

Voluntary Sector Studies Network



**LUTHER
COLLEGE**
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

Our First Year-in-Review

May 2015



VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK
LUTHER COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

VSSN Steering Group Members

Amy Hunter, Manager of Recruitment, Luther College

Angela Tremka, Student

Brenda Anderson, Faculty, Luther College

Evelyn Siegfried, Curator of Aboriginal Studies,
Royal Saskatchewan Museum

Hanna Karman, Student

Ingrid Cazakoff, CEO, Heritage Saskatchewan

Karen McIver, Environmental Consultant, Regina School Board

Mary Vetter, Faculty, Luther College

Moses Kanhai, Regina Multi-Faith Forum

Roger Petry, Faculty, Luther College

Scott Adams, Pastor

Selene Wray, StudentsFirst Program Coordinator, Luther College

Tracey Mann, Executive Director, Community Initiatives Fund

Volker Greifenhagen, Academic Dean, Luther College

Gloria DeSantis, Facilitator/Developer



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	i
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. MANDATE	1
1.2. VSSN PROGRAM	2
1.3. GROUPS THAT WILL BENEFIT FROM THE VSSN PROGRAM.....	4
1.4. CURRENT VSSN STRUCTURE	5
2. RATIONALE FOR THE VSSN	5
3. VSSN FIRST WITH STRATEGIC PLANS	7
4. BRIEF HISTORY: OBJECTIVES, RESULTS AND EXPENSES DURING THE FIRST YEAR	9
4.1. OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS DURING THIS FIRST YEAR.....	9
4.2. COSTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS DURING THIS FIRST YEAR	13
5. WHAT WE LEARNED DURING THIS FIRST YEAR	15
5.1. LEARNING ABOUT THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR.....	15
5.2. LEARNING ABOUT DEMAND FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY COURSES	16
5.3. LEARNING ABOUT HOW BEST TO SHARE, COLLABORATE AND GROW IDEAS	18
5.4. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS DURING THE FIRST YEAR	19
6. THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT FEW YEARS	21
6.1. OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS	21
6.2. OUR LONGER TERM VISION FOR VSSN	22
NOTES.....	23

SUMMARY

Who are we?

The Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) is an interdisciplinary, community-university collaborative, comprising students, the voluntary sector and faculty/staff administered out of the VSSN office at Luther College at the University of Regina. The VSSN program embraces three interrelated themes – learn, research, innovate. A twelve-member steering group was formed in September 2014 and continues to guide our work. Our ultimate goal is the sustainability of the voluntary/nonprofit sector for the benefit of our communities.

What did we do?

We began our first year in September 2014. We created community-university engagement and research strategies that focused on Saskatchewan and Canada. The community-university engagement work included public conversations centred on the voluntary sector through discussion meetings (Koffee Klatches), focus groups and a forum on financing the sector. These events saw students, voluntary sector staff/volunteers and university faculty/staff in dialogue together about what they need from VSSN, how they can serve VSSN, challenges/opportunities facing the sector, areas of skill and deficiencies in knowledge that exist in the sector, core competencies and courses required for a new undergraduate certificate, and best delivery methods for these courses (e.g. online, block courses, weekend university, etc.). In addition, we conducted a student survey, a cross-Canada environmental scan and interviews with post-secondary education program administrators, an environmental scan of professional development opportunities already being offered to nonprofits in Saskatchewan through nonprofits and the private sector, and a focused literature review on skills/capacities needed in the sector. Finally, at the VSSN interactive booth, we helped students find voluntary sector jobs at the University of Regina Career Fair and the Neil Squire Society Job Fair held at the University.

What were the results?

- There is definitely an appetite for conversation about and action on the voluntary sector. The eight public meetings had up to 60 people engaged in lively discussions. VSSN started a province-wide conversation about learning for/about the sector and will continue this work given this collective enthusiasm; our e-list of 190 individuals and organizations is the foundation of this new network.
- The Koffee Klatches and focus groups resulted in inventories and descriptions of core competencies and possible courses for undergraduate students as well as courses for voluntary sector staff and volunteers who are looking for advanced academic credentials. Thus, there is interest in a new certificate for undergraduate students as well as staff/volunteers in the sector.
- Research results indicate:
 - 70 post-secondary programs focused on the non-profit/voluntary sector exist across Canada but none are offered by Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions.

- There is demand for learning opportunities – especially a new undergraduate certificate that introduces students to the sector. Learning opportunities are being initiated at other universities (e.g. in September 2013, Carleton University unveiled a new Master's Degree in Nonprofit Leadership and Philanthropy; Brescia University College in London, Ontario launched an undergraduate degree in Nonprofit Management in April 2015).
- VSSN learned about special groups of people that it must incorporate into its research and learning opportunities: Aboriginal people, seniors, youth, rural communities and newcomers.
- Saskatchewan has a network of professional development opportunities available to staff and volunteers in the sector, provided by nonprofits and the private sector, thus VSSN must work to build on that network and not replace it.
- The literature review allowed us to make three major conclusions:
 - There is an increasing awareness by all levels of government, funders, donors and communities about the importance of the sector in society, governance and democracy, which has led to interest in educating and training voluntary sector CEOs, program managers and front-line workers as is currently done in both the public sector and private sector.
 - There are numerous analyses published that show future labour force shortages and skills mismatches, sustainability challenges, as well as a potential leadership "crisis" in the voluntary sector.
 - Post-secondary education programs that exist in Canada typically require ongoing advertising campaigns and a champion.
- Those voluntary organizations that attended VSSN public events spent time networking with others both on and off campus, thus VSSN is building community-university relationships.
- The only cautionary notes raised during the public conversations were: a) that VSSN should undertake a careful mapping exercise in order not to duplicate any courses that are currently being offered by Saskatchewan universities/colleges and b) re-think the label "voluntary sector".
- There is interest in sharing current information about the sector (e.g. a focus group with faith-based organizations was excited to receive information about how to engage volunteers given the current trend of time-strapped individuals and families).
- Students learned about the voluntary sector through three courses at Luther College (i.e. total of 20 students) as well as jobs in the sector through career fairs (i.e. 84 students at the University of Regina Career Fair and another 79 students at the Neil Squire Society Career Fair at the University of Regina).
- The research and teaching circles organized by VSSN at Luther College showcased new methodologies and pedagogies being tested by faculty under the VSSN model (i.e. experiential learning, community-based research, student assignments presented at community meetings); thus faculty learning is occurring.
- Our VSSN website was designed and launched in October 2014 and features background research, the proceedings and photos of all our public conversations, student testimonials, and links to search engines for jobs in the nonprofit sector around the world that students can freely access (www.luthercollege.edu/vssn).

In sum, we learned about a) the voluntary sector in Saskatchewan, b) the role that VSSN can play in growing nonprofit talent and capacity with/for/in the sector, c) key elements required for academic programming in the sector and finally, d) how to share and grow ideas with our public conversations including the launch of a new website where we share all our work. Our research will be used to develop curricula to enhance the knowledge and skill bases of those working and volunteering in the voluntary sector as well as for undergraduate students. We believe our VSSN work is a major impetus for human capital development and voluntary sector labour market development. VSSN promotes the sector as a viable career opportunity, provides learning specific to the sector, and enhances the professional status of those working in the sector. With these enhancements, individuals as well as whole communities benefit.

Who was involved?

A network of 190 individuals and organizations reflects who participated and who wants to stay connected to VSSN's mission. We had students, voluntary sector staff/volunteers and faculty/staff at all our public gatherings (60 people attended the October launch, 35 people attended the Koffee Klatch held at United Way, 25 people participated in the Koffee Klatch at First Nations University, 28 people participated in the Heritage Saskatchewan focus group, six people were at the funders' focus group, six people were at the faith organizations meeting, etc.).

Why did we do it?

Collectively, the steering group had much knowledge about the voluntary sector in Saskatchewan and had anecdotal evidence that there was not a certificate or undergraduate program focusing on the sector in Saskatchewan. Prior conversations with people in the sector emphasized the need for learning opportunities, identification and coordination of research and innovative collaborations between the sector and the university.

Where did we do it?

Currently, the VSSN program is based at Luther College at the University of Regina and meetings took place in Regina, but we know our new program will serve the entire province using various technologies (e.g. skype meetings, webinars, online courses).

How did we manage to do all this work?

Luther College provided seed money, \$89,298, for ten months. An additional \$96,705 of in-kind resources was leveraged (e.g. volunteer knowledge and skills, student involvement, free meeting space at First Nations University and United Way Regina). A full report will be available on our website, www.luthercollege.edu/vssn, at the end of May 2015.

1. Introduction

1.1 Mandate

The Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) is an interdisciplinary¹, community-university collaborative, comprising students, the voluntary sector and faculty/staff administered out of the VSSN office at Luther College at the University of Regina. At VSSN, a buzz of activities and conversations unfold daily about the voluntary sector in Regina and across Saskatchewan.

The VSSN is the first formal program of study on the voluntary sector as a whole in Saskatchewan. It began in September 2014 with seed money for ten months from the Luther College President's Academic Strategic Initiatives Fund. A total of \$89,298 was made available and an additional \$96,705 was leveraged in in-kind resources. The present mandate of VSSN is:

- a) to create opportunities for dialogue about voluntary sector studies among diverse groups both on and off campus in order to formulate innovative approaches to research, learning and collaboration.
- b) to advance the implementation of both scholarly and practical learning programs.

The voluntary sector - also known as the nonprofit sector, the third sector and the community-based sector - is worthy of significant academic exploration. The sector provides many public benefits, is woven into the historical fabric of Canada, is active in myriad areas (e.g. arts/culture, heritage, environment, sports and recreation, faith-based organizations), has \$75 billion in revenues, is found in every community, has thousands of staff, and draws on millions of volunteer hours every year.² Saskatchewan has at least 8,000 registered charities and nonprofits, the second highest number of voluntary organizations per capita in Canada³ and the highest volunteer rate in Canada.⁴



1.2 VSSN program

The VSSN program embraces three inter-related themes: learn, research, innovate. As shown in the figure to the right, students, voluntary sector staff and volunteers as well as university faculty/staff are involved in dynamic and mutually beneficial relationships while learning, researching and innovating. We believe that by enhancing connections among these diverse groups, the potential for reciprocal learning for everyone involved is substantial – indeed, the creation and sharing of knowledge is multi-directional. This reciprocal learning benefits communities and society as a whole.



Learn – Learning at VSSN is both formal and informal and encompasses different models of course delivery: semester-long courses, online courses, webinars, block classes, evening seminars and ‘weekend university’. There are three main groups of learners at VSSN:

- **Academic courses for students who may be interested in studying the voluntary sector** – based on a review of curricular guidelines, new courses are being designed at the undergraduate level.⁵ In addition, a selection of courses currently offered on campus are being adapted to incorporate a "community-engaged learning" model wherein student projects serve the needs of voluntary sector organizations; voluntary organizations and students mutually shape the direction of projects. Connections are being fostered with the University of Regina, First Nations University and Campion College in order to bundle together new courses as well as a collection of courses already being offered, to provide students with a new area of specialization – a Certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies.

- **Professional development for voluntary sector staff and volunteers** – new learning opportunities are being developed for voluntary sector staff (e.g. senior, middle and front-line staff) and volunteers. While there are some training programs currently in place, the HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector in Canada⁶ found problems with numerous courses (e.g. there were very few hands-on components). We are exploring what is currently available in Saskatchewan, identifying what gaps exist and discerning how to fill them.
- **Professional development for faculty** - through peer-mentorship, faculty are given the opportunity to learn how to build experiential learning activities into their courses as well as learn about community-engaged scholarship and how to apply it.



Research – Community-based participatory action research and community-engaged scholarship are the main paradigms at the VSSN. Community-engaged scholarship is a multi-dimensional, systematic, documented and evaluated process of discovery that is entrenched in both theoretical literature and real-world experience, which results in products that are public, peer-reviewed, change-oriented and made available to others for further use.⁷ These products range from theories about the sector and new public policies to community histories and children’s drawings. Depending on the nature of the projects, teams of students engage in community-based research and work closely with faculty and voluntary organization staff and volunteers. The integration of theory and practice is paramount. VSSN believes in collaborating with other research-oriented units and organizations in order to best serve the interests of the community (e.g. Community Research Unit and others at the University of Regina, First Nations University and Campion College). The potential for VSSN to become an academic clearinghouse of ideas and resources about the voluntary sector, serving the entire province, is tremendous.

“I’m really impressed and excited by the work being done with this initiative.”

*Attendee of May 6, 2015
RCE Recognition Event*

Innovate – Innovation is an essential component because the voluntary sector is undergoing transformational shifts today (e.g. shifts in the charity, social justice, and social enterprise models) yet Canadian research on the voluntary sector is still in its infancy. Complexity, network and ecological theories (to name but three) inform our work. We believe when a diverse group of thinkers - old and young, experienced and inexperienced - sit around the same table and converse, new ways of looking at problems (and how to solve them) emerge. Students will develop their leadership and social entrepreneurship skills; new public policies and voluntary sector incubators are but two examples of what students can pursue at VSSN while working with voluntary organizations. Cross-disciplinary thinking and action on real-world problems unfold daily at VSSN.

1.3 Groups that will benefit from the VSSN program

Given this model, the following groups of people benefit from VSSN:

- A diversity of undergraduate students studying in many different disciplines benefit because voluntary organizations exist across numerous disciplines; for example, Engineers Without Borders, Museums Association of Saskatchewan, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Saskatoon Food Bank, Al Ritchie Community Association, and Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations.
- People who have already graduated and are now working and/or volunteering in the voluntary sector or in the government sector and who are interested in upgrading their knowledge and skills will enrol in courses.
- People who have retired and are currently running programs as volunteers.
- Faculty and staff on campus who want to challenge themselves to learn new ways of thinking about old problems and new teaching skills.

1.4 Current VSSN structure

The VSSN organization comprises a director, a part-time coordinator, and a Steering Group comprising members of voluntary organizations, students and faculty/staff. The Academic Dean of Luther College is ultimately responsible for the VSSN.

2. Rationale for the VSSN

Given the size, scope and importance of the voluntary sector in Canada, there is an increasing interest in labour force and human capital development by those working and volunteering in the voluntary sector as well as the funders and governments that fund these organizations. We have critical literature that points to the need for a more formal and co-ordinated strategy for enhancing the sector especially given demographic and other trends in Canada (e.g. a large cohort of retirees are expected to exit the sector within the next decade, Aboriginal people make up a growing number of the labour force, there will likely be growth in the number of voluntary organizations serving seniors given the aging of our population, and workers shift jobs and careers more frequently today than they did 30 years ago – thus there is a need for ongoing learning opportunities). The following quote is one of many found in a growing body of literature in Canada:

"The ability of this sector to attract and retain the right talent, develop effective leadership, provide relevant training and skills development, and offer competitive benefits and compensation will be critical in determining the future vibrancy and sustainability of the nonprofit sector." ⁸

Many provinces have post-secondary education institutions that offer certificate programs, undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees that focus on the voluntary sector; Saskatchewan does not. Both the universities and the colleges in Saskatchewan offer some



"I am very glad that you are doing this. I'd much rather do this home-grown program than some online program from (another province)."

Participant at
Feb. 27 Koffee Klatch

courses and/or modules within courses about the sector, but there is no formal program of study per se. Given the large number of organizations in the sector, the high volunteer rate,⁹ the employment of thousands of people¹⁰ and that the funding and functions of the sector in Canadian society have been under a microscope recently, the time is right to advance this program of study on the voluntary sector in Saskatchewan.

The Voluntary Sector Initiatives (VSI) that were implemented by both the federal government and the Government of Saskatchewan between 1998 and 2005 catalyzed interest and action on the sector as a critical component of Canadian society. As a result, there has been a major increase in awareness by all levels of government and communities about the importance of the sector in society, governance and democracy.^{11 12} With this growth in awareness about the sector has come interest in educating and training CEOs, program managers and front-line workers as is currently done in both the public sector and private sector.^{13 14} In addition, funders and donors want to know their financial contributions to organizations are being managed professionally and output and outcome measures are appropriate.

While currently the University of Regina has strong linkages to the business community (through the Paul Hill School of Business), to government (through the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy), and to some sub-sectors such as human services (through the Faculties of Social Work and Nursing) and sport/recreation (through the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies), there is no focused program of study on the voluntary sector as a whole for students. Further, while three pillars constitute our society¹⁵ – the government sector, the market sector, the voluntary sector – the voluntary sector lacks a coordinated and comprehensive academic presence in Saskatchewan. There are many experienced and talented voluntary sector senior staff and volunteers from our Saskatchewan communities who are considered assets to VSSN's model regarding their potential roles in teaching, researching, and innovating.

Students should be given the opportunity to see and understand that the voluntary sector is a viable, meaningful, career alternative in the same way that business students learn about working for the private sector and public policy/administration students learn about working in the government sector. Indeed, the VSSN offers networking opportunities for livelihood options after graduation and reinforces the increasing importance of non-market, volunteer activity in building sustainable livelihoods. In addition, the current cohort of students appears very interested in interdisciplinary approaches and programs that allow them to explore real-world problems from multiple perspectives.¹⁶

Finally, a voluntary sector studies stream at the University of Regina complements the emphasis offered by the Centre for Studies of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan. With the Co-operative Studies program and a Voluntary Sector Studies program, the Saskatchewan student market would be well-served, thus supporting a provincial government goal of student retention.

3. VSSN fits with strategic plans

The focus of the voluntary sector on causes aimed at advancing human well-being in its many dimensions is reinforced by the scholarship of Luther College grounded in the humanities and liberal arts and science more generally. The Luther College Strategic Plan 2014-2019 contains priority areas that are linked to key components of the Certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies. First, "capacity building" is of importance in the College's Strategic Plan. Within this strategic initiative is the need to develop volunteer opportunities for students that will allow them to develop real-world knowledge and skills. Second, the Plan also has as one of its priority areas, "student diversity". Given the inherently diverse nature of the voluntary sector (e.g. organizations that serve people with disabilities, First Nation and Métis organizations, agencies that serve the needs of seniors), the VSSN will naturally attract a diverse group of students. Third, a liberal arts education is a beneficial and valued skill-base for occupations in the voluntary sector.



"I like the diverse representation, wisdom, innovation and collaboration that groups bring to the table."

Participant at
Dec. 15 Koffee Klatch

The following examples of skills learned through a liberal arts curriculum are extremely important for working and volunteering in the sector:

- ability to discern how to find, collect and critically analyse data needed to make decisions about policies and programs;
- what it means to be in diverse relationships including building trust and reciprocity;
- cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary understanding and collaboration;
- the ability to identify core issues from a mass of information and then organize and unify one's ideas;
- effective written, verbal and listening skills;
- being able to work with varying degrees of unpredictability and ambiguity; and
- being able to see the whole picture in an often complex and messy real world.

In addition, VSSN is an excellent fit with the new 2014 University of Regina Strategic Plan for a number of reasons. First, one of the three main strategic priorities is "commitment to our communities." VSSN focuses on "serving and engaging diverse peoples and communities." Second, community-engaged, experiential learning for students is a theme in the new Strategic Plan; VSSN offers community-engaged learning and research opportunities that encourage a shift "from knowledge as self-interest and private good to knowledge as civic responsibility and public work." ¹⁷ Third, the strategic plan promotes the "integration of the liberal arts across disciplines" and the development of "interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum design and delivery between Faculties and departments." The VSSN and voluntary sector are multidisciplinary and utilize the knowledge and skills from diverse disciplines on campus.

4. Brief history: objectives, results and expenses during this first year

4.1 Objectives and results during this first year

The VSSN¹⁸ is energized and gaining momentum! Its launch on October 30, 2014 attracted 60 people from the campus and the community and its e-list has grown to include 190 individuals.

Given the nature of many courses taught at Luther College and relationships that already exist, the initial focus of VSSN was on arts/cultural/heritage, environmental and faith-based voluntary organizations. However, those who attended the variety of public meetings came from a larger variety of voluntary organizations. Luther College is committed to embracing the diversity of organizations that comprise the voluntary sector and that are interested in participating in VSSN as it moves into its second year and beyond.

The following list of objectives was derived from an inaugural brainstorming session of Luther College students, faculty and staff in September 2014. The results below were recently compiled by the VSSN steering group:

- a) To pursue institutional sustainability of the VSSN. Sustainability is a theme that weaves its way into everything we do! Sustainability refers to people skills, partnerships, in-kind resources and financial resources.

RESULTS

- ✓ Had our VSSN booth at the province-wide Heritage Saskatchewan Trade Show sponsored by OH! Media.
- ✓ Annotated list of potential financial sources including eligibility criteria and deadlines created.
- ✓ First meetings held with representatives of Community Research Unit (CRU), Liberal Arts Advisory Committee, Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, and Faculty of Business; some faculty indicated interest in offering courses (see objective #5 below too), thus links have been made.



***“Keep doing
what you’re
doing –
strides are
being made.”***

*Participant at
Feb. 27 Koffee Klatch*

- ✓ VSSN attracted a practicum student who joined VSSN in January 2015 to work 35 hours/week for four months (which did not require any funding).
- ✓ Steering group of twelve members, five of whom are community representatives and are committing many in-kind resources to VSSN.
- ✓ Records kept of all meetings, emails with interested people on and off campus catalogued, etc.; these are critical for long-term planning and sustainability work.

b) To create opportunities for connections, conversations and commitments to unfold.

RESULTS

- ✓ VSSN has an e-list comprising 190 different individuals who asked to receive updates from VSSN (includes government staff, voluntary organizations, students, faculty/staff).
- ✓ October 30, 2014 launch brought 60 people (from both on and off campus) to Luther College.
- ✓ December 15, Koffee Klatch¹⁹ was held at United Way Regina and had 35 people in attendance.
- ✓ February 2, 2015 Career Fair at the University of Regina resulted in conversations with 84 different students about jobs in the voluntary sector through our interactive booth.
- ✓ February 21, Heritage Week Trade Show at Delta Hotel – talked with 29 different people about VSSN.
- ✓ February 27, Koffee Klatch was held at First Nations University and had 25 people in attendance.
- ✓ March 3, "The Quest for \$75 Billion: Financing the Voluntary Sector," saw 25 people join four panelists to discuss funding sources and then break into small groups for a more intimate conversation. The Minister of Social Services was one of our panelists.
- ✓ April 9, Neil Squire Society Job Fair at the University of Regina resulted in conversations with 79 different students and parents about jobs in the sector – at one point in the day, our interactive booth had a line-up!

- ✓ May 4, invited to present VSSN at the bi-annual meeting of provincial Cultural Organizations hosted by SaskCulture Inc. (33 nonprofit organizations present).
- ✓ May 6, VSSN was presented with an award from the Regional Centres of Expertise in Sustainable Development at its meeting at University of Saskatchewan.
- ✓ May 22, invited to present VSSN's current work at the Museums Association of Saskatchewan annual general meeting; there were 87 people in attendance.

c) To undertake a co-ordinated marketing and advertising campaign of the VSSN.

RESULTS

- ✓ Logo designed and launched – VSSN is branded.
- ✓ New website launched at Luther College that features background research, the steering group, student testimonials, links to voluntary sector jobs, and photo gallery from our public meetings.
- ✓ The one-page overview of VSSN is circulated and explained at all meetings, thus knowledge dissemination is occurring.
- ✓ 500 student-focused "jobs book marks" and "myths cards" featuring the voluntary sector as a career destination have been designed, printed and distributed on campus.
- ✓ Interdisciplinary Studies courses, including courses on the nonprofit sector, have been showcased across campus and the community.
- ✓ Social media campaign is underway – Twitter messages are already being sent out to students on campus.

d) To conduct research focusing on the needs/capacities of voluntary organizations and to discern the level of interest in and utility of the VSSN concept.



“VSSN has given me the chance to meet like-minded people with vast experiences and resources.”

*Participant at
Dec. 15 Koffee Klatch*

RESULTS

- ✓ A cross-Canada environmental scan of 70 voluntary sector certificates, diplomas, undergraduate and graduate degrees on the sector is complete; it reveals that none are physically located in Saskatchewan.
 - ✓ In-depth research with seven universities across Canada that have programs similar to VSSN is currently underway in order to learn about their enrolment trends, etc.
 - ✓ February 20, hosted a focus group with 28 Heritage Saskatchewan members to collect qualitative data.
 - ✓ March 17, hosted a focus group with five clergy from a variety of faith communities.
 - ✓ March 25, hosted a focus group with the Saskatchewan Funders Network.
 - ✓ May 1, hosted a focus group with Saskatchewan Nonprofit Partnership.
 - ✓ Research Ethics Board approval for a survey of university students was received and a survey was conducted between March 30 and April 17; 100 surveys were completed.
 - ✓ June 1, invited to facilitate a day-long meeting and focus group in Saskatoon for Administrators of Volunteer Resources of Saskatchewan.
 - ✓ Preliminary research completed by undergraduate students (via the course Nonprofits in Society IDS 290AA) on the number, types, and delivery methods of professional development courses for voluntary sector staff/volunteers offered in Saskatchewan.
 - ✓ Preliminary research completed by undergraduate students (via the course Nonprofits in Society IDS 290AA) on social enterprises in Saskatchewan.
- e) To begin a process of voluntary sector course evolution on campus.

RESULTS

- ✓ During the fall 2014, a new course, IDS 290AC Mixed Methods Research on the Voluntary Sector, was delivered based on the VSSN model, which engaged two students in real-world research projects.
- ✓ A new course on inter-religious dialogue using the VSSN model ran from January-April 2015 and involved four students.

- ✓ A new course has been created for September 2015 featuring Indian Head Grand Theatre as a case study; the course is, “Discovering Prairie Community.”
- ✓ Six students were mentored using this VSSN pedagogy in the course, IDS 290AA Nonprofits in Society during the winter semester.
- ✓ A proposal for a new Certificate in Voluntary Sector Studies has been drafted and presented to Centre for Continuing Education.
- ✓ A list of core competencies and a list of courses are being drafted based on data collected from the Koffee Klatches and focus groups.
- ✓ On January 27, VSSN hosted a Research Circle on community-based research in order to share and grow the VSSN model on campus; ten faculty/staff from across campus learned about this model.
- ✓ On March 10, VSSN hosted a Teaching Circle that involved faculty learning a new pedagogy (i.e. experiential learning, student assignments presented at community meetings) that is being tested and implemented at Luther College; six faculty attended.



4.2 Costs and contributions during this first year

These results have been accomplished with both financial and in-kind contributions. During this first year, expenditures of \$89,298 will have been made on a full-time Project Facilitator/Developer, a Program Assistant and operational expenses (e.g. promotional material, meeting materials, etc.). Secondly, VSSN has benefited immensely from in-kind contributions totalling **\$96,705**. The following is a list of these contributions.

“When I read the notes from December, I was worried that the process may be ethereal or bogged down in minutia. I was pleasantly surprised when it was practical.”

*Participant at
Feb. 27 Koffee Klatch*

In-kind contributions	Description	Estimated <u>minimum</u> dollar value
Steering group member participation in VSSN	12 members, each contributes approximately 8 hrs/month at rate of \$50/hr x 10 mon.	\$48,000
Practicum student (internship)	35 hrs/week x 14 weeks at rate of \$16.75/hr from Jan. to April 2015. (this hourly rate is for 4 th year TA at UofR)	\$8,207
Participation of people from voluntary organizations	50 unique individuals from different organizations prepared for and participated in public meetings (e.g. Koffee Klatches, focus groups, etc.) and shared their knowledge and made recommendations about the VSSN program. Apply pay rate of \$50/hr x 4 hrs. each x 50 people	\$10,000
Expert panel "Financing the voluntary sector"	5 experts prepared for and presented at the 3-hour public forum held on Mar. 3 (5 experts x 15 hrs. each x \$50/hr.)	\$3,750
Students working on research projects in Luther courses	- Sept-Dec. 2014, 2 students @ 10 hrs/week x 14 weeks at pay rate of \$16.50/hr - Jan-Apr. 2015, 5 students @ 10 hrs/week x 6 weeks at pay rate of \$16.75/hr	\$4,620 \$5,025
Luther College IT support staff	Set up and regular maintenance of computer and phone systems: 1 hr/mon. x 10 mons. at \$50/hr	\$500
Luther College Academic Office staff	Staff participated in meetings to design new Certificate (e.g. Registrar participated in 2 meetings x 2 hrs. each x \$50)	\$200
Luther Communications Officer	1 hr/week x 4 weeks x 10 months x \$50/hr.	\$2,000
Luther College Business Office	Project financial reports \$50/hr x 4 hrs.	\$200
Office space	At Luther College – 1 office in a high traffic area of the main floor of the College (18' x 12' floor space, \$750/mon x 10 mon.) and 1 office in cellar (\$490/mon x 6 mon)	\$7,500 \$2,940
Office equipment	VSSN staff and volunteers have access to: - 2 phones (phone is 1% of \$15,000 annual charge and 1% of \$1000 monthly charge x 1 phone/10 mons. and 1 phone for 6 mons.) - 2 upgraded computers (\$26.75/mon x 16 mons)	\$1,260 \$428
Meeting rooms for public meetings	VSSN had free use of - Luther College room LC 100 (capacity 100) for 2 public meetings, \$175 for half day - United Way Community Room - First Nations University Memorial Tipi - Delta Regina meeting room hosted by Heritage Saskatchewan (with refreshments)	\$350 \$400 \$200 \$875
Sponsorship	OH! Media sponsored VSSN booth at annual Heritage Saskatchewan Trade Show	\$250
TOTAL		\$96,705

5. What we learned during this first year

The VSSN has had an extremely productive first year as noted in the previous section. The VSSN has started a province-wide conversation about the voluntary sector and has already had an impact on the university community by making this sector more visible. The collaboration and partnerships between the university and voluntary organizations in Saskatchewan has started us on a course of building capacity. Our work together is a strategic way of employing the voluntary sector to sustain communities and build social, human, natural, and financial capital.

5.1 Learning about the voluntary sector

Some theorists argue that the voluntary sector itself is a complex ecological system with a diversity of agents (e.g. nonprofit organizations, governments, funders, and businesses), acting in a diversity of ways and creating a diversity of forces, conditions and reactions. Voluntary sector organizations have to adapt to these (i.e. mutate) or succumb to threats (i.e. cease to exist). There is also the emergence of new organizational forms and foci to deal with new conditions and realities that emerge in their environment (e.g. most HIV/AIDS organizations did not exist 25 years ago). This foundational knowledge helps orient VSSN to its future work.

More specifically, we have learned from our research and public conversations that:

- There are professional development options offered by nonprofits, private sector companies and individuals, as well as a few courses offered at Saskatchewan universities that serve the sector. Thus the sector is engaged in learning opportunities, however, there are gaps, which VSSN needs to analyse and fill.
- We know there are at least 8,000 registered nonprofits and registered charities but no census of the sector has been undertaken.



“I like the eclectic nature of VSSN’s Koffee Klatches.”

*Participant at
Dec. 15 Koffee Klatch*

- We will have to pay particular attention to Aboriginal communities and their voluntary organizations. In particular, First Nations reserves in Saskatchewan are unique places of "voluntary" activities that require culturally-appropriate research and learning approaches; these communities can teach VSSN about alternative conceptualizations of voluntary behaviour, which in turn can be taught in courses by people from these communities.
- Given demographic trends that show an increasing seniors population, we will have to think carefully about organizations that serve seniors.
- Youth are engaging in matters of concern to them but in ways that are different from earlier generations (e.g. online public policy advocacy work), thus we will have to ensure we adopt youth-specific awareness and engagement strategies.
- Saskatchewan has been attracting immigrants in greater numbers over the past few years who are interested in volunteering as a way to gain Canadian experience, meet new friends, and learn about their new communities.
- Rural communities have been identified as having special challenges regarding philanthropic and volunteer activities.

In summary, given current literature as well as our primary data collection and analyses with those who work and volunteer in the sector in Saskatchewan, it is a sector with important sustainability challenges. In general, we have heard about the lack of stable funding, a decreasing number of volunteers, a projected labour force deficit and ageing infrastructure, which cumulatively threaten the survival of the voluntary sector. However, the sector is also very resilient and adaptable to change. VSSN can play a role by offering learning opportunities to support the sector in its adaptation to change and adoption of innovation.

5.2 Learning about demand for professional development and university courses

Based on the Koffee Klatches, focus groups, steering group meetings, the cross-Canada environmental scan and interviews with a select group of program administrators, as well as

Student surveys, there is a demand for learning opportunities in Saskatchewan. However, the VSSN also heard that it must ensure it is building on a network of learning opportunities that already exist in the province - its aim should be fill in the gaps. A detailed analysis of VSSN's collected data is currently underway and will be completed for mid-June 2015. A draft list of core competencies and courses for the Certificate will be included.

Based on this first year of work, we know the following:

- There is high interest and community engagement in VSSN given that events it hosted were attended by diverse groups of enthusiastic people who were interested in talking about and contributing to the development of learning opportunities.
- All participants in VSSN public events have indicated their support for VSSN and its new certificate idea in particular – in fact, they have offered much advice to this end.
- A mapping of gaps in learning opportunities will have to be completed now that lists of what is already available have been drafted (e.g. professional development/learning opportunities offered by nonprofits, private sector companies and individuals in Saskatchewan, university courses, etc.).
- Seventy post-secondary institution programs exist across Canada and although some appear to have been suspended, others have been successfully restructured (e.g. Mount Royal University moved their program to an online format and currently have 450 students enrolled in courses) and new programs have opened (e.g. Carleton University began its Master of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership in September 2013, Brescia University College in London, Ontario launched an undergraduate degree in Nonprofit Management in April 2015).
- A survey of 100 university students conducted in March/April 2015 indicated that 57% of them were already working and/or volunteering with nonprofit organizations and 46% of them stated they are interested in enrolling in a new university certificate that focuses on the nonprofit sector.
- Current population trends in Saskatchewan show immigration of people from countries from around the world, thus learning opportunities through VSSN will have to be open to



“I like the diverse representation, wisdom, innovation and collaboration that groups bring to the table.”

*Participant at
Dec. 15 Koffee Klatch*

regular modification depending on the expressed needs of the shifting composition of our provincial population.

- VSSN will have to work carefully to modify traditional research and learning opportunities (e.g. university-driven should become community-driven) in order to better impact the real-world issues with which the voluntary sector is dealing.
- VSSN will need to ensure that it maximizes the use of technology to provide learning opportunities for all interested people in Saskatchewan, especially those working/volunteering in rural and/or northern areas.
- VSSN research indicates that demand for courses and ongoing participation in learning opportunities can be increased with well-designed student and public awareness campaigns and a champion to advance the VSSN program.

In conclusion, there appears to be demand for learning opportunities about, and directed at, the voluntary sector. Research indicates that enrolment in university courses is affected by attractive course elements (e.g. experiential learning, problem-based learning, social innovation, etc. should be in all courses) and awareness campaigns led by a strong champion.

5.3 Learning about how best to share, collaborate and grow ideas

The VSSN has adopted principles of public, collective and transparent conversations in all of its work. For example, invitations to the Koffee Klatches were circulated to listservs on campus and off campus throughout the nonprofit sector. Koffee Klatches, focus groups and forums held to date have been open to anyone who has an interest in the topic of discussion. All conversations and meeting proceedings are recorded on paper, transcribed, and posted on the VSSN website. These proceedings are available to any individuals or groups locally, provincially, nationally or internationally who want to use our collective thinking to enhance their own learning and to inform their group's action. More specifically:

- The VSSN e-list has grown to 190; people on this list receive information about VSSN's work, invitations to events, and other reports about the nonprofit sector that may be of interest to them.
- A carefully designed "awareness raising campaign" will have to be developed in VSSN's second year and beyond given research indicating that the voluntary sector is invisible to many students, despite it being all around us.
- VSSN will have to broaden its conversation base to include a larger group of nonprofits, governments at all levels and the business community in order to grow its impact.

5.4 Summary of impacts during this first year

The numerous events, conversations, meetings and research have led to the following list of impacts for the three main groups that comprise the VSSN:

Students

- 20 students have been impacted by three new courses that used the learn-research-innovate model grounded in experiential learning (IDS 290AC Mixed Methods Research in the Voluntary Sector, IDS 290AB Ecomuseums, IDS 290AA Nonprofit in Society). New courses typically require a few years to grow awareness.
- Students who have had conversations at public events with VSSN (e.g. 84 students at the Career Fair at University of Regina, 79 students at the Neil Squire Society Job Fair) have learned about jobs in the sector.

Voluntary organizations (based on evaluation forms collected at events)

- Some voluntary sector organizations have been impacted by VSSN's presence and its knowledge-sharing because they are inviting VSSN to facilitate events (e.g. invited to Heritage Saskatchewan annual forum in February 2015, invited by Community Foundations



***“Great
brainstorming
time, great
discussion, great
connections and
networking.”***

*- Participant at
Dec. 15 Koffee Klatch*

of Canada to a national meeting in April 2015 on enhancing the vitality of the nonprofit sector, invited by Saskatchewan Archeology Society to present at their annual meeting, invited by Saskatchewan Administrators of Volunteer Resources to facilitate a day-long meeting in June 2015).

- Those voluntary organizations that attended VSSN events indicate they left the event with new knowledge (e.g. some of the projects going on around the province, what students are learning in university, similar struggles across organizations in the sector such as board recruitment and management, some of the resources available, the critical role of the sector and the idea of the voluntary sector as a new dominant form of production, learning about other sub-sectors in the voluntary sector).
- Those voluntary organizations that attended VSSN events spent time networking with people both on and off campus, thus VSSN is building community-university relationships.
- Those voluntary organizations that attended VSSN events said the university seems more approachable than they originally thought and that the engaged citizenship and holistic foci of Luther College were very interesting.

Faculty/staff

- Ten faculty/staff now know about community-based research and experiential learning methods as well as how to adopt these into their courses (based on a Teaching Circle held in January 2015).
- The University of Regina President's Advisory Committee on the Liberal Arts is aware of VSSN because of our presentation to them.
- The Community Research Unit, Faculty of Arts, is aware of VSSN and conversations and referrals regarding community-based research initiatives have begun.

VSSN intentionally set out to create and implement a series of public processes in order to start a province-wide conversation about the voluntary sector and learning possibilities. It has accomplished this!

6. Thinking about the next few years

The VSSN has decided, given the positive feedback to date, that it will continue its efforts. The steering group decided its main goals for VSSN over the next two years are:

- To continue to strategically, collectively and publicly define and build the VSSN, its three pillars and its long-term sustainability (e.g. people skills, partnerships, financial resources and in-kind resources); and
- To implement scholarly and practical, innovative learning programs with and for the VSSN's three main groups – students, voluntary organizations and university faculty/staff – that also results in the incubation of new ideas with/for the voluntary sector.



6.1 Objectives for the next two years

Six main objectives and their accompanying activities directly contribute to the achievement of these new goals.

- a) Communications (both on and off campus)** – to expand VSSN communications with VSSN's three main groups – students, voluntary organizations and university faculty/staff - in order to increase awareness and understanding of the VSSN.
- b) Sustainability** – To build institutional sustainability for the VSSN including: securing the people with specific skills to build VSSN (e.g., communications, coordination, grant-writing); formal partnerships with those with deliverables (e.g., those offering courses in the new Certificate); in-kind resource sharing (e.g., free meeting space, free experts for learning events, sponsorships); links with governments and businesses; and securing financial resources.
- c) Program and curriculum development** – to use all research to further develop curricula for the new certificate and for professional development opportunities.

- d) **Research** – to complete research projects currently underway in year one and embark on new sector-wide initiatives for which results are required to further inform VSSN programming and ultimately to serve the sector.
- e) **Community development** – to continue to create the time and space to connect with and have conversations with voluntary sector organizations, collectively identify and define issues and solutions, operationalize these in learning opportunities and create partnerships for teaching/learning.
- f) **Administration, co-ordination and planned approach** – to ensure VSSN's administrative work is completed and there is proper co-ordination of the above listed VSSN activities within a framework of strategic thinking/choices/action.

6.2 Our longer term vision for VSSN

VSSN is working to inspire the development of new knowledge, skills, understanding and collaborations. Its research will be used to develop curricula to enhance the knowledge and skill bases of those working and volunteering in the voluntary sector as well as for undergraduate students. In addition, further research and piloting of new approaches to learning, governance models, policy development, program delivery and partnership development, and more are expected outcomes. Through our community-engagement strategies and community-based research agenda, VSSN has already initiated dialogue that will lead to a province-wide awareness campaign about the scope, value and impact of the voluntary sector as well as strengthen the sector's voice individually and collectively. Further, the VSSN connects the university with the community, thus we are breaking down barriers and silos in order to showcase synergies that can ensue in similar partnerships to solve society's big problems (e.g. wetlands destruction, racism, heritage protection). In summary, our VSSN work is a major impetus for human capital development and voluntary sector labour market development. VSSN promotes the sector as a viable career opportunity, provides learning specific to the sector, and enhances the professional status of those working in the sector. With these enhancements, individuals as well as whole communities benefit.

Notes

¹ The voluntary sector crosses all disciplines. The International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations makes this point clear given its 14 categories are related to many academic departments on campus: arts and culture, sports and recreation, education, health, social services, environmental, employment development and housing, politics and political studies, voluntarism promotion, religion, international development, and business/professional associations.

² Hall, M., et al. (2004). *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry, Statistics Canada.

³ Hall et al (2004).

⁴ See Statistics Canada report, *Distribution of Donor and Volunteer Rates, Average Donations and Volunteer Hours, by Province and Territory (2010)* <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/120321/t120321a1-eng.htm>

⁵ Nonprofit Academic Centres Council (2008). *Curricular Guidelines for Undergraduate Study in Nonprofit Leadership, the Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy*. Cleveland, Ohio.

⁶ HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector. (2010). *The State of Leadership Development: An Exploratory Study of Social Service Charities in Alberta and Saskatchewan*. Ottawa, ON: HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector.

⁷ Adaptation of Jordan, C. (2007). *Community-Engaged Scholarship Review, Promotion & Tenure Package*. Washington: Peer Review Workgroup, Community-Engaged Scholarship for Health Collaborative, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/CES_RPT_Package.pdf and Seifer, S. (2003). Documenting and Assessing Community-Based Scholarship. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* (pp. 429-435). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Boss.

⁸ For more information, please see the following reports:

- McIsaac, Park & Toupin (2013). *Shaping the Future Leadership in Ontario's Nonprofit Labour Force*, Mowat Centre, University of Toronto.
- HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector (2012). *Skills Development: Using Evidenced-Based Information to Inform Practice*. Ottawa.
- HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector (2011). *Current State of Skills Development: The Canadian Nonprofit Sector*. Ottawa.
- Toupin & Plewes (2007). *Exploring the Looming Leadership Deficit in the Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector*. The Philanthropist, Vol. 21, No. 2.

⁹ Hall et al (2004).

¹⁰ See Statistics Canada report, *Distribution of Donor and Volunteer Rates, Average Donations and Volunteer Hours, by Province and Territory (2010)* <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/120321/t120321a1-eng.htm> and Hall et al. (2004).

¹¹ Laforest, R. (2011). *Voluntary Sector Organizations and the State*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

¹² Mulholland, Mendelsonh & Shamshiri (2011). *Strengthening the Third Pillar of the Canadian Union: An Intergovernmental Agenda for Canada's Charities and Non-Profits*. Toronto: University of Toronto, Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation.

¹³ Hall, M. et al. (2005). *The Capacity to Serve: A Qualitative Study of the Challenges Facing Canada's Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.

¹⁴ HR Council (2010). *The State of Leadership Development: An Exploratory Study of Social Service Charities in Alberta and Saskatchewan*.

¹⁵ Mulholland, Mendelsonh & Shamshiri (2011). *Strengthening the Third Pillar of the Canadian Union*.

¹⁶ See *Five Bold Predictions for the Future of Higher Education* <http://www.fastcoexist.com/3029109/futurist-forum/5-bold-predictions-for-the-future-of-higher-education>

¹⁷ Hicks Peterson, T. (2009). Engaged Scholarship: Reflections and Research on the Pedagogy of Social Change. *Teaching in Higher Education* 14 (5), 541-552.

¹⁸ For more information, see www.luthercollege.edu/vssn

¹⁹ A Koffee Klatch, kaffeeklatsch, is a German word, that is "an informal social gathering for coffee and conversation" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary).

3737 Wascana Parkway
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 0A2, Canada



**LUTHER
COLLEGE**
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

www.luthercollege.edu/VSSN



VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK
LUTHER COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA