



FRESH
PERSPECTIVES
2016

**Innovation
and Impacts
of Applied
Research**

BOWVALLEY
COLLEGE



Russ Wilde

Director, Learning Resource
Services and Applied Research

Deepening Roots and Branching Out: Growing Applied Research Towards Vision 2020

Have you ever wondered why researchers seem to love producing reports and other documents about their studies? Like most people, we're proud of our work and enjoy sharing what we've learned with others. For many though, there is a further, deeper need to ensure that our hard-won insights find real-world applications for individuals and society. We want our research used as envisioned by chemist Arthur D. Little, "to make building stones out of stumbling blocks."

In that spirit, we proudly offer this fourth edition of *Fresh Perspectives* to highlight the important work of Bow Valley College (BVC) researchers over the past two years. At BVC, we take the application of our research efforts seriously. As noted in our Vision 2020 strategy, the College "pursues applied research activities to enhance teaching and learning and foster innovation in support of industry sectors where our academic expertise enables such a contribution." That's why we are so pleased to highlight this year a number of projects of larger scope than previously undertaken, and to recognize the important foundational work and partnerships that have allowed us to become an increasingly recognized part of the Canadian college applied research community.

The exciting growth of applied research at BVC would not have been possible without the committed efforts of researchers across the College along with dedicated individuals serving on the College's Research Ethics Board. I'd especially like to thank our Executive Team for their continued strategic support of applied research, and the Applied Research & Evaluation unit within Learning Resource Services for their efforts to build this important part of our college community.

Please enjoy this latest edition of *Fresh Perspectives*, and ask yourself which of today's stumbling blocks **you** might turn into tomorrow's building stones.

Message from the President and CEO

Each new Fresh Perspectives booklet documents the growing momentum of scholarly agenda as well as the expanding influence of our research program.

Applied research fosters solutions, innovations, and improvements that lead to genuine change in our work and in the experience of our learners. Indeed, much of our research program is focused on strengthening applied education as well as teaching and learning outcomes. These changes to practice help our College fulfill its mandate to support Albertans' learning and workforce needs.

The scope of our applied research activity is expanding appropriate to our mandate as a comprehensive community college. We are convening new partners to develop action research, alternative credentialing, and social innovation projects that hold potential to reach diverse audiences and affect organizational policy, government programs and benchmarks, industry practice, as well as collective trauma and community well-being.

It is a research program in which everyone at Bow Valley College can take pride.

Thanks to all of you—researchers, staff, partners, and participants—for following your curiosity and achieving excellence. And thanks to all of the staff in Applied Research & Evaluation for enabling our research capacity and making the important work detailed in this version of Fresh Perspectives possible.

Message from the Vice President, Academic and Chief Learning Officer

In reflecting on the past three years of applied research here at the College, there is cause to celebrate the significant growth in our capacity over a relatively short period of time. Over eight years ago, applied research began as a small endeavor with big aspirations. Today, we have evolved with sufficient capacity to develop and produce quality research with substantial reach.

Applied research is thriving at Bow Valley College, and our reputation grows both locally and nationally. This year we are the proud recipient of our first grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This grant provides us with the opportunity to collaborate with key community partners around social innovation research that will provide meaningful resources to public and private organizations across the country.

Fresh Perspectives highlights some of the diverse projects happening at the College, and how these research findings are being applied to practice. It is truly inspirational to see this research in action and its impact both internally and externally. I would like to thank the Applied Research & Evaluation unit, and all faculty and staff who have been involved in our applied research projects for their initiative, professionalism and curiosity.



Sharon Carry, AOE

President and CEO



Anna Kae Todd

Vice President, Academic and
Chief Learning Officer



I was truly inspired to hear about the sheer diversity of adult literacy programs and the passion of practitioners. Without exception, all were dedicated to both their learners and improving their teaching practice.

- Sandra Loschnig

◀ Left to right:

Diane Hardy
Berniece Gowan
Sandra Loschnig
Samra Admasu

Stories from the Adult Literacy Field

Stories from the Field articles explore current issues, innovation, best practices and challenges in teaching adult literacy and Essential Skills.

This Adult Literacy Research Institute (ALRI) initiative, which began in January 2013, takes a journalistic approach to professional development for adult literacy and Essential Skills practitioners. According to lead researcher Sandra Loschnig, the project was inspired by *Literacies: Researching Practice, Practicing Research*, a national adult literacy journal published from 2003 to 2009. *Literacies* challenged instructors to examine their teaching practice and help the adult literacy field stay connected with what was happening across the country. *Stories from the Field 3* continues this tradition while fulfilling BVC's strategies of being a **Learning Partner for Life**, delivering **Excellence in Applied Education**, engaging in **Applied Research**, and optimizing its **Community Connectedness** for becoming the future of learning.

Over the past two years, 24 research articles have been published. Over 50 inspiring practitioners engaged in reflective conversations about their experience, knowledge, innovations and wise practices. *Volume 1* had a provincial scope and focused on increasing understanding of adult literacy research and practice. *Volume 2* emphasized literacy as a human right, highlighting Calgary based programs designed to address the learning needs of marginalized adults.

The most recent collection is an interdepartmental collaboration between the Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning and the Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement (CEIIA). Sandra and the ALRI team worked with Diane Hardy and the CEIIA English as a Second Language literacy practitioners to profile excellence and innovation in both programming and resource development.

The researchers hope that these articles spark conversation about teaching philosophies, instructional practices, diversity and community inclusion.

For Sandra and the ALRI team, it was a challenge to narrow the research focus and choose from all the inspiring practitioners and their extraordinary work. Maybe those stories will be told in *Stories from the Field 4*.

RESEARCHERS

Sandra Loschnig
Berniece Gowan
Diane Hardy
Samra Admasu

DEPARTMENTS

Centre for Excellence
in Foundational Learning
Centre for Excellence in Immigrant
and Intercultural Advancement

PROJECT

Stories from the Field 3

A lot of the unemployed participants in the project are new Canadians, and being able to help them understand the culture of the Canadian workplace has been very rewarding.

- Krista Medhurst



Essential Skills in the Canadian Workplace

Essential Skills are critical to success in the Canadian workplace. Any gap in these skills can impact an employee's performance and make it more difficult for those seeking employment to find a job. Krista Medhurst was part of a national collaboration of businesses and colleges dedicated to increasing Essential Skills training in the supply chain sector.

In a 2013 report from Statistics Canada, about 48% of Canadians have skill gaps. These gaps can impact safety, productivity, and the overall health and wellness of workers. The supply chain sector, one of the fastest growing sectors in Canada, is experiencing labour challenges due to gaps in critical workplace skills. This concern turned into the Stocking up on Skills project, a collaboration between the Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council, Conestoga College (Ontario), Bow Valley College, and Douglas College (British Columbia). With funding from Employment and Social Development Canada, the project's objective was to create and pilot test Essential Skills learning resources specific to the supply chain sector.

Krista and her team started the project in 2013 with a needs assessment of employers who generously donated their time: Fresh Direct, Southland Transportation, Matrix Logistics, the Calgary Board of Education, and Tim Hortons. By early 2015, her team was ready for pilot testing the Essential Skills program, Stocking Up on Skills. Pilot testing their materials, however, proved a bit more challenging. Due to an economic downturn in Calgary, a few partners committed to piloting dropped out. Krista and her team persevered and they managed to secure 31 employees from Southland Transportation and Fresh Direct. They also recruited 88 unemployed participants. Pilot testing will be completed in February 2016 and a Stocking Up on Skills website will be launched shortly after. Stocking Up on Skills will provide learners with the Essential Skills to find and keep meaningful employment and be a BVC **Learning Partner for Life**.

RESEARCHER

Krista Medhurst

DEPARTMENT

Test of Workplace Essential Skills

PROJECT

Stocking Up on Skills:
Developing Essential Skills
for Supply Chain and Logistics

*When everyone gasped at
our results, I was stunned.*

- Dr. Margaret Toye



Predictors of Success and Failure in the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination

There was anecdotal evidence for why some Practical Nursing (PN) graduates were not successful on the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination (CPNRE). When their dean approached them about a project exploring factors affecting PN graduates' outcomes on the CPNRE, Dr. Margaret Toye and Laura Kowalsky jumped at the opportunity to discover if there was more than anecdotal evidence.

Margaret got to work on a literature review and Laura scoured learner data collected by BVC and the PN Program, synthesizing it with help from Information Technology Services. Then with help from Applied Research & Evaluation, they analyzed the data on 541 BVC PN graduates who sat the CPNRE between 2010 and 2012. Of the 541 graduates who sat the exam, 67 (12%) graduates did not pass. The literature review suggested that graduates' academic performance and English proficiency could be predictors of success or failure on nursing licensing exams. The data revealed slight, but significant, correlations between failing previous program courses, as well as having transfer credit for courses, and CPNRE outcomes. The researchers also found a positive and significant correlation between TOWES scores and CPNRE outcomes. Additionally, they discovered no correlation between high school entry scores in English, Biology, and Math and passing the CPNRE. Furthermore, they found the pass rates for learners who met English language requirements through standardized English proficiency tests had pass rates similar to the overall pass rate.

When Margaret presented these results at the Canadian Association of Practical Nurse Educators conference in 2014, there was an audible gasp when she revealed that high school grades were found to not predict success or failure on the CPNRE. According to Margaret, many nursing educators assumed that high school entry scores were good indicators of success or failure on the CPNRE. To discover differently means educators might have to rethink how they assess learner preparedness for entry into PN programs. The results of Margaret and Laura's research will contribute to BVC's **Applied Research** goals by providing a strategy that optimizes learners' successful transition into the workforce.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Margaret Toye
Laura Kowalsky

DEPARTMENTS

School of Community Studies
and Creative Technologies
School of Health and Wellness

PROJECT

Factors Affecting PN Graduates' Success and Failure in the Canadian Practical Nurse Registration Examination



Despite our complicated skills and work processes, satisfaction comes from simple understandings. BVC instructors are educating the makers of the future, and I am supporting them in shaping the future one class at a time.

- Flora Mahdavi

Supporting Online Instructors

When Flora Mahdavi began her research, she wanted to learn if an online course was an effective mode to train and prepare facilitators for teaching online courses at BVC; and if there were other opportunities to enhance the support and training of online facilitators.

Flora's research was inspired by her own experiences providing support to facilitators who taught online. She frequently encountered facilitators who felt overwhelmed and isolated while instructing online. Flora thought that some of the difficulties facilitators experienced could be avoided if they were provided with supports before they start encountering problems.

With support from her coordinator, Tim Loblaw, and the Applied Research & Evaluation unit, she applied for and received a BVC Applied Research Internal Grant. Once she completed her literature review, she created surveys to assess the efficacy of the pre-existing course, Teaching with D2L. This course was created to prepare new online facilitators for online instruction and identify opportunities for ongoing support. Flora started her data collection in August 2015 and will finish by the end of April, 2016. Her goal is to have 15-20 respondents complete pre- and post-course surveys. The data collected to date is consistent with the literature and shows that the online training course has been beneficial to the facilitators.

Flora sees her research as helping to fulfill BVC's Vision 2020 strategy, delivering **Excellence in Applied Education**, due to the emerging role of e-learning in post-secondary education; therefore, the role of online facilitators is becoming more critical to the future of education at BVC. Flora believes her research can help give direction to the supports provided to online facilitators and improve the quality of professional development offered at BVC.

RESEARCHER

Flora Mahdavi

DEPARTMENT

Learning Resource Services

PROJECT

Professional Development for
New Online Instructors at
Bow Valley College

Don't be afraid to try new things as an instructor and include learners in the process.

-Lauren Kirychuk



Peer-to-peer Learning and Engagement

During a brainstorming session amongst accounting instructors in the Chiu School of Business, Lauren Kirychuk and Sarah Fillier came up with an idea to increase learner engagement. They were concerned that learners were not responding to traditional teaching methods, so they decided to have learners take on some responsibilities of course instruction and turn this into a research project.

Lauren and Sarah's research focused on the implementation of a teaching program that created deep learning experiences through the use of learning communities and interactive learning techniques. These peer-to-peer activities encouraged learners to share their knowledge with one another. The activities included group projects, presentations, and facilitating class lectures with guidance and support from their facilitators.

When Lauren and Sarah started their research, the peer-to-peer activities were employed in four sections of various accounting courses in the winter 2014 semester and one section in the spring 2014 semester. Fifteen to 30 learners participated in each section. Data were collected during the last two weeks of the semester by survey and within two weeks of the end of classes using focus groups. Lauren and Sarah analyzed the data after the winter semester and made alterations for the spring. For example, they discovered that the winter semester learners did not believe they were receiving a fair grade for the amount of work that was required of them; therefore, Lauren and Sarah modified the activities for the spring semester.

The results of Lauren and Sarah's research showed that 71% of learners were engaged in course materials; however, 52% said they would not want to participate in a course with peer-to-peer learning activities. The learners felt the activities were very hard work, but they also felt they learned the course material better. Lauren views this as a positive outcome. She believes that as a facilitator, she is frequently searching for methods to make learning fun; however, her research has shown her that not all learning has to be fun to be effective. Sometimes learners have to do activities that are not fun, but are necessary for them to succeed at work or in their everyday lives. Strategies like facilitator-supported peer-to-peer learning exemplify BVC's commitment to delivering **Excellence in Applied Education** by providing an environment that increases learner engagement and knowledge of course material.

RESEARCHERS

Lauren Kirychuk
Sarah Fillier

DEPARTMENT

Chiu School of Business

PROJECT

Peer-to-peer Learning and Engagement:
Study Results and Practice
Refinement Discussion



Facilitators have to make an effort to know learners in online courses, especially in private or one-to-one channels because that's what sets up a lot of the comfort with the course and encourages learning.

- Glen Cochrane

Virtual Education in ELL: Opportunities, Challenges, and Potential

*In January 2015, lead researchers Jennifer Acevedo and Glen Cochrane began a project funded by the Alberta government to investigate how to diminish learners' feelings of isolation and instructional distance in an English language learning (ELL) e-learning environment. This was an ideal opportunity to investigate a form of online learning that has not been extensively researched in the literature: online ELL. Furthermore, it was a project that would contribute to growing BVC's **Capacity for the Future** strategy by exploiting technology to provide effective methods and opportunities for learning.*

The course chosen for their project, Language for Work, was an online pilot course designed independently of their research. This course was an introduction to culture and communication in the Canadian workplace. Jennifer and Glen used existing strategies for mitigating learner isolation already built into the course, and implemented strategies that emerged from a literature review and throughout the course of their research.

Eighteen participants were surveyed about course content, design, and their experiences in the course. At the end of the course, seven of the 11 completing participants contributed to a focus group via online conferencing technology. The results, outlined in a research report called *Virtual Education in ELL: Opportunities, Challenges and Potential*, highlight several strategies for improving the e-learning environment: simple course navigation, timely feedback, centrally located support documents and the need for a dynamic and responsive facilitator.

Evidence in the literature review suggested that small online groups were better for learner participation; however, Jennifer and Glen found there was no cut-and-dry group size for learner participation. They had to continually monitor and modify the group dynamic and composition to ensure that discussions were not dominated by a few individuals, or silent. Just like face-to-face offerings, it is crucial for a facilitator to frequently engage with learners to encourage participation both implicitly and explicitly. To keep learners engaged, facilitators must make an effort to know learners on a one-on-one basis, design course spaces that are intuitive and easy to use, and provide a variety of communication channels.

RESEARCHERS

Jennifer Acevedo
Glen Cochrane

DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement

PROJECT

Fostering Community Online:
An Investigation to Mitigate Issues
of Learner Isolation and Instructional
Distance in an ELL e-Learning Environment

*The spirit of recovery is
steeped in partnerships.*

- Corinne Finnie



High River Families Coping with Disaster

As many of us who have lived in Alberta for the past few years know, 2013 was a devastating year. It was the worst flooding in Alberta's history. One community significantly impacted by the flooding was High River. This small community 70 kms south of Calgary experienced some of the worst flood damage in Alberta, exacting a heavy emotional and financial toll on the town's residents.

A research team led by Mount Royal University's (MRU) Caroline McDonald-Harker and Dr. Timothy Haney received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to study the effects of the 2013 flood on families in High River. The project was a collaboration between regional Campus Alberta partners: Grant MacEwan University (Edmonton); Calgary Catholic Immigration Society; Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools (Okotoks); Foothills School Division (High River); Rowan House Emergency Shelter (High River); and BVC. The research group received more than \$165,000 in SSHRC funding for three years of research. This was groundbreaking for BVC. It marked the first time BVC was a formal SSHRC partner in its history.

Collaborating with the researchers was BVC's Director of Regional Stewardship, Corinne Finnie. She viewed the research as an opportunity to collect valuable information on changes in High River as a result of the disaster, leading her to produce a sociodemographic report from the larger project. The results will be used to aid the community in developing coping strategies to support the needs of families in the region. Bow Valley College's contribution to the data collection spanned June to October 2015. Information on the community was collected using pre-existing data, surveys, and interviews. Participant recruitment was facilitated and planned by BVC's High River Campus and the response was tremendous: over 190 participants were recruited. Corinne attributed the success of the project to the collaborative efforts of everyone involved, which contributed greatly to BVC's Vision 2020 strategy of optimizing

Community Connectedness.

For Corinne, the most rewarding part of the project was collaborating with the academic researchers at MRU and working toward bringing qualitative data into useable, meaningful quantitative data. Finding comparable statistics to help shape an understanding of the flood's impact on families was challenging for the research group; however, it was also a driving force motivating the team to produce a meaningful piece of applied research for community partners.

RESEARCHER

Corinne Finnie

DEPARTMENT

Regional Stewardship

PROJECT

The High River Family Study:
Sociodemographic Outcomes



Financial empowerment gives our learners valuable tools for success in school and life.

- Stacie Baker

Financial Empowerment and Learner Success

Stacie Baker and Angele Patry were excited when they received funding from the Premiere's Scholarship Fund for the learner financial assistance and education pilot program. According to Stacie, this was a unique program and a fresh approach to embedding financial literacy into post-secondary education. She saw it as an opportunity to make a difference in learners' lives and encourage them to actively pursue their educational goals.

Twenty-nine learners qualified for the program over three semesters between 2014 and 2015. The pilot program provided learners who demonstrated financial need the opportunity to invest personal savings, engage in financial literacy and empowerment education, and, if eligible, receive a bursary. Learners committed to saving between \$20 and \$50 per month, for four months, and participated in workshops on managing their finances. Those who completed all workshops and saved the required contribution "graduated" and received a Matched Savings Bursary of three times their savings as well as a certificate for their professional portfolio. Their total personal and matched savings could be spent on a selected educational asset that assisted in them completing their education at BVC.

The Matched Savings Bursary Program pilot was very successful and surpassed the expectations of Stacie, Angele, and the Learner Success Services team. The program achieved exactly what it was designed to do: participants attended all money management workshops; they all managed to save the maximum amount of \$50/month; and they all received a full Matched Savings Bursary.

Stacie and Angele's pilot program contributed to a couple of BVC's strategies for becoming the future of learning. The knowledge learners gleaned from the program will stay with them for the rest of their lives and inspire them to be a **Learning Partner for Life**. Furthermore, Stacie and her team partnered with Momentum, a non-profit community organization, to develop the program. This contributed to the strategy of optimizing BVC's **Community Connectedness**. The program also addressed BVC's Comprehensive Institutional Plan goals of New Models of Learning Partnerships, Affordable Learning, and Community Relationships. Furthermore, it supported the college-wide outcome of Financial Literacy.

RESEARCHERS

Stacie Baker
Angele Patry

DEPARTMENT

Learner Success Services

PROJECT

Matched Savings Bursary Pilot
Program Research and Evaluation



*It was very validating
to learn the extent to
which LINC classes at
BVC supported learners'
integration into
Canadian society.*

- Elza Bruk

Increasing Newcomer Success Through LINC Programming

Immigrating to a new country can be a daunting experience, especially if the newcomers have to learn a new language and adapt to a culture likely disparate from their own. For organizations with programs designed to support those adjustments, providing a safe, inclusive, and effective learning environment for newcomers can be an equally daunting task.

As a way to assess how well they were serving immigrant language learners, Elza Bruk and Hana Taleb Imai from BVC, in collaboration with NorQuest College (NQC), engaged in a research project that explored the experiences and perceptions of adults enrolled in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program through the lens of their immigration and settlement to Canada.

Elza, Project Director and Chair of the project's steering committee, and Hana, a member of the steering committee, were part of a research team lead by Dr. Dean Wood. Data were collected from 372 newcomers enrolled in LINC programs at BVC and NQC between May and June 2015. The learners participated in an online survey about their level of engagement with campus support services and activities, and how the program aided their understanding of Canadian culture. Additionally, 20 of these learners were interviewed about their experiences. Findings showed that learners viewed BVC and NQC LINC programs as highly effective at meeting their language learning and settlement needs. This was in large part due to their interactions with other learners and college faculty and staff, and the role modeling that was displayed around valuing difference while promoting inclusion. Findings also demonstrated that learners increased their confidence and felt better prepared for further education and employment.

The research team was happy to discover that LINC programs provided learners with unique learning opportunities that set them up for success and contributed to BVC's Vision 2020 strategy, advancing the **Diversity Advantage**. The results of this study will be used by multiple areas of BVC to enhance opportunities for LINC learners to integrate with other learners and for faculty members to promote inclusion in the classroom.

RESEARCHERS

Elza Bruk
Hana Taleb Imai

DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement

PROJECT

Understanding LINC Learners' Experiences in College Settings



I've read a lot of academic studies that talk about different teaching techniques, but what is most important to my research is what the learner finds valuable.

- Abbie Kranz

Creating a Positive Clinical Experience

With 60 clinical groups of eight learners per semester, Program Coordinator, Abbie Kranz, wanted know if there were learner defined qualities of an effective clinical facilitator.

Abbie decided on a literature review to find answers to her question. Knowing that literature reviews require time and other resources, she applied for a BVC Applied Research Internal Grant to find answers that could improve BVC clinical courses. She was awarded the grant in March 2013.

Nine short months later, Abbie completed her review and quickly set about applying her findings to the Practical Nursing Program. Her findings suggest that clinical competency, interpersonal and teaching skills, as well as fairness of evaluation were qualities frequently identified as desirable in a clinical facilitator. According to Abbie's research, the most salient qualities were fairness and transparency. She knows that clinical assignments are at the mercy of clients who are already in a care facility, so learners might not have equal workloads. This can result in feelings of unfairness. Through her research, Abbie found that these feelings can be easily mitigated at the beginning of the course if facilitators clearly explain the clinical environment, their expectations, and how learners will be graded.

Abbie has used her research to update BVC's Clinical Instructor Facilitator Manual for new faculty and increase clinical facilitator orientations to three days from half a day. Furthermore, during the orientation, she gives a presentation on effectively communicating positive feedback that was also gleaned from her research. All these changes are crucial considering that the majority of new facilitators do not have prior teaching experience. According to Abbie, her research is just the beginning. She plans to continue researching methods of instruction that will inform future clinical facilitator practices and contribute to BVC's Vision 2020 for delivering **Excellence in Applied Education.**

RESEARCHER

Abbie Kranz

DEPARTMENT

School of Health and Wellness

PROJECT

Creating a Positive Clinical Experience:
A Literature Review



This research was an opportunity to validate what we were seeing anecdotally – that the TOWES at BVC training program was making a difference in learners' lives.

- Kaesy Russnak

Essential Skills Training and Learner Success

Following approval of their BVC Applied Research Internal Grant, Kaesy Russnak and Laurel Madro knew they had a lot of work to do before recruiting participants.

The goal of their research was to determine if the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) at BVC training program had an effect on TOWES scores. To do this, Kaesy and Laurel compared TOWES scores before and after the program as well as collecting data on self-reported confidence levels for successfully completing Essential Skills (ES) tasks; learner self-reported ability to transfer ES strategies to broader work-life contexts; and cumulative grade point averages (GPAs). Kaesy and Laurel recruited career learners from the Chiu School of Business and the former School of Health, Justice and Human Services who were enrolled in 30-week certificate or 60-week diploma programs.

Along with collecting TOWES and academic data, the researchers also used three surveys to collect learner responses to statements of confidence, predictions of performance, outcomes, and self-reported preparation and opinions of the program. The three surveys were administered at three different time points. As the study progressed, it became a challenge for some learners to complete all the research components; therefore, it was difficult to obtain complete data. Of the 78 learners recruited for the study, 45 completed the surveys. Kaesy and Laurel did provide a small incentive for completing all the research components, but they found that altruism was the dominant motivation for learners' continued participation. Learners wanted to help make the course better for future learners.

The results showed that TOWES scores significantly improved for learners who had completed the training program, as did their level of confidence with completing ES tasks and applying ES strategies to their daily lives. Grade point averages also increased for 75% of learners, however, GPA data was available for only 20 learners. According to Laurel, ES empowers learners to take control of their learning, career, and life. The TOWES at BVC training program, as the study suggests, is fulfilling BVC's strategy to build long lasting relationships with learners and be a **Learning Partner for Life**.

RESEARCHERS

Kaesy Russnak
Laurel Madro

DEPARTMENTS

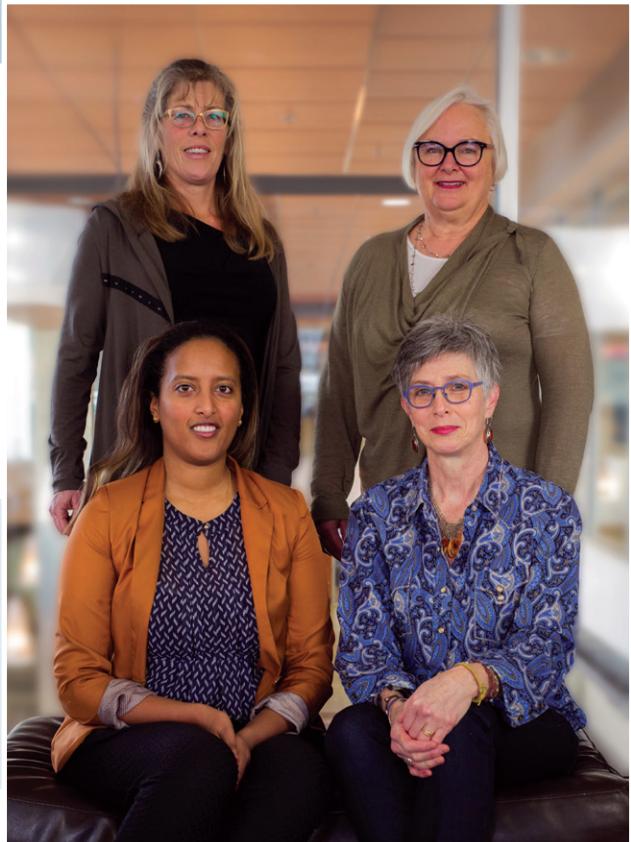
Learning Resource Services
Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement

PROJECT

TOWES at BVC: Supporting Learner Success through Essential Skills Training Interventions

The challenge was to take something so complex and granular and make it accessible and user-friendly. I think we have accomplished that and I am very proud of the amazing team we worked with.

- Berniece Gowan



◀ Clockwise from top left:

Patricia Pryce
Lorene Anderson
Berniece Gowan
Samra Admasu
Missing: Rim Schewczyk

Creating Writing Assessments for Adult Literacy Learners

*Building on BVC's previous success with **readforward**, a low stakes reading assessment resource for use with adult literacy learners, researchers and developers Patricia Pryce, Lorene Anderson, Samra Admasu, Rim Schewczyk and Berniece Gowan embarked on a new project to develop **writeforward**, an informal, low stakes formative writing assessment for use with adult literacy learners.*

The goal of this tool is to increase practitioner knowledge in assessing the writing skills and writing strategies of adults with low literacy writing and increase learners' knowledge about writing skills and the strategies that make those skills transferrable from across the three contexts of home, community, and workplace.

writeforward is grounded in adult learning principles, aligned with Level 1 and Level 2 of Employment and Social Development Canada's Literacy and Essential Skills framework, formative assessment best practices and current Writing Theory. The project is funded by the Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills with support from the Government of Alberta.

The project began in 2012, led by Audrey Gardner and managed by Deanna Jager. In 2013, the project was handed over to Berniece and the current team was assembled. Over the next two-and-a-half years, they researched writing as an essential skill, examined other writing assessment tools and increased knowledge through surveys, interviews and focus groups about supporting writing literacy development. By early 2015 a hardcopy draft of the tool was evaluated in pilot sites across Alberta. By fall 2015 they were ready to launch the national pilot with a website, training videos, user guide, 57 exercises and rubrics, comprehensive teaching and learning guides, a bibliography, and more. Forty-five literacy and Essential Skills practitioners have used and evaluated the **writeforward** formative assessment tool.

Feedback from the practitioner community through pilots and two symposium presentations confirms that **writeforward** addresses an assessment gap.

The team is very proud of the **writeforward** assessment tool and believe it contributes to the adult literacy field and to BVC's strategies of delivering **Excellence in Applied Education**, promoting **Applied Research**, and being a **Learning Partner for Life**.

RESEARCHERS

Patricia Pryce, Lorene Anderson, Samra Admasu, Rim Schewczyk, Berniece Gowan

DEPARTMENT

Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning

PROJECT

writeforward



The idea was the easy part! I don't think anyone predicted the time, energy, persistence and tenacity required to develop such a complex proposal. It was a pleasure to work with the wonderful LRS team – the "we can do it" attitude, the incredibly hard work – tempered with a dose of good humour! I look forward to seeing this project through.

- Rena Shimoni



◀ Top to bottom:

Tim Loblaw
Rena Shimoni
Russ Wilde
Augusto Legaspi
Scott Henwood

Breaking New Ground in College-Led Social Innovation

When the Government of Canada announced the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's (SSHRC) new Community and College Social Innovation Fund, the BVC community rejoiced. The announcement was evidence of the success of many years of advocacy from Colleges and Institutes Canada regarding colleges' vital role in applied research.

Russ Wilde, Director of Learning Resource Services, decided that BVC must seize this opportunity. His decision was a milestone in a concerted ten-year strategy developed by Dr. Rena Shimoni, former Dean of Applied Research and Innovation, and encouraged by Anna Kae Todd, Vice President, Academic and Chief Learning Officer. The strategy was to develop the organizational and human capacity at BVC that would enable a successful SSHRC proposal. Rena, who since retiring has served as Research Advisor to Russ and Anna Kae, proposed that as colleges are seen as key to addressing Canada's economic and social development—and "social innovation" a key strategy—we need to develop a broad understanding of the practice of social innovation in Canada and apply this knowledge to support college and community led social innovation. Russ agreed, and assembled the team (Dr. Aggie Legaspi, Tim Loblaw, and Scott Henwood) he would direct to work with Rena and turn the idea into a successful proposal—with Mount Royal University, the Town of High River, the United Way of Calgary and Area, eCampus Alberta, and BVC Regional Stewardship as partners and collaborators.

The three-year project entails a national survey and provincial group discussions to learn what Canadians see as essential characteristics of successful social innovation. Results will inform the development of tools for planning and evaluating social innovation, which will be piloted with actual social innovation projects through a case study approach. After refining the tools based on the findings, a number of strategies will ensure that knowledge and resources gained from this study are widely mobilized.

Along with many other meaningful applied research projects, this award exemplifies BVC's leadership in **Applied Research** and growing its **Capacity for the Future**. Applied Research & Evaluation at BVC is now using the experience gained from this process to support other departments who wish to apply for a SSHRC grant.

RESEARCHERS

Russ Wilde, Rena Shimoni, Scott Henwood, Augusto Legaspi, and Tim Loblaw

DEPARTMENT

Learning Resource Services

PROJECT

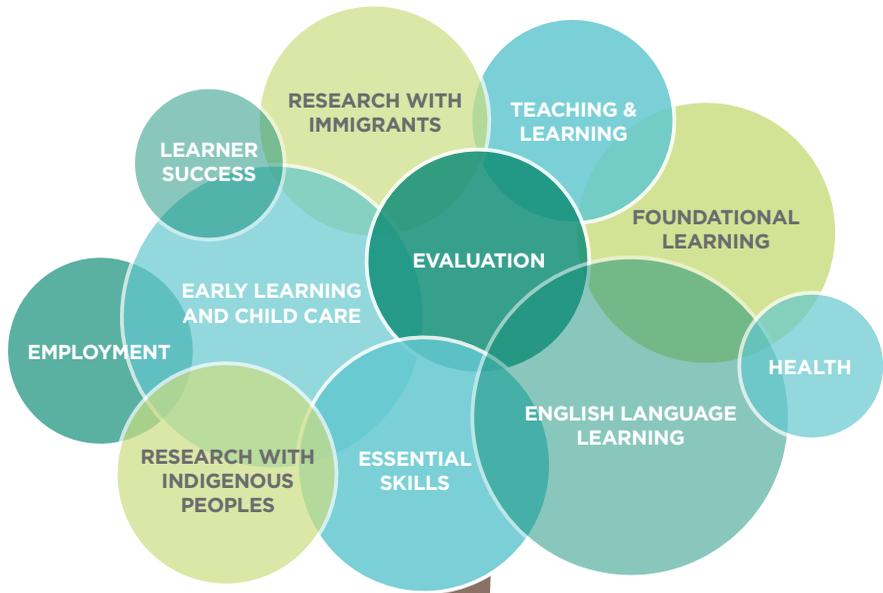
Social Innovation on the Ground: Accessible and Evidenced-Based Tools for Social Innovators

Deepening Roots and Branching Out: Growing Applied Research Towards Vision 2020

Applied research is growing at Bow Valley College. Since 2006, forty-five Applied Research Internal Grants have been awarded to BVC faculty and staff, covering a range of topics and involving researchers in every department. In addition, College researchers have conducted many projects with external funding from all sectors and levels of government, producing real-world impacts for learners and communities.

The Applied Research & Evaluation unit, in its various iterations, has been instrumental in this growth by providing support to researchers and building capacity for applied research at BVC through workshops, lunch-and-learns, celebrations of success (such as Fresh Perspectives), and more.

Below is a snapshot of the growth of applied research at BVC over the years.



Fresh Perspectives IV	2016	
	2015	Approval of first Tri-Council Agency grant (First SSHRC-funded research where BVC is lead applicant). 45 BVC Applied Research Internal Grants awarded to date.
BVC is eligible to receive federal research funding through SSHRC and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).	2012	
	2011	OARI merges with Evaluation Services to become Applied Research & Evaluation.
For the first time, BVC surpasses \$1,000,000 dollars in annual applied research revenue.	2010	
	2009	Fresh Perspectives I 23 BVC Applied Research Internal Grants awarded to date
Dr. Rena Shimoni becomes dean and the Applied Research Office becomes the Office of Applied Research and Innovation (OARI)	2008	
	2006	Applied Research Office is established. First call for BVC Applied Research Internal Grants results in 6 approved projects
Committee for Leadership and Excellence in Applied Research (CLEAR) is created.	2005	
	Pre-2005	Applied research exists in loosely coordinated pockets in BVC. One notable success story from this period is the creation and validation of TOWES.

Additional Approved Internal Research Grants 2015-2016

RESEARCHER(S)	PROJECT TITLE	DEPARTMENT
Candace Witkowskyj	Thoughts enacted: Stereotypes and learning in adult literacy	Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning
Dayn Hornberger Candace Witkowskyj	Bridge to success: Exploring factors relating to engaging DHH learners in the development of bridging programs for linguistically diverse learners	Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning
Kate O'Neill	Hearing past insecurity: Examining the role of linguistic prejudice in the academic engagement and performance of ESL learners	School of Health and Wellness
Kelley Wadson	Aligning information literacy support and instruction with the information behavior of practical nursing learners and professionals: An exploratory-descriptive study	Learning Resource Services
Krista Medhurst	Literacy and Essential Skills: A snapshot of practitioner knowledge at Bow Valley College	Learning Resource Services
Laurel Madro Cheryl Whitelaw	Crossing the threshold: Using Essential Skills to build strategies for learners and workers to use to master threshold concepts	Centre for Excellence in Immigrant and Intercultural Advancement (CEIIA) with Norquest College
Patricia Hartford Margaret Toye	Effectiveness of English communications resources for ELL Practical Nurse learners	School of Health and Wellness
Patricia Pryce Candace Witkowskyj	Using practitioner reflective critical inquiry to manage program change in adult basic education	Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning
Sarah Fillier	Understanding adult learning: The critical pedagogical lens on how adults engage in their education and why engagement is important	Chiu School of Business
Shauna Cox	Overcoming systemic barriers to adult education and training for rural women in Cochrane and Rocky View County	Regional Stewardship

Projects to Watch

Leveling the Learning Field

The CEIIA is developing a self-directed course for learners entering post-secondary education. The course will cover culturally-based academic learning needs of internationally educated professionals seeking enrollment in Canadian post-secondary career programs. This project is funded by a BVC Applied Research Internal Grant.

Workplace Communication for Urban Immigrant Professionals

With funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CEIIA and The Calgary Immigrant Educational Society are conducting research to create a 12-hour professional development course. The Workplace Communication for Urban Immigrant Professionals project will use a literature review and focus groups to inform best practices in facilitating workplace success for urban immigrant professionals.

Connecting with People with Dementia: A Knowledge Translation Project

The School of Health and Wellness and the School of Community Studies and Creative Technologies, with funding from the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta and the Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research, are collaborating on a literature review and knowledge translation initiative. Their research is aimed at improving leadership and communication abilities of practical nurses and their care teams in long term care settings, specifically in working with clients with dementia.



For more information, contact:
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To learn more about these projects, visit:
[**bowvalleycollege.ca/applied-research-evaluation**](http://bowvalleycollege.ca/applied-research-evaluation)