**Research and Scholarly Activity Fund Award Final Report**

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Department: Social Service Worker and School of Management

Faculty: Social Sciences and Management

In no less than 350 words, please reflect on the status of the project for which you received an RSAF award. You *may* wish to address: potential new avenues for the project enabled by the award; how the funded project builds on previous projects and/or collaborations; any publications, conferences, talks, classroom modules, etc., coming out of the funded project; the outcomes of collaboration facilitated by the award; the potential for future research and scholarly activity projects made possible by the award; or the funded project's impact on your activities in general at the College. As this report will be posted on the [Scholarly Activity website](http://langara.ca/about-langara/applied-research/scholarly-activity/index.html), please submit an electronic copy.

The RSAF award final reports may also be published in the Research and Scholarly Activity annual report. You will be notified of this and given final approval of content before publication.

You may also be asked to participate in events promoting research and scholarly activity at the College.

Please write in the space below or attach an additional PDF page.

Langara Faculty partners Janet Douglas, from the Social Service Worker program, and John Falcus, from the School of Management, saw an opportunity to assist the South Granville Seniors Center (SGSC) in their research goals and provide a meaningful pedagogical experience for their students. The SGSC is a community-based, non-profit agency that provides low-cost and free services for seniors in their area. In keeping with the principles of applied research, the South Granville Seniors Centre set the research agenda. The agency wanted to determine what seniors are looking for from a Seniors Centre, and to identify any barriers to accessing their services.

 In the first phase of the project, sixteen part-time students worked closely with SGSC staff and seniors who participated in the Centre. Under faculty supervision and as part of their course work, students developed survey instruments intended to gauge member satisfaction at the SGSC; collect suggestions for improvement; determine how to attract more members to the Centre; and encourage more participation in the programs offered. Although the intent of the project was to gather information, many students were deeply moved by the seniors’ experiences and felt a strong commitment to help find solutions that would benefit the seniors’ lives.

 When reflecting on their experiences, one student stated, “I think more courses should require our assignments and projects to be applied to businesses and non-profit organizations in our community.” Another student who worked on the initial phase of the project said, “It gives us a real sense of connection to our work. Now, I feel personally responsible for helping this seniors’ center improve. I don’t want to let them down.”

In the second phase of the project, students conducted focus groups and individual interviews to understand the barriers preventing younger seniors from participating or volunteering at the SGSC, and to determine how to encourage younger seniors to attend.

In addition to developing their marketing and research skills, students had an opportunity to engage with a non-profit and make a meaningful contribution to the SGSC. They were also able to develop relationships, albeit fleeting, with some seniors, learn how to listen well, be patient, and be curious. This type of work required students to develop “soft skills” such as listening, collaboration, thinking on their feet and responding to the public, which will serve them well in future work environments.

At the conclusion of the project, two BBA Program market research students presented the results of the second phase of this study to the SGSC’s Board of Directors with several recommendations.

The Director of the SGSC, Clemenica Gomez, said the Board was very pleased with the report and the effort the students put into this project. The outcomes of this project were beneficial to the Centre in their future planning. The project also paves the way for further collaborations with Langara College students in the future.

From a faculty perspective, we were able to take two seemingly unrelated disciplines and work collaboratively on a project that not only required students to take risks in a real-life marketing situation, but also to consider the impact that their work can have on the lives of ordinary people. We believe this strengthens their learning experiences and contributes to the development of the soft-skills necessary for success in the workplace.

There are a number of possible future projects made possible by the award. These include:

* Further work with Langara business students to develop a strategic marketing plan, organize and implement special events, or assist in the development of an advertising campaign for the SGSC.
* Future studies to reassess member satisfaction, particularly if the SGSC moves forward with relocation of the current facility.
* Utilization of the surveys & moderator’s guides developed by students for case study discussion in the classroom.
* Contributions to publications, attending conferences & presentations are under discussion. This would include encouraging other departments to work collaboratively on projects and draw from the strengths of each discipline.