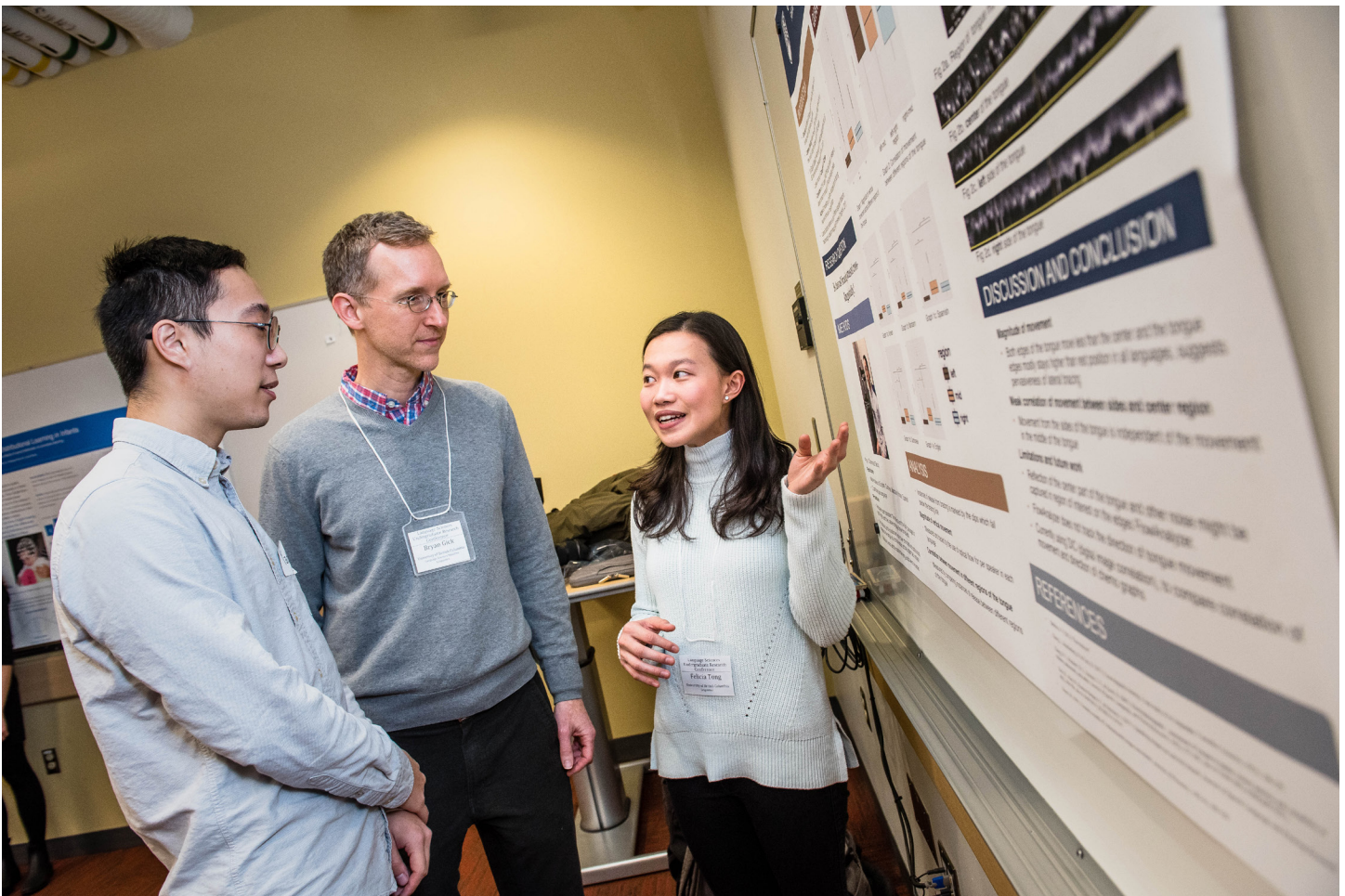




THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Language Sciences

STRATEGIC PLAN

September 2018



From left: Graduate student **Yadong Liu (Linguistics, UBC)** and **Bryan Gick (Linguistics, UBC)** listen to undergraduate **Felicia Tong (Linguistics & Speech Sciences, UBC)** present her research on cross-language tongue bracing at the **Language Sciences Undergraduate Research Conference**, January 20, 2018. LSURC is a student-lead and -run conference held every spring, with volunteer and financial support from the Language Sciences Initiative.

Introduction

Language is a key component in many central societal questions that can only be answered by drawing on the expertise of different fields. Since its founding in 2015, the Language Sciences Initiative (UBC LangSci) has emerged to be one of the strongest and most diverse networks of researchers at UBC. In the spring of 2018, the LangSci Steering Committee undertook a strategic planning process to clarify its vision, purpose, and goals for the next five years. Through this process, the Steering Committee has developed a roadmap for how to serve its members and draw on their strengths in connecting UBC LangSci research and teaching with community priorities and needs.

Through the support of many key stakeholders – the Vice President Research and Innovation, the UBC President and Provost, our Committee of Deans, an engaged donor, and many funding agencies – Language Sciences has catalyzed scholars from across the university, enabling UBC to address problems beyond the scope of any one researcher, department or discipline. UBC LangSci's greatest assets are the energy and expertise of our faculty, students, and their emerging partnerships, and a strategic framework that allows us to reconfigure dynamically around emerging questions. Three key examples of this framework in action are:

- » Language Science and Literacy, a project that draws on the expertise of more than 30 LangSci members in language and literacy education, developmental psychology, audiology and speech science, neuroscience, and computer science to take a comprehensive approach to understanding language and literacy comprehension deficits, and how cultural context and new media connect with the foundational language skills underpinning literacy.
- » [Indigenous Storybooks](#), an expansion of the [Storybooks Canada](#) project that engages faculty and students in Language & Literacy Education, Linguistics, and Anthropology, as well as First Nations community partners, to develop culturally and linguistically relevant literacy materials for children and other learners of Indigenous languages. During its early stages, this project has already yielded a contribution to the Museum of Anthropology's [Culture at the Centre](#) exhibition in collaboration with the [Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre](#).
- » Health Outcomes of Language, a collaboration of faculty in Audiology & Speech Science, Psychology, Nursing, Family Medicine, and Central & Eastern European Studies, across four universities and multiple partnering organizations, examining how communication between health care providers and patients (or caregivers) might be linked to health outcomes.

In the last year alone, LangSci has launched a university-wide 4th year LangSci course (the first of its kind at UBC), submitted several successful funding applications, and hosted open events such as the Language Science Talks Series and semi-annual member meetings. In addition, we have supported numerous workshops, guest lectures, as well as our undergraduate-run Language Sciences Undergraduate Research Conference (LSURC). We are committed to building on this momentum through concerted focus on member, peer and community engagement to further expand our research and outreach activities. Our plan is aligned with the priorities outlined in the UBC strategic plan (Shaping UBC's Next Century), supporting the university in channelling and accelerating its efforts to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration.

Vision and Purpose

Vision

UBC is a centre for ground-breaking research and education in the science of language that together enable positive impacts in society.

Purpose

Facilitating collaborations that advance our understanding of how language shapes our individual and collective human experience.



From left: Bonny Norton (Language & Literacy Education, UBC), H       Deacon (Psychology & Neuroscience, Dalhousie University), Sophia van Hees (Language Sciences Initiative, UBC) listen as Christine Schreyer (Anthropology, UBC-O) asks a question of speaker Alona Fyshe (not pictured; Computer Science, University of Alberta) at the workshop Envisioning a Language Science of Literacy, May 22nd, 2018.

Areas of Focus

UBC LangSci organizes its activity across domains in which language has a profound impact on practice. These are represented in our visualization of three primary themes connected by sub-themes, each aligned with issues facing various communities and industries.

UBC Language Sciences



Initiatives

Reflecting on our opportunities and challenges, we have agreed on several initiatives for UBC LangSci, arranged in order of immediacy:

Planned or ongoing

- » Continued development of research efforts with connections to, or roots in, LangSci through support such as matching funds for grant applications, course buyouts, and research coordination;
- » Evolution of the Living Language course, including development of the course syllabus, offering the course for the first time in September 2018, and course evaluation;
- » Expansion and coordination of education outreach activities such as the LangSci Talks Series, the Film Series, and partnerships with community organizations; and
- » Engagement with new and existing LangSci members and members of the community through public research roundtables.

Urgent (1 to 2 years)

- » Articulation of LangSci's definition, purpose, and impact using examples of LangSci member work, and communication of these narratives through the LangSci website;
- » Support for the formulation of a UBC plan for interdisciplinary clusters and initiatives through ongoing conversations between LangSci leadership and the VPRI and Provost, President, and Deans;
- » Development of a plan to support diversity and inclusion in LangSci membership and especially at the initiative leadership level through equitable distribution of cluster resources;
- » Promotion of deeper member engagement across LangSci by raising awareness of LangSci activities, connecting members with one another to form new collaborations, inviting involvement in LangSci leadership, and mentoring promising faculty and graduate student leaders;
- » Development and submission of new collaborative grants (e.g., CIHR, CERC); and
- » Exploration of an inter-university network of Language Sciences researchers and educators, beginning with the cultivation of our relationships with existing Affiliate Members.

Important (3 to 5 years)

- » Establishment of sustainable structural capacity, including the hiring of a permanent faculty director; dedicated space for interdisciplinary cluster / initiative events such as meetings for between 5 – 60 people; and administrative support for research coordination, communications and knowledge translation, community outreach, and finance and human resources. Space and support could potentially be shared across clusters and initiatives at UBC;
- » Continued development and submission of new collaborative grants (e.g., NCE, CFREF); and
- » Development of an inter-university LangSci network.

Initiatives (cont.)

Aspirational (5 years +)

- » Customization of Living Language course for communities beyond UBC, potentially through collaborations with groups such as UBC Continuing Professional Development (Faculty of Medicine) and the UBC Learning Exchange;
- » Establishment of a community advisory board to enhance UBC LangSci public involvement and impact; and
- » Formalization of an inter-university LangSci network.

Next Steps

In the latter half of 2018, we will translate these initiatives into concrete actions aligned with our vision and purpose, and guided by the values, goals, and strategies in the UBC Strategic Plan. In the short term, this will involve establishing metrics for assessing and reporting on our success. Our evaluative processes will encourage and encompass member feedback. In addition to periodic member check-ins, members should always feel welcome to contact LangSci leadership with questions, concerns, and recommendations at language.sciences@ubc.ca.



Mark Turin (Anthropology, First Nations & Endangered Languages, UBC) and **Janet F. Werker (Psychology, UBC)** prepare to co-teach fourth-year students from six faculties: Applied Sciences, Arts, Forestry, Land & Food Systems, Language & Literacy Education, and Pharmacy for the course **Living Language: Science and Society**.