UBC's Focus on Equity in Canada Research Chair Experiences

Final Report and Recommendations

September 2021

Executive Summary

The University of British Columbia (UBC) has conducted an annual Experience Survey of its current Canada Research Chairs (CRCs), since 2018, as part of its CRC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan. This research project, with funding from the CRC Program in Ottawa, was implemented to explore more deeply the responses regarding the perceived inequities in the program among CRCs, and to explore strategies to address any inequities.

This CRC Experiences research project encompassed five phases: program documents and literature review; focus groups with former CRCs from UBC; focus groups with recently appointed CRCs at UBC; validation of preliminary findings and draft report; and reporting.

Both UBC and the CRCP have an opportunity to enrich the experiences of CRCs by creating supportive, equitable environments where researchers can thrive and achieve their fullest potential. While this is a national program, the findings of this report reveal that institutional and, more particularly, departmental environments play a critical role in the experiences and success of a chairholder.

The experiences of former and new chairholders illuminated several actionable areas to improve the experiences of CRCs at UBC and beyond, listed in brief below:

Recommendations

Mentorship Connections

- Facilitate identity-informed mentorship connections.
- Connect incoming chairholders with mentors as soon as possible.
- Formalize a chairholder mentorship program.

Networking Opportunities

- Provide chairholders with opportunities to network with researchers across campus.
- Nation-wide symposiums hosted by the CRCP in Ottawa.
- Support collaborative Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Fund applications.

Redefining Research Excellence

- Clearly communicate the restricted program's purpose, criteria, and timespan.
- Pursue further opportunities within the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the UBC Dimensions pilot.
- Support chairholders to hire and mentor graduate students from federally designated groups.

Equitable Negotiations

- Provide notice of publicly available faculty salary information.
- Notify chairholders of the opportunity to connect with the Faculty Association for negotiations assistance.
- Offer start-up package options and flexibility.
- Offer centralized guidelines for institutional expectations and standards of CRC support.

Program Transparency

- Provide transparent accounting for how CRC funding is allocated.
- Develop an internal UBC CRC nominations 'road map' resource.
- Create explainers and/or FAQs for UBC's internal CRC processes and procedures.
- Remove the onus on the chairholder to explain or justify any CRC perquisites to their colleagues.

Research Grant Support

- Designate an institutional CRC specialist within SPARC.
- Provide connections to specialized grant writing assistance within the chairholder's research area.

Institutional Support and Recognition

- Clarify the scope of the CRC Secretariat's support.
- Recognize and celebrate chairholder achievements.
- Ensure department heads provide chairholders with adequate administrative support.
- Expand opportunities for upper-level undergraduate or graduate students to work with CRCs.
- Explore the potential for UBC childcare sites at satellite research locations.

Chairholder Orientations

- Offer orientation sessions to new chairholders.

National CRC Program Support

- Increase national program funding.
- Modify national policy to permit sabbaticals consecutively following family or medical leave.
- Conduct national research on the impact of CRC equity initiatives.
- Elevate the national profile of CRCs.

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Introduction

The University of British Columbia (UBC) has conducted an annual Experience Survey of its current Canada Research Chairs (CRCs), since 2018, as part of its CRC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan. The experience survey has had a steadily growing response rate[1] and includes both qualitative and quantitative questions. This research project, with funding from the CRC Program in Ottawa, was implemented to explore more deeply the responses regarding the perceived inequities in the program among CRCs, and to explore strategies to address any inequities.

UBC has a current allocation of 199 chairs, spanning 11 faculties at UBCV and 7 faculties at UBCO, consisting of 88 CIHR chairs, 71 NSERC chairs, and 40 SSHRC chairs. UBC is currently meeting its equity targets for women, visible minorities/racialized faculty, and Indigenous faculty but is under-represented in chairs held by persons with disabilities.

In May 2017, the Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) advised universities that there was a need for greater transparency and accountability in the processes used to allocate, select, and support chairholders to ensure that institutional equity and diversity targets were met. All institutions with five or more chairs were required to develop an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (EDIAP). UBC has a well-earned reputation as an institution that fulfills its commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and supports public transparency and accountability. UBC has developed its EDIAP to ensure greater transparency in the allocation, selection, and renewal processes for chairholders from members of the four designed groups (FDGs) – women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities (members of groups that are racially categorized)[2]. The EDIAP includes impactful equity, diversity, and inclusion objectives to address any inequalities that are experienced by individuals.

1.1 UBC CRC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan

This project responds to actions 14 through 17 in UBC's CRC EDI Action Plan, and will support the development of discipline-specific and institutional practices with current and former chairholders to create more equitable experiences in the quality of support received to advance their research. The actions from the plan are listed below for reference:

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[1] In 2018, the inaugural UBC CRC Experience survey had a response rate of 64%. In 2019 it was 80%, and in 2020, the response rate grew to 88%.
[2] This terminology is used in the 2019 Addendum to the 2006 Canadian Human Rights Settlement Agreement, https://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/2019_addendum-eng.aspx

14. Conduct an annual comparative review by surveying each department with one or more chairholders for reports of their institutional supports provided, and surveying all chairholders for their experiences including support, and including collection and analysis of disaggregated and intersectional data, to improve understanding of the current state and any existing disparities in the range of institutional supports provided to each chairholder.

15. Create a rigorous process or criteria for identifying inequities in chairholder institutional supports.

16. Report disparities to the Provost and Deans to discuss and resolve, with the assistance of Associate Deans of Equity in each Faculty, collaborating across disciplines to implement resolutions.

17. For three areas of concern raised by the Comparative Reviews:

- Conduct annual focus groups with different equity groups around their sense of inclusion in the workplace and what might be done to improve that.

- While the data regarding protected time for research is based on impressions and methodologically unreliable, perceptions have an impact on workplace experiences and engagement. The AVP, Equity & Inclusion and the AVP, Academic, will be sharing results with meetings of Heads and Directors within different Faculties, also at monthly meetings of the Associate Deans of Equity, and monthly meetings of the Associate Deans of Research

- For CRCs with Disabilities – concerns raised will be shared with the Accommodations Working Group for strategies to respond.

Indicator:

- By December of each year, the completed review provides a snapshot of how institutional supports are currently provided to CRCs across UBC.

- New processes to prevent future inequities are in place.

Responsibility: Office of the Provost and VP Academic; CRCPO; EIO; PAIR

Due Date: 2019, and annually thereafter

Background

2.1 History of the Canada Research Chair Program

Since its establishment in 2000, the Canada Research Chair Program invests approximately $295 million annually for the recruitment and retention of world-class researchers within Canadian postsecondary institutions. As part of this national strategy, Canadian postsecondary institutions are allocating funding to recruit Canada Research Chairs at two tiers:

Tier 1 Chairs, tenable for seven years and renewable once, are for outstanding researchers acknowledged by their peers as world leaders in their fields. For each Tier 1 Chair, the institution receives $200,000 annually during the term(s).

Tier 2 Chairs, tenable for five years and renewable once, are for exceptional emerging researchers, acknowledged by their peers as having the potential to lead in their field. For each Tier 2 Chair, the institution receives $100,000 annually during the term(s), with an additional $20,000 annual research stipend for first-term Tier 2 Chairs.

With the CRCP's goals to attract and retain excellent researchers, Courty and Sim (2015) studied the impact of this government intervention on retention of researchers. They found that there is a modest role for salary increase as a retention instrument but did not find an impact of CRC nomination on retention, as the chance of changing jobs does not decrease after nomination (Courty and Sim, 2015).

Grant and Drakich (2010) conducted qualitative interviews with 60 Canada Research Chairs from across the country to contextualize their experiences as chairholders. Their 2007 study found that while most CRCs had a positive experience in the program, negative experiences were underpinned by institutional practices and systemic factors that impeded the work of the CRC (Grant and Drakich, 2010). Examples include broken promises over institutional research space and teaching release, as well as significant bureaucratic hurdles in accessing funding.

As part of the 2016 Management Response to the Canada Research Chairs Program 15th-Year Evaluation, "the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat were mandated to work with the Management Committee, using the evaluation findings and considering other input received, to

develop a strategy to promote adherence to equity targets by universities, in collaboration with the CRCP Advisory Committee on Equity Policy, as soon as possible".

Universities were required to provide an EDI action plan by December 2017. Action plan reviews provided more opportunities for institutions to sharpen their focus on creating more equitable recruitment, retention, and success for their CRC programs. UBC's EDI Action Plan satisfied the CRCP requirements in 2020. On July 31, 2019, the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat released an Addendum to the 2006 Canadian Human Rights Settlement Agreement. This Addendum outlined a number of measures that will be implemented in the CRCP over the coming years. In addition, Employment and Social Development Canada published Canadian Workforce Availability data for the last three census years on June 27, 2019, including national data for the four designated groups (FDGs) referred to in the 2019 Addendum: women, visible minorities (members of groups that are racially categorized), persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples.

The following table presents data encompassing all CRCs in the national program. CRC representation data are updated twice annually through university reporting of self-identification data in each nomination cycle.

Table: National CRC Program equity targets and actual representation (via https://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/about_us-a_notre_sujet/statistics-statistiques-eng.aspx)

	December 2019, equity targets	Current representation, June 2021	New targets (December 2029 deadline)
Women	31%	39.1%	50.9%
Members of visible minorities	15%	22.1%	22%
Persons with disabilities	4%	5.7%	7.5%
Indigenous Peoples	1%	3.4%	4.9%

2.2 Race and Cultural Taxation

Amado Padilla (1994) coined the term "cultural taxation" to describe the academic labour dilemmas ethnic scholars encounter when they are frequently called upon by administration to assist and resolve situations on the basis of their race/ethnicity or presumed knowledge of cultural differences. Examples of cultural taxation include being called upon as a diversity expert, regardless of subject matter knowledge or comfort; being called upon to repeatedly educate individuals about diversity; serving on equity committees and task forces; serving as a liaison with an ethnic community; acting as a problem solver for departmental disputes arising out of sociocultural differences; and being called upon to translate or interpret (Padilla, 1994). These examples are threaded together as duties falling outside of the regular duties of faculty employment, taking time away from academic work. Additionally, the assumption that racialized faculty members are "best suited" to deal with issues of race and diversity effectively sheds the responsibility of white colleagues to attend to these issues (James, 2017). As James (2017) posited: "...As long as racialized faculty members are perceived as the ones to teach, supervise, and mentor marginalized-group students and new faculty, majority faculty members will never take responsibility for the needs and interests of marginalized students" (p.164).

While Padilla's (1994) work focuses specifically on the experience of ethnic scholars, new developments in the scholarship of cultural taxation have extended the concept with intersectional analysis. Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) proposed the complementary concept of identity taxation as an intersectional way of theorizing non-academic service burden across a variety of marginalized identities (like race, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation). Identity taxation is used as a framework to demonstrate how women faculty (in general) and women of colour (specifically) navigate the influences of their marginalized identity groups within their academic experiences. In an earlier intervention, Joseph and Hirshfield (2011) expanded cultural taxation to include issues of legitimacy that challenge faculty of colour's sense of belonging within their departments.

2.3 Academic Ableism

Inckle (2018) argued that there is still a "general culture of disbelief within universities (and wider society) that it is possible to have a disability and to be an academic" (p.1374). Due in part to this culture of ableism, Inckle (2018) recounted the extra work required of disabled faculty that is neither paid, nor acknowledged, which takes significant physical, emotional, and mental toll.

Despite the legal requirement of Canadian universities to provide accommodations for disabled employees, disabled faculty members still experience barriers and difficulties within the neoliberal university setting (Waterfield, Beagan and Weinberg, 2018). Waterfield, Beagan and

Weinberg (2018) argued that while neoliberal performance standards are increasingly affecting all academics, these standards uniquely affect disabled academics because of the ableism encoded within. Canadian disabled academics were also found to receive little institutional support to access accommodations, and this lack of support led to feelings of isolation and inability to participate fully in their careers (Waterfield, Beagan and Weinberg, 2018).

Saltes' (2020) analysis of disability accommodation policies for faculty at 42 Canadian universities revealed policies that contained overtly medical language and provisions that worked to isolate disabled faculty by reinforcing the notion of competency as able-bodiedness and emphasizing the entanglement between disability, health and medicine. Disabled academics argue for a more holistic understanding of disability, moving beyond medicalized approaches, and contextualizing social and environmental factors (Saltes, 2020). Saltes (2020) offered several recommendations to institutions, including: involving disabled people in policy drafting; having clearly outlined steps to obtain accommodation; using inclusive language for disability disclosure; and ensuring dignity and respect throughout accommodation processes.

2.4 Gendered Divisions of Labour

Park and Park-Ozee (2020) understand academic work as gendered labour, with men focusing on research and women bearing responsibility to teaching and service. They further argue that these gendered divisions have become further entrenched in the neoliberal university, with areas of teaching and service receiving more managerial control and standardization by the corporatized university (Park and Park-Ozee, 2020). Gendered expectations also manifest in the ways women faculty interact with students. Dengate, Peter and Farenhorst's (2019) mixed methods work found that STEM women faculty report bearing greater responsibility for students in distress and were approached by a far greater number of students to discuss non-academic issues. Through this data, they understand faculty's responses to students' problems to be informed by gendered cultural care expectations (Dengate, Peter and Farenhorst, 2019).

Acker and Feuerverger (1996) contributed some of the earliest work on women faculty and unrewarded academic 'care work', articulating the duality of the necessity of care, and the associated frustrations of inequitable distribution and expectations. They borrow a phrase from Jean Baker Miller about 'doing good and feeling bad' to sum this up – the 'good' in understanding the importance of good departmental citizenship, and the 'bad' in reflection of the obligations women academics feel to take responsibility for this type of 'academic housekeeping' work (Acker and Feuerverger, 1996).

The time that faculty members can allocate towards research is vital for publication and advancement. Bellas and Toutkoushian (1999) found that faculty who devote more time to research and less time to other activities (teaching and service) will have a greater likelihood of success. When the constraints on faculty's time for research are inequitably distributed and experienced, there are further implications for inequities in promotion. In a study of faculty workload and work interactions, O'Meara et al. (2017) found that women consistently received higher numbers of work activity requests than did men. These requests also pertained more to teaching, student advising and professional service than did the requests received by men (O'Meara et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that women faculty were more likely to receive requests from other women, which suggests the significance of mentorship and lifting other women (O'Meara et al., 2017).

It is important to consider the gendered divisions of labour with an additional intersectional lens to identify the compounding experiences of racism or ableism for racialized and/or disabled women. Joseph and Hirshfield's (2011) developments on "identity taxation" holds space for the unique complexities of navigating cultural taxation within the academy as a racialized faculty member who also experiences marginalization on the basis of gender or disability.

2.5 Faculty Support and Success

While there are no studies specific to Canada Research chairholders' experiences, the following literature on the academic workplace experiences of faculty members provide relevant insight into ways faculty members can feel supported and be successful in their roles.

In a sample of recently appointed assistant professors, Fiset and Saffie-Robertson (2020) studied the impact of gender and perceived academic supervisor support on faculty appointment negotiation outcomes. Their findings revealed that women were overall less likely to engage in negotiations and were less effective than their male counterparts when bargaining for elements that revolved around direct compensation (e.g., salary, research funding) (Fiset and Saffie-Robertson, 2020). Critically, their study also revealed a relationship between gender and negotiation effectiveness, where women with highly supportive academic supervisors achieved greater effectiveness in negotiations (Fiset and Saffie-Robertson, 2020). This underscores the integral role of faculty mentorship, and the ways poor or lacking mentorship for women faculty can deepen inequities in salary and support.

Most of the dominant mentoring models at predominately white institutions do not address the sociocultural specific challenges and realities of faculty members who are Black, Indigenous or People of Colour (BIPOC) (Endo, 2020). Disabled faculty members were not included in this

study, though disability scholarship would suggest that disabled faculty may similarly benefit from mentors that share experiences navigating academic ableism. Effective mentorship must also be identity-informed, particularly as we approach 'Greater Equity in CRC Experiences'.

"While one of the major outcomes of such initiatives is often to support new faculty through attaining certain career milestones such as promotion and/or tenure, another goal might be to actively model to external and internal stakeholders how a dynamic campus community is able to authentically build community, explicitly promote racial equity from within, and find ways to recognize the rich expertise and lived experiences that BIPOC faculty bring to their institutions" (Endo, 2020, p.176).

Acker and Webber's (2017) qualitative study of early career academics in the Canadian university highlights a troubling caveat for balancing faculty workload. Early career academics reconcile "working [themselves] to the ground" trying to meet and decipher expectations, while simultaneously "feeling lucky" to have received a tenure-track appointment at all (Acker and Webber, 2017, p.547). In hopes that their pre-tenure hard work will pay off in the long run, early career academics strategize for a romanticized "life after tenure" (Acker and Webber, 2017, p.548). This punishing workload further disadvantages disabled scholars. As we analyze findings from early career academics who have been recently appointed as Tier 2 CRCs, the implications of this study and future approaches to workload sustainability are significant.

Methodology

This CRC Experiences research project encompassed five phases: program documents and literature review; focus groups with former CRCs from UBC; focus groups with recently appointed CRCs at UBC; validation of preliminary findings and draft report; and reporting.

UBC chairholders who finished their second term as a CRC between 2018 and May 2021 were contacted and invited to participate in focus groups. UBC has 33 CRCs who concluded their terms between 2018 and May 2021, and 9 former chairholders took part in the focus groups in May. Recently appointed UBC chairholders were contacted and invited to participate in the focus groups in August. Seven chairholders participated in these focus groups.

At the time of intake, participants were not asked to disclose whether they belonged to any of the four federally designated equity groups. However, some chairholders did disclose and reference their identities in response to certain questions throughout the focus group. Focus group questions were developed in consultation with the CRC Working Group and are listed as an appendix at the end of this report.

Participants in both sets of interviews have been exceptionally generous with their time, experiences, and analysis. Focus group conversations were fascinatingly diverse, while including some overlapping themes. Respectfully representing diverse perspectives while working to achieve the aims of the research on specific actions related to the CRC program can create tensions. Probing the efforts to create inclusion also necessitates discussing painful and frustrating experiences where those efforts fell short or were non-existent. Deciding on the tone of the final report also requires navigating the obligation to represent various voices, and focus on developing strategies to address these experiences in the program. To mitigate an exclusive focus that silences some voices, this report presents findings and recommendations for UBC's CRC program within its larger research environment, and for the federal CRCP.

As part of the data validation process, participants in each set of interviews were provided with draft preliminary findings for their revision and confirmation.

Findings

While the focus of this research project and focus group discussions aimed to uncover obstacles and issues within the CRC Program, it is also important to reflect the enthusiasm shared for the mission of the CRC Program and the gratitude expressed by the former Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) who were focus group participants.

The title of 'Canada Research Chair' has been prestigious for chairholders and has boosted their international profile, particularly at academic conferences and gatherings. The acclaim of having been a CRC is still cause for great celebration and has prestige across the academic community. The title itself has also been perceived to provide increased credibility, has contributed to successfully obtaining research grants and funding, and opened doors to interesting research collaborations and gifted graduate students and post-doctoral fellows during the term of the chairholder.

At its best, the Canada Research Chair Program has provided opportunities for prolific researchers to pursue their innovative research programs with increased credibility and opportunity. In particular, chairholders who were leading research programs with a greater degree of risk, expense and/or innovation expressed gratitude for the CRC in enabling this particular type of research within the university.

It is important to note that the degree to which participants shared positive experiences varies across disciplines and faculties, which may allocate varying levels of protected research time and

additional supports for their chairholders (e.g., CRCs in Health Sciences reported the greatest satisfaction with the amount of protected research time).

4.1 Former Chairholders

A. Harmful perceptions of equity initiatives within CRC program

Former CRCs who self-identified as women, Indigenous, racialized, and/or disabled (the FDGs) stated that some colleagues internal and external to UBC remarked that CRCs are appointed as part of 'affirmative action' rather than in recognition of research excellence. These attitudes create hostile environments and are harmful to chairholders from FDGs. Departmental colleagues may judge those who have been hired under a restricted hiring program as less "qualified" for the position than those who are hired in an open faculty search, because the perception is that not competing against white males and being hired is not competing against the "best".

Attitudes and expressions of frustration from and on behalf of white, male, non-disabled scholars who are excluded from restricted CRC searches may further entrench an environment where incoming CRCs from FDGs are required to repeatedly prove their capacity and expertise. This raised concerns among former CRCs about whether future selection committees for CRCs would be able to equitably assess and communicate the research excellence of incoming candidates from FDGs and demonstrate their support for those candidates throughout their tenure.

B. Obfuscated negotiations and disparities

Disparities between research support and course releases across units were revealed when chairholders participated in internal committees to evaluate CRC applications. After settling into the university, chairholders shared that they had discovered salary disparities and found it difficult to renegotiate their own salary to an equitable level.

This is a great source of frustration about inequitable compensation, particularly among chairholders from FDGs who did not feel equipped with the information needed to negotiate at the time of appointment. The difficulty in renegotiating to reach equity in supports and salary led to a sense of betrayal and long-term dissatisfaction with under-appreciation and lack of institutional support.

Some participants noted the start-up support they received felt similar to incoming non-CRC faculty and shared that their CRC colleagues at other institutions received much greater financial

support from their institutions at start-up. However, while benefits received through the CRC program felt insufficient, the title of CRC was useful for participants in securing external funding and grants, and creating opportunities for interesting research collaborations.

C. Unsustainable workloads

Some chairholders reported unanticipated and unsustainable workloads related to the expectations associated with both their research output/results and administrative work relative to the maintenance of the CRC title. Course teaching releases often came with higher expectations for administrative work (e.g., editing journals, serving on review committees, etc.) that effectively filled the hours released, providing no extra time for research to match the expectations that there would be greater results. Several chairholders shared that they were without institutional support from grant writers/facilitators to assist with the additional research funding applications needed to support the greater output and excellence expected of CRCs.

In addition, for those who felt that their CRC award was not valued or provided with additional support from their department, it was doubly distressing to be expected to complete all the administrative work of ensuring that the funding for the CRC was received and renewed for the department. Their departmental colleagues were only expected to do the work of applying for grant funding for their own research, while some chairholders were expected to also do the work of covering their salary line item for both terms of the chair, without any additional administrative support for these onerous applications and with higher expectations for their research and grants received.

A majority of participants shared that they had also received comments from colleagues and administrators that their research outputs were smaller than expected of a CRC. This peer perception of an acceptable level of research output can be extremely troubling within the context of tenure and promotion processes, as well as renewal processes, particularly with the lack of institutional support described above.

Additionally, the CRC policy that prohibits sabbaticals taken consecutively after a family or medical leave can be harmful to new parents and disabled faculty who may have to postpone their sabbatical as a result of other required leaves. This means that dedicated time for research is less available to those CRCs who may already be behind on their research output because of previous leaves.

D. Mismatch between support and the expectations and prestige of a CRC

Most chairholders expressed that the support (both monetary and non-monetary) they received as CRCs was inconsistent with expectations for a prestigious research chair, and with what colleagues in other institutions reported. The title of the CRC brings the weight of additional expectations, but a majority of chairholders did not feel they were provided with the additional resources and support needed to match these expectations for research, funding, and service. This was highlighted to chairholders in CRC renewal processes, as well as institutional promotion and tenure processes, where chairholders received comments that their productivity and publications were not meeting expectations for a CRC.

There is a sentiment among some chairholders in various departments at UBC that the value of a CRC is 'just a title' without many of the tangible or program-level benefits to support their research programs. While much of this is captured in monetary ways through the section above (obfuscated negotiation processes), this also contributed to cynicism about the program.

For the high calibre of research achievement and academic excellence expected, and achieved, there was a palpable sense that a majority of chairholders felt under-appreciated by the institution for their efforts. Some former CRCs from FDGs felt almost exploited by their departments. Peers at different institutions were reported to receive greater celebration and recognition for similar achievements and accomplishments.

As stated in the introduction to this section, being a CRC did bring prestige and recognition externally, and in some cases, provided the time and space to pursue innovative research. Strategies that may mitigate some of the negative experiences and barriers noted above are proposed in the Recommendations section.

4.2 New Chairholders

A. Lack of understanding about the restricted nominations program

Chairholders noted the systemic nature of the equity issues the restricted nominations program sets out to resolve. Addressing CRC-specific recruitment is intertwined with representation issues of equity-deserving groups across all levels of academia, particularly in senior roles.

At the time of the focus groups, no one reported that their award was disparaged by colleagues. However, some participants did recount previous interactions with colleagues where there was

frustration expressed about the rationale and criteria of the restricted nominations program. Colleagues had expressed a desire to hire on "merit" and did not understand why a CRC search would or should be restricted to certain groups. There were also concerns raised about the lack of understanding about what the criteria for "excellence" are, and how they are applied to searches, particularly restricted searches.

The lack of clarity about rationale and expectations for the CRC restricted nominations and how they are being interpreted/enacted can create conflict within departments and can put nominees in uncomfortable positions. The restricted program's timelines, criteria, and purpose are not clearly communicated to faculty and academic leadership.

B. Opaque application and negotiations processes

Chairholders felt the application process suffered from a lack of clarity. Several participants shared that they had informally reached out to current or former chairholders for assistance with their applications and received copies of previously successful CRC applications. This was tremendously helpful for the incoming chairholders who had been able to make these connections, primarily from the UBC Vancouver campus.

With fewer and newer CRCs on the Okanagan campus, many faculty, staff, heads and deans were inexperienced with the CRC nomination processes. This was also an issue with contract negotiation, where both the candidate and the department had limited precedents to guide them.

The time required to provide an initial application in response to the job posting, and then to develop a completely new application for a nomination as a CRC for review, and then complete the revisions to that for submission to the CRCP by the deadlines amid the usual workloads, were hurdles that were unexpected and difficult to navigate. Chairholders also shared frustration over the varying format requirements for each stage. Often, chairholders were tapped by department heads to apply to the CRC posting and did not understand the significant time commitment and intensity that the CRC applications process would entail. While the initial internal processes within departments may have been unclear, chairholders expressed gratitude for the knowledgeable and very useful feedback from UBC's internal review committee to support them in the national stages of review.

Knowledge and insight into the CRC process and the federal research apparatus was a particularly steep learning curve for external chairholders who arrived from outside the Canadian academic context. One significant gap was an understanding of the process and importance of the simultaneous Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) grants. Some participants shared

that they were unable to complete their CFI applications due to the compressed timeline and demand of the CRC nominations process. Without knowledge of Canadian grant cycles or the deadlines of the CRC onboarding process, new chairholders may have a large delay in funding till the next cycle, impacting their ability to progress in their research program.

Concerns were also raised about the ability of externally recruited CRCs to authentically articulate their research relationships with Indigenous communities in their nomination applications when they hadn't yet arrived at UBC, or understood the Canadian context. External recruits were also concerned that a position could be offered conditionally on the CRC being awarded, which increased the pressure and workload of applying for a faculty position, though this is a rare practice at UBC.

Chairholders described negotiations that took place in a context of little information about what was possible or expected in terms of supports for CRCs, and that this disadvantaged them in requesting equitable support for themselves. Those who had information from other CRCs could use that to help with their negotiations. In some departments that had not had CRCs previously, there were also limited precedents for department heads to follow.

C. Helpful administrative and grant support

While the cohort of new CRCs has only just begun their terms, participants shared a resounding appreciation for the administrative staff support they received in the nominations process. Specifically, the CRC Secretariat, Support Programs to Advance Research Capacity (SPARC), some faculty-specific grants officers, the Office of Research Services Okanagan, and the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, Institutional Programs Office were helpful to participants, both in the nominations process and in previous non-CRC-related grant applications. Participants were unsure about whom to contact for administrative help with expertise and experience with CRC applications and identified this information as a potential area for improvement.

D. Expected benefits of holding a Canada Research Chair

As a result of their CRC appointment, most chairholders did not anticipate their research program changing significantly. Chairholders were concerned by the premise of 'higher expectations' for CRCs, as this had not been communicated to them.

Participants who were unable to negotiate teaching releases or sufficient research funding felt there were more "soft" benefits (i.e., prestige, increased opportunities, greater chance of grant application success) than "hard" benefits. Chairholders felt they would be able to take advantage

of the title to be successful in future grant applications and opportunities to collaborate on project grants and team grants but believed most benefits would depend on the ways they leverage the prestige of the title, rather than tangible, negotiated benefits.

The ability to fund and attract graduate students and postdocs was identified as one of the main benefits of becoming a CRC. For chairholders at UBCO, recruiting graduate students to the Okanagan can be difficult because there are few job opportunities for relocating partners, expensive housing, and concerns about living in a non-diverse, predominantly white town. With the new opportunity to work under the supervision of a CRC, chairholders were optimistic that this could positively impact their graduate student recruitment. UBC Vancouver chairholders hoped the title would help attract graduate students who might otherwise pursue their PhDs in the United States.

For some participants, the ability to fund and attract graduate students was a key benefit by virtue of the very limited benefits identified. For many participants, the amount of CRC funding that they were given to use for research purposes would be just enough to cover the costs of funding a graduate student salary, rather than fund the research itself. This may be limiting to chairholders as they start up their research programs and work to secure additional grants.

Notably, chairholders in the Health Sciences already experience a high degree of protected research time and are not anticipating significant changes. Chairholders in the Faculty of Science are not anticipating much change, as teaching responsibilities are not reduced for CRCs.

E. Mentorship and peer support

Chairholders expressed universal support and interest in the development of a mentorship program for CRCs. Social gatherings and building connections with other CRCs would also be valuable, but emphasis was placed on the desire for mentorship.

New chairholders in departments with extensive experience with CRCs were able to access more natural, informal connections throughout their nominations journey. These connections were immensely valuable and provided a peer-to-peer insight and nuance that was difficult to replicate.

Limitations

The findings and recommendations within this report are based on the experiences shared by 16 chairholders who participated in the focus groups. While the themes and experiences presented

here do not reflect the experiences of all CRCs at UBC, this report is consistent with several themes and trends revealed in the findings of the UBC CRC Experience Survey.

Chairholders who participated in this study were not asked to provide self-identification information; however, some did self-identify to contextualize the answers they provided in the focus groups. For these reasons, we cannot further analyze our qualitative findings by subpopulation.

This research is also limited by an inability to temporally contextualize the chairholders' answers. For example, if a chairholder shared a negative experience, we were not able to confirm whether that specific instance had been previously remedied or addressed. This is particularly relevant with the participation of former chairholders, where policy, best practices and leadership have undoubtedly evolved within the last decade. In these circumstances, it is the intention of this report to represent the experiences of chairholders as they were communicated.

Recommendations

6.1 Mentorship Connections

A. **Facilitate identity-informed mentorship connections**. Through mentor matching, chairholders could use a checklist to identify themselves and what is important in their connections. Chairholders might prefer to find a connection with someone with whom they share specific experiences and identities (i.e., CRC Tier, internal/externally recruited, race, Indigeneity, gender, disability, 2SLGBTQIA+, parenting, caregiving, etc.). Matches made within the same Tri-Council funding agency (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC) would be most beneficial. Discipline-specific mentors may not be necessary and may be more difficult (or impossible) to find.

B. **Connect incoming chairholders with mentors as soon as possible.** Mentorship connections between CRCs could be helpful as early as the negotiations stage. Early mentorship connections can also assist with nomination applications and clarify the CRC program and expectations. Mentor connections between UBCO and UBCV would be helpful, and potentially create an awareness of various resources available within a UBC context.

C. **Formalize a chairholder mentorship program**. This will ensure that the mentor is appropriately recognized for their work and create clarity in expectations.

6.2 Networking Opportunities

A. **Provide chairholders with opportunities to network with researchers across campus.** Creating opportunities for greater connection amongst CRCs, similarly to the programming of the Peter Wall Scholars Program, could support increased research collaboration and innovation. This would also raise the institutional profile of the CRC program and its researchers.

B. **Nation-wide symposiums hosted by the CRCP in Ottawa** for CRCs could support connections and mentoring nationally, as well as raise the profile of chairholders and their federally funded research.

C. **Support collaborative Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Fund applications** through connecting chairholders with potential co-applicants. This would both increase research collaboration and redistribute application time demands.

6.3 Redefining Research Excellence

A. **Clearly communicate the restricted program's purpose, criteria, and timespan**. Departments must be educated to understand that generations of socialization that excluded the consideration of research excellence from marginalized groups need to be acknowledged and dismantled, and new hiring practices implemented.

B. **Pursue further opportunities within the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the UBC Dimensions pilot** to reshape attitudes and understandings of where research excellence exists, particularly among hiring committees evaluating the CVs of future CRCs.

C. **Support chairholders to hire and mentor graduate students from federally designated groups**. By encouraging the use of CRC research funds intended for the use of student stipend and salary to be used in recruiting graduate students from FDGs, the benefits of the CRC program can extend towards building a pipeline of excellent researchers for the future. Through work opportunities and mentorship within the prestigious research programs of CRCs, graduate student skills and CVs are strengthened.

6.4 Equitable Negotiations

A. **Provide notice of publicly available faculty salary information**. As a public institution, UBC is obligated to annually report salaries in excess of $75,000. Chairholders should be

notified of this resource to support equitable negotiations and long-term feelings of satisfaction and support.

B. **Notify chairholders of the opportunity to connect with the Faculty Association for negotiations assistance.** Incoming chairholders who have been externally recruited may not be aware of this resource that can provide helpful information about salary scales and realistic negotiations for new faculty.

C. **Offer start-up package options and flexibility.** Offering chairholders the flexibility to define what areas of monetary and non-monetary support would be most valued in their start-up package (e.g., funding to pay graduate students, expensive equipment, greater office and lab space, etc.) to a maximum cost/chair in each discipline would be a way to effectively tailor the support to the discipline/research area, while ensuring transparency in negotiations.

D. **Offer centralized guidelines for institutional expectations and standards of CRC support**, including protected time, reduced teaching loads, grant writing supports, renewal application supports.

6.5 Program Transparency

A. **Provide transparent accounting for how CRC funding is allocated.** Transparency with chairholders about where the funding for their chair position is going could help combat growing perceptions that the CRC is 'just a way to pay a faculty salary'.

B. **Develop an internal UBC CRC nominations 'road map' resource.** Creating a 'road map' of how the CRC nominations process works, what is expected of whom, and who to turn to for support would be a helpful guide for faculty, chairholders, staff and administrators alike. This will be especially helpful for departments that are less familiar with CRCs and their processes.

C. **Create explainers and/or FAQs for UBC's internal CRC processes and procedures.** Greater clarity about how UBC allocates its CRCs across units, decides on internal vs. external searches, and selects internal candidates will mitigate conflict that arises out of mistaken assumptions about this process.

D. **Remove the onus on the chairholder to explain or justify any CRC perquisites to their colleagues.** Departments which have not previously held CRCs may find it helpful to inform faculty members about the CRC program and expectations of CRCs, and what the expected supports are to meet those expectations. Department heads should also

communicate the additional funding the CRC position brings into the department. This strategy would remove the onus on the new CRC to justify any noticeable perquisites (i.e., reduced teaching loads) to colleagues.

6.6 Research Grant Support

A. **Designate an institutional CRC specialist within SPARC.** The CRC specialist will be able to provide in-depth assistance on nomination and renewal applications.

B. **Provide connections to specialized grant writing assistance within the chairholder's research area.** Grant writers must have sufficient disciplinary knowledge and go beyond grammatical and formatting assistance in applications. As an example, grant writers could meet with CRCs as they onboard, interview them about their research plans for the next several years, and then use that information to craft their applications. The onus for the development of grant applications should not be on the chairholder; through proper grant writing assistance, chairholders can be producing more of the innovative research their CRC is meant to foster.

6.7 Institutional Support and Recognition

A. **Clarify the scope of the CRC Secretariat's support**. This would be helpful for chairholders long-term (i.e., some chairholders thought assistance from the CRC Secretariat was mainly intended for the recruitment and nominations phase).

B. **Recognize and celebrate chairholder achievements.** Meaningful non-monetary opportunities for support can include greater recognition, valuing and celebration of the appointment and research accomplishments of CRCs, and their achievements throughout their terms.

C. **Ensure department heads provide chairholders with adequate administrative support** commensurate to the additional workload of applying for and retaining the department's CRC. This is especially important with respect to internal nominees who were 'tapped on the shoulder' to apply.

D. **Expand opportunities for upper-level undergraduate or graduate students to work with CRCs** as part of their course work (e.g., fulfilling an honours program requirement) to help address funding gaps or student availability, particularly at UBCO where graduate programs are smaller.

E. **Explore the potential for UBC childcare sites at satellite research locations**, e.g., hospitals.

6.8 Chairholder Orientations

A. **Offer orientation sessions to new chairholders.** Chairholder orientation programming would help address many lingering questions and demystify the process. This will be particularly useful for external chairholders who are arriving to a new place and system. Orientation events will also assist CRCs to network and build connections that can lessen their isolation and increase opportunities for research collaborations.

6.9 National CRC Program Support

A. **Increase national program funding.** The funding allocated to each Chair has remained stagnant over the twenty years of the CRC program.

B. **Modify national policy to permit sabbaticals consecutively following family or medical leave.** Sabbaticals are valued protected research time, and chairholders should not be penalized by policy that requires them to postpone this productive research period because of their needs for family or medical leave.

C. **Conduct national research on the impact of CRC equity initiatives**. The findings of this study are applicable to a UBC context, and the CRCP should endeavour to measure the effectiveness of equity initiatives within CRC programs at different institutions to understand effective practices that may be adaptable to various contexts. Within this research, the experiences of chairholders from FDGs should be central.

D. **Elevate the national profile of CRCs**. The CRCP has an opportunity to provide greater recognition of CRCs, their research and its impact on the Canadian academic and general communities. Particularly during this period of restricted appointments, the CRCP should make greater efforts to recognize and boost the profile of the excellent researchers recruited and retained under this program. This could include events like a national symposium to showcase CRC research and foster greater connection between chairholders on a national level.

Conclusion

Both UBC and the CRCP have an opportunity to enrich the experiences of CRCs by creating supportive, equitable environments where researchers can thrive and achieve their fullest potential. The experiences of former and new chairholders illuminated several actionable areas to improve the experiences of CRCs at UBC and beyond, including but not limited to: mentorship

and networking opportunities; increased support to chairholders in negotiating salary and supports; and enhanced institutional support and recognition.

While this is a national program, the findings of this report reveal that institutional and, more particularly, departmental environments play a critical role in the experiences and success of a chairholder. The importance of a supportive and inclusive 'home' environment is particularly key for chairholders from FDGs, as recruitment is only the first step to developing a more equitable program.

Issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, and representation in academia are systemic in nature, and initiatives to combat this stretch far beyond the CRC program. The work of the CRCP in establishing representation targets and working towards diversity and equity in the program sets an important tone for the ways institutions, faculties, and departments can consider recruiting, retaining, and supporting faculty from FDGs at large. With the CRCP's emphasis on the recruitment of diverse chairholders, responsibility for retention of these CRCs lies within the department and its ability to foster a support and inclusive environment.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Former Chairholder Focus Group Questions

1. How was your experience being a CRC at UBC?

2. How could your experience as a CRC have been improved?

3. Do you believe that you had adequate support to fulfill the expectations for your research as a CRC?

4. In the 15-year evaluation of the national CRC Program, a finding was that prestige of the program has diminished over time. Do you believe that the prestige of the CRC program has changed over time, and why?

5. How, if at all, has the CRC program at UBC changed over time, and how might that have influenced or impacted the program?

6. What was your experience accessing research support as a CRC? (e.g., grant writing support, use of resources like VPRI, SPARC, IRSI, ORE, etc.)

7. Did you feel able as a CRC to balance your workload between research, teaching and service in the context of the additional research expectations of a CRC?
   a. Did anything in this balancing impact your promotional path or ability to be successful in your role?
   b. Are there any interventions you can imagine that would better support, manage, or recognize service work contributions for future chairholders?

8. In the CRC Experiences Survey, comments revealed a sense of isolation amongst CRCs. As a former CRC, what do you think could be done to create a sense of belonging?
   a. Would creating a greater sense of belonging have helped to build stronger collaboration and innovation in your research?

9. What should UBC be doing to support incoming and current CRCs?

10. Would you be interested in providing mentoring for junior CRCs? What form of mentoring do you think is needed?

Appendix B: Newly Appointed Chairholder Focus Group Questions

1. How did you learn about the CRC position in your field and what made you decide to apply?

2. What was your experience with the recruitment process?

3. And your experience with the nominations process?
   a. What could make either of those better?

4. Considering the expectations of the CRC program, how do you anticipate that your research will be supported differently?

5. What was your experience in negotiating support for this position and your research in consideration of the higher expectations of a CRC position?
   a. What could be done to assist? (e.g., grant writing support, use of resources like VPRI, SPARC, IRSI, ORE, faculty grant facilitator, etc.)?

6. Has becoming a CRC during this time with restricted nominations changed your relationship with colleagues, or your understanding of yourself as a researcher?

7. Considering your experiences to date, what changes would you suggest to improve the experience of CRCs?
   a. At recruitment and/or orientation, now you've started?

8. Would you like to have an opportunity to network with other CRCs at UBC? If so, would you like to participate in social gatherings? Research presentations? Other ways to network?

9. Would you benefit from mentoring opportunities offered by other CRC holders? From within your discipline? Within your Faculty? Outside your Faculty?

Appendix C: Project Team

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