

## External Review of the Social Justice Studies Program

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### Review Committee:

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### Executive Summary

UVic's Strategic Vision is to be a "university that best integrates outstanding scholarship, engaged learning and real-life involvement to contribute to a better future for people and the planet." This bold vision materializes in a context of significant social change. We are witnessing a convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic downturn in its wake, the climate emergency, as well as global uprisings for racial justice and for Indigenous sovereignty. As the Strategy document emphasizes, the thrust of SJS as an interdisciplinary field of teaching and research is to "guide students to develop a deeper understanding of the world." (y)10.6 (o) (e)2A004 ri12-9.6 1-2.-2.9 (u1n)-0.8 (3 (s)13.1 0 ( )6 (o) t-0.8 (e)-6 (r-2.

SJS has an engaged community of supportive faculty, students, and staff as longstanding partners in Victoria's nonprofit sector. These constituencies are fully committed to the growth of the program. However, because SJS has no appointed faculty members, no ongoing budget, and exists within the

## Recommendations

1. The Associate Vice President Academic Planning and the Provost should explore a model that would allow interested faculty members to teach a portion of their nonroads in interdisciplinary programs through crossappointments of faculty members (e.g. 75% Sociology, 25% SJS). If UVic proceeds with a cluster hire of Black faculty members, at least two of these new positions should be crossappointed with SJS and the unit should develop new courses focused on race and racism.
2. The Dean of FSS should incentivize Department Chairs to contribute to interdisciplinary teaching. The current model, in which faculty members individually negotiate with reluctant Chairs, results in most SJS courses being taught on overload. The Dean needs to instruct Chairs that interdisciplinary programs are a priority for FSS, and that everyone needs to work together to ensure their viability. Faculty members could negotiate their SJS teaching with the Dean/ADA, who would then compensate the Departments. 3.
3. The recruitment of a new Director needs to be a priority for the ADA. Dr. Margo Matwychuk will be difficult to replace because of her knowledge of and commitment to the program, as well as her deep ties to Victoria's nonprofit sector.
4. The Directorship must be advertised with additional course release of at least one course per academic year. This is justified because of the range of responsibilities of the Director (including, community partnership building) and because of the significant tasks arising out of the external review (a curriculum review, a redesigned website, rethinking the teaching model, a potential renaming of the program, exploration of online teaching...).
5. The ADA should work with the current Director and the newly appointed Director to develop a vision and a set of priorities for the program.
6. To ensure that interdisciplinary programs are central to FSS and included in its strategic initiatives, the Program Directors should attend Chair meetings.
7. The required SJS 400A Seminar in Social Justice Studies should be offered more than once a year. When it is only scheduled once every academic year, this is a barrier to the completion of the minor and diploma programs.
8. Students reported that the program lacks visibility; many had learned about the minor late in their degrees. Enhancing the visibility of the program through a redesigned website (with student testimonials) and ensuring that the program participates in recruitment events will enable students to learn about SJS earlier in their degrees to allow more time for program planning.
9. As the main mechanism of promoting the program to prospective students, the SJS webpage needs a redesign. The current webpage is very basic. A redesigned webpage should aim to capture the dynamism of the program, by featuring current students and alumni. Student stories and a promotional video would help to convey the student enthusiasm that the ERT witnessed during our virtual site visit.
10. SJS should consider renaming the program Social Justice and Equity Studies as a way of better signaling to prospective students and employers the valued nature of the minor and diploma.
11. There are possibilities for greater collaborations with Continuing Studies could provide new sources of revenue for the program. Designating SJS 100 as 'credit' would enable community members and mature students to be introduced to the program, improving both revenues and pathways into the Diploma program.
12. The teamteaching model for SJS 100 and SJS 200 needs to be rethought. While having instructors from different disciplines and fields-teach these courses ensures a multidisciplinary lens, students reported that the courses can seem disjointed. SJS 200, with

three instructors each teaching what amounts to a “mini-course,” inhibits students from building a rapport with instructors. It can fall to the TA to ensure continuity. When it is already so difficult to secure instructors, the team teaching model adds unnecessary complexity. A better pedagogical approach would be to redesign these courses as single instructor interdisciplinary courses, with a greater use of guest lecturers and guest activists. FSS should provide additional compensation to instructors who would be charged with redesigning these courses.

13. While SJS 100 and 200 are both valuable courses, one focused on theories and the other on praxis, we wondered if it was necessary to have required courses at both the 100 and 200 levels. As part of a curriculum review, SJS should consider a more streamlined structure with a single introductory course, elective courses at the 200 and 300 level, with students coming back together for the required 400A seminar. This would ease the burden of staffing required courses.
14. SJS should consider eliminating the requirement of two elective (3 unit) courses from each of the “Theory and Methods” and “Substantive” lists. The ERT felt that there should either be a single list of electives, or else that electives could be grouped thematically (for example, Indigenous Knowledges, Global Issues,...) to help students navigate. SJS may also want to eliminate the requirement that no more than two (3 unit) courses be from a single department.
15. A well-designed online introductory course, perhaps developed in collaboration with Continuing Studies and with a grant from UVic’s Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation, could increase pathways into the minor and diploma programs and could be a source of additional revenue for SJS. While taught through the lens of feminist and gender studies, the University of Alberta’s online Introduction to Social Justice course has annual enrolments of more than 300 students.
16. Restoring the program’s small speakers’ budget will help SJS to maintain community connections. Guest lecturers who work in the non

highlight the career relevant skills developed in the programs, with alumni speakers discussing their journeys into paid employment.

21. There are several potential advancement opportunities that could help to support the program and its students. The Dean should work with the Director to identify and approach potential donors to help fund the annual lecture, scholarships for SJS students, and to provide some support for community organizations who take on mentoring commitments with students.
22. FSS should provide a dedicated shared office space for SJS sessional lecturers.