria, 2010c, nd-b). Thus the working group's role became more advisory and consultation oriented with the drafting of instructor qualifications, building from the Faculty of Graduate Studies minimum standards, and circulating the call for expression in teaching.

The issue of pay levels for course development and teaching also became an issue for discussion within the working group. Again, given the unionization, pay levels are negotiated through a collective agreement (University of Victoria, 2008). While it was agreed by all members of the working group, including university representatives, that the sessional rate was low relative to the amount of work required, the School of Public Administration was constrained by these negotiated pay scales and could not pay more. In response, some community representatives on the working group and other potential instructors declined to undertake course development and teaching at these set rates of pay.

Concurrent with hiring instructors, marketing material for student recruitment needed to be created. These materials had to conform to university's communication guidelines for colours, layout, font and other common elements which ensured a consistent "look and feel" to all university materials (University of Victoria, 2006). The flyer was also subject to review process where various stakeholders had opportunity to comment before final approval by the Deans of the Faculties of Graduate Studies and Human and Social Development. Despite the intentions again for collaboration and decision-making, the working group's role was limited to suggesting text, but not approving it, as initially hoped.

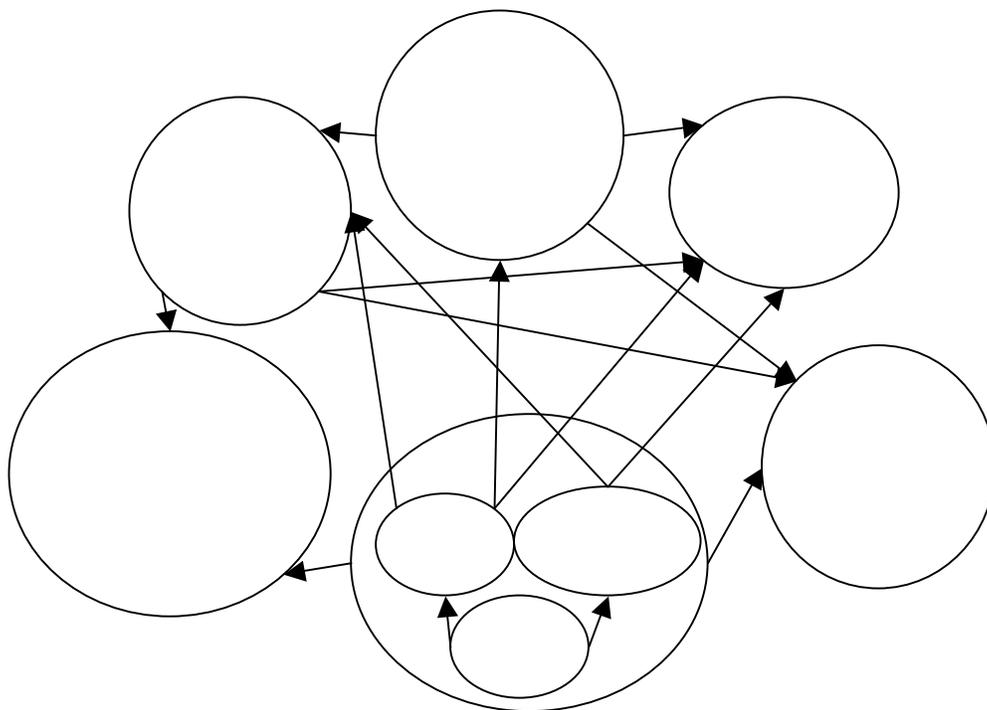
Course development, an important part of the implementation process, brought additional stakeholders, rules, and procedures into consideration, and imposed further limitations. Given that the MACD program is a combination of distance education courses and residency periods, all course material, including notes, assignment instructions, discussion modules, and other material, must be developed in advance of the course

Human and Social Development (academic and admin), Provincial Government, Faculty of Graduate Studies (academic and admin), Other Administrative Stakeholders (HR, DES, Library Bookstore, Communications), SPA, Admissions, C&S, MACD, Board of governors, Faculties, Senate, Board of governors

starting Distance Education Services worked with course developers to ensure that the course material formed to good pedagogy for distance education courses and common design templates. For some of the course developers and instructors, this required a change in focus from the traditional lecture format to a more facilitated learning style. Further, instructors needed to ensure that they complied with the Access Copyright policy on copyrighted material (University of Victoria, 2011a). In some cases, this meant choosing alternative readings when preferred books, journals, or other material were not available. Finally, instructors needed to work within bookstore deadlines to ensure that textbooks and course reading packages were ready by the start of term (University of Victoria Bookstore, nd).

As can be seen in Figure 2, the end result is a complex, and perhaps even messy, set of accountabilities to a variety of stakeholders, both inside and outside the university, for legal, academic and administrative decisions, that had implications for the working group and the program alike. Within each of their respective realms, each stakeholder had the ability to influence and even dictate the shape of the decisions necessary for MACD's development and implementation.

Figure 2: Relationships to stakeholders



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As acknowledged by all those involved, this partnership between community representatives and the university achieved its goal of developing graduate education for those employed in the community development sector.

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Given the community's involvement, the curriculum is grounded in the skills, knowledge and expertise that the community development sector has identified as important for their members' professional development.

However, this has not been without its challenges and tensions between the community and university representatives and drew into question whether this was or could be a "true" partnership with joint decision-making. As the working group's focus shift from program development to implementation, these tensions focused around the meaning of "partnership" within this context and the role that those outside the School would and could play in the program's governance and decision-making on an ongoing basis. It was not always possible to accommodate the desires of some community representatives to play a decision-making role in all aspects of the program. Further, given the short timeframe available, the School could not slow down on implementation activities in order to have the larger, and often time-consuming, discussions on the nature of this partnership. Frustrations and tensions increased for community members as they perceived that they were blocked from participating in the decision-making they felt was inherent within this partnership.

The larger university context and accountabilities had a definitive impact on this partnership and its ability to meet its goals and objectives. The partnership's original intention was to have community representatives play a substantial role in the program's development and implementation. This was more easily accomplished during the program development stage. While accountabilities to the various stakeholders were present from the outset, the School, as the sponsoring academic unit, was able to mediate these and create a space where the community representatives could shape and design the program to meet the needs of community organizations and potential students. The School's Director and the author, as the co-chair of the MACD working group, met with relevant university stakeholders to keep them informed of the program and proposal development progress as well as ensure their support through the approval process. The fact that the community was playing such an active role in the program development was an important "selling point" to the larger university. As co-chair of the MACD working group, the author worked with the community representatives to ensure that the degree was structured similar to other graduate degrees in terms of number of credits, capstone project requirements, and other factors as well as fit with the university culture and priorities along with provincial government ones while still fulfilling the working group's vision for the program. In the end, to gain approval, the MACD could not deviate from the structure of other similar professional graduate degrees, even if the working group desired something different.

The partnership encountered more challenges to its goals and objectives as the program moved into the implementation stage. It was here that administrative rules and procedures became more pronounced and perhaps created the greatest frustration within the partnership. Originally, given overarching goal of community involvement in the development and implementation of the MACD, the working group envisioned, perhaps naively, that it would play a key role in the selection of instructors and students and course development. Alas, this became difficult given the many rules and procedures, creating an often bureaucratic process that seemed to defy rationality and explanation at times. The instructor hiring process was one example that particularly exemplified these constraints and required a change in expectations on the part of the community members. While not meeting their original objective of deep involvement in hiring, they were very successful in ensuring that the overwhelming majority of course developers and instructors had many years of experience in community development organizations and included many leaders in the community development sector (School of Public Administration, 2011).

The program implementation stage also brought more stakeholders into the process which helped shaped the program's actual implementation. These administrative staff included human resource staff who enforced the

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collective agreement and graduate admissions staff who ensured that potential students met the minimum academic standards and submitted the appropriate admission paperwork and that the admission process was followed precisely. Some of these rules were contrary to the working group's long-term objectives for a prior learning assessment policy. The administrative staff also questioned the program design from an operational perspective, rather than a pedagogical perspective, which is not their purview (Adams, 1976; Foster, 2006; Henkin, et al., 1992). This graduate program contains some courses which are not standard course credits. These courses consisting of fewer credits made sense from a pedagogical perspective, but created difficulty in scheduling and staffing.

The final stage of program implementation and ongoing operations also highlighted the challenge of having community members who lack formal standing in the university because they are neither staff nor faculty involved in some form of decision-making. Several examples exemplify these constraints. The Privacy Act places constraints on the ability to share personal information with those who are not part of the university and/or do not need it for their university jobs. This meant that even those university representatives on the working group, much less community members, could not see information about potential instructors and students because it was not directly related to their responsibilities. When the working group recommended an appropriate name for the program, that particular decision was both guided and shaped by the academic decision-making process and reflected the university's culture and politics. Program marketing materials underwent a similar consultation and review process, incorporating feedback from various units on campus, including the university's communication unit. Ultimately, given their responsibility for this graduate academic program, the Deans of the Faculties of Human and Social Development and Graduate Studies approved any final versions. Thus the working group could only recommend wording that would resonate with potential students and their organizations.

### Implications for Community-University Partnerships

So what does this case study analysis mean for other community-university partnerships, particularly those involved in academic program development and implementation? Several recommendations can be made for both the university and the community partners.

First, the university partner should articulate clearly the university context to community representatives and outline a partnership's parameters within this context, with specific reference to government, academic and administrative stakeholders. In particular, the university and community partners should explore the areas where the community representatives can make decisions and those where they can only provide recommendations and advice (Hall, 1992, 2002). The university should also discuss the potential impact of the university culture on the partnership's objectives as well as relevant rules and procedures that will need to be followed during academic program development and implementation. University representatives must remember that to "outsiders" the university appears confusing, bureaucratic and beyond recognition. Care should be taken at the outset to explain the university environment and its decision-making processes.

Just as academic partners learn about the community, community representatives must also take time to learn about the university and its context (Lefever-Davis, et al., 2007; Minkler, 2004; Prins, 2005). While most community organizations are relatively small, flat and nimble, even a relatively small university like University of Victoria<sup>5</sup> is relatively large and has formal rules, policies and procedures. Like any large organization, many of these rules, policies and procedures are not known in advance and may even contradict each other. These rules, policies and procedures are further impacted by the collegial nature of universities, which are rarely documented or even clearly articulated, but nonetheless shape the implementation and adherence to these.

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As these types of collaborations develop, the university and community partners need to ensure sufficient time has been allocated for both the partnership's creation and academic program development and implementation. In contrast to the normal experience within universities, this particular program was developed and implemented quickly. This was further complicated by the fact that all university representatives and community partners were working on this project as tasks in addition to their regular duties. The time needed for a discussion about the nature of the partnership, potential areas for decision-making, administrative requirements, and general participation was not available. This contributed to some frustration with the process experienced by community members, because they did not understand why decisions were made as they were. For example, during the implementation stage, it often took several weeks to find a time for a meeting of the working group while administrative decisions had to be made quickly to ensure that everything was ready for the first cohort of students. This led to missed opportunities for the working group to contribute to some decisions.

Both the university and community partners might find it useful to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines areas of decision-making and advice, resource commitment, recognition of community partners and other matters. In a recent CCEDNet (2011) publication, a series of questions were proposed that could guide these discussions in advance of a community-university research partnership. Questions included "how will decisions be made", "who will have final say over budgetary matters", "what role will community partners play" and "will they be involved in decision making guiding the project" and others (CCEDNet, 2011, pg. 2). These suggested questions could easily be adapted to fit a partnership related to academic program development and delivery.

Within such an MOU, both parties need to be careful with the use of terminology and label the working relationship appropriately, ensuring mutual understanding of terms and parameters for decision-making (Brock, 2010; National Network for Collaboration, 1995). For example, what is meant by "partnership" and other common but possibly misunderstood terms within this context? What is the associated level of decision-making that each party can play? On what issues can each party contribute to decision-making and on which can only advice be provided?

As universities and communities undertake more joint academic program programming (Savan, et al., 2009) and learn from these experiences, an opportunity exists to reflect and communicate the lessons learned to other similar partnerships. This activity would build on other similar reflections on community-based research projects and service learning activities carried out at both a comprehensive level and related to a specific project ( Amey, et al., 2002; Buckeridge, et al., 2002; Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, et al., 2008; Flicker, Savan, McGrath, et al., 2008; Hollander, 2011).

The development and launch of the MACD program through a partnership with the university and various community representatives demonstrated that it is possible for the community and a university to extend their partnerships beyond research and service learning projects to academic programming. However, this next step requires new understandings on the part of both the community and university on how to genuinely work together. This case study begins to explain the university, open the "black box", and suggests the possibilities and limitations of partnerships within this context. A true partnership with fully shared decision-making may not be possible given the multiple accountabilities, decision-making structures, rules and procedures that exist within a university. However, deep collaboration that can achieve communities' goals is still possible if university and communities work to understand each other's context and develop effective working relationships.

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### NOTES

1. University of Victoria has made exceptions with some undergraduate programming. In particular, the Law School has offered Bachelor's of Law Degrees to northern residents through the Akitsiraq Law School Society. Admission to this program is based on a variety of factors, including life experience and personal achievement (<http://www.akitsiraq.ca/admissions-1>).
2. By contrast, Royal Roads University has a flexible admissions policy that does not require an undergraduate degree for admissions to a graduate program, see [www.royalroads.ca/admissions/flexible-admissions](http://www.royalroads.ca/admissions/flexible-admissions).
3. It can often take 2 years or longer for an academic unit to receive permission to hire a permanent faculty member. Further, the hiring process for that individual generally takes a year from when the position is posted until it is filled.
4. Readers who are unfamiliar with distance education courses may wish to consult documentation prepared by University of Victoria's Distance Education Services (2011, nd).
5. Within Canada, UVic is considered a medium size institution with approximately 19,000 students. It has over 5,000 employees, including faculty, sessional lecturers and staff.

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