



Mount Saint Vincent University Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) Equity Action Plan (EAP)

September 28, 2026

Executive Summary

The Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) is part of the Government of Canada's strategy to advance Canada a global leader in transformative research and innovation. Through the CRCP, Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) has been able to attract and retain exceptional researchers. In alignment with a key recommendation in the CRCP's evaluation, the CRCP requires each participating institution to develop and subsequently maintain its own equity action plan due by September 30, 2026.

The Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) Canada Research Chair (CRC) Equity Action Plan (EAP) identifies strategic areas, key objectives and actions for addressing underrepresentation of individuals from the four designated groups (FDGs) - women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and visible minorities - in the institution's complement of CRCs.

The importance of considering CRC nominees from the four designated groups, including intersecting identities, is a key feature of our discussions and actions in supporting CRCs and in the strategic planning of future CRC positions. The MSVU CRC Program is embedded in our institutional strategic plan and research plan which are connected to the EDIA Plan for the university. These core institutional documents describe actionable processes by which MSVU is creating positive change in the relatively small community of CRC chairholders at MSVU and more broadly, for other faculty and the overarching EDIA environment across our campus.

MSVU remains committed to promoting a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility that supports a changing research environment with different perspectives, innovative ideas, and novel approaches. As we move forward as an institution, we endeavor to increase our diversity in research and through this, we are building a more inclusive research ecosystem for all.

Introduction and Context Setting

The Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) is part of Canada's strategy to remain a global leader in transformative research and innovation. The CRCP has enabled Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) to attract and retain exceptional researchers and leaders in their respective fields of expertise. In keeping with the recommendations from the CRCP, MSVU is required to develop its own equity action plan (EAP) which will be updated as additional EDIA data become available. This living document will be reviewed and where needed, revised, on an annual basis.

MSVU's CRC EAP focuses on improving the governance and transparency towards enhancing representation from the four designated groups (FDGs) - women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities - in our CRC complement. This process will in turn increase diversity and representation on campus with a focus on providing a supportive research environment in which to flourish. In addition, as a member of the Dimensions Program, MSVU has moved towards equity, diversity, and inclusion with broad institutional support to promote a robust research ecosystem broadly and an enhanced focused on EDIA in our CRC processes.

MSVUs' current complement of CRCs includes a Tier 1 CRC in Global Aging and Community, a Tier 2 CRC in Early Childhood: Diversity and Transition, and a Tier 2 in Interdisciplinary Studies in Neuroscience. We will be welcoming a new Tier 2 CRC in Health Communications during this upcoming academic year. [here](#)

The current CRC recruitment and Nomination process, which follows the CRCP requirements, is also included in the MSVU Collective Agreement, including terms of reference of the search committee, and input on the focus of the CRC. These processes include EDIA practices such as EDIA training and resources for the committee members, and the collection of self-identification data from applicants and Chairholders. In addition, MSVU undertakes an environmental scan of how our EDIA commitments are being met both within this program as well as across the institution.

What is a Canada Research Chairs Equity Action Plan (CRC EAP)?

In shaping our MSVU Action Plan, it is important to note that in 2003, eight women filed a complaint against the Government of Canada, asserting that the CRCP was violating the Canadian Human Rights Act by discriminating against protected groups.¹ The 2006 settlement agreement between the plaintiffs and the Government of Canada required that the CRCP implement equity targets in universities across the country to increase the representation of women, racialized individuals, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples

Despite the requirements listed in the 2006 settlement agreement, a 2016 evaluation of the CRCP concluded that institutions lacked transparency in their chair allocation and renewal processes and needed “greater accountability in terms of meeting ... equity targets.” In 2017, the CRCP steering committee published the program’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and required universities to implement their own plans. The plan recommended that the CRCP should require institutions to adopt greater transparency in their allocation, selection and renewal processes for chairholders. CRC EAPs are focused on improving:

- Program governance
- Transparency
- Monitoring of its measures
- Addressing long-standing equity, diversity and inclusion challenges

All universities must maintain annual EAP reports in which they describe “the progress made in implementing their action plans and meeting their equity and diversity targets and objectives.” In addition to the four designated groups, in 2019, the CRCP started implementing approaches to increase the representation of 2SLGBTQ+ chairholders. Universities that do not meet the CRCP equity targets face consequences, including a reduction in the number of nominees and allocated chairs.

The nature of the CRCP stems from its unique ability to improve hiring practices, making them more transparent and streamlined. When CRCP selection and nomination procedures are well integrated into specific policies (e.g., faculty agreements), they can inform best practices for recruiting faculty members across the institution. CRCP requirements can also identify systemic issues and deficiencies with respect to recruitment, promotion, and administrative support, and help support the institution in best practices. At MSVU this falls under our Collective Agreement Article 45: Provisions for members appointed under the research programs or appointed to endowed chairs which includes Canada Research Chairs.

Strategic and Organizational Landscape at Mount Saint Vincent University

MSVU was founded in 1873 with a mission focused on the advancement of women and girls and the promotion of accessibility through flexible learning opportunities and services. Since its founding, MSVU has continued its commitment to increasing equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), and more recently, in supporting Indigenous initiatives in its operations. The overall goal of which is to systematically remove barriers as it works to achieve an equitable academic, research and campus environment, as outlined in our Research Strategic Plan (2023-2028).

To align with this commitment, resources have been invested in advancing EDI through the following:

The MSVU EDIA Advisory Working Group is dedicated to fostering a culture of equity, anti-racism, and works to build and enhance EDIA competency across campus, update policies and procedures, and offer support services.

The MSVU Indigenous Advisor works collaboratively on and off campus to advance the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action as well as providing a long-term vision for MSVU grounded in decolonization.

Dimensions is a federal program to help drive deeper EDI cultural change across postsecondary research. MSVU is a foundational member of the Dimensions program, MSVU has spent considerable time reviewing existing data and issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. The [Dimensions program](#) in Canada is a federal initiative designed to foster transformational change and increase research excellence by advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in postsecondary institutions. The core principles of Dimensions are: 1. Centrality of Voices: Prioritizes the lived experiences and engagement-based evidence of individuals from equity-deserving groups; 2. Context-Specific Evidence: Adapted to each institution's unique size, location, resources, and specific challenges, and 3. Mutuality and Cooperation: Encourages participating schools to share best practices and help improve the broader research community. As the only university in Atlantic Canada to be awarded Dimensions recognition, MSVU continues to ensure that we are meeting the requirements under this program in advancing EDI across the institution.

CRC EDIA Action Plan

Keystone Objective 1: Implement equitable recruitment and selection processes that reflect real, meaningful, and accountable employment equity requirements for faculty hiring

Implement EDIA training for all individuals involved in faculty hiring, including CRCs	Complete: EDIA training required for all individuals participating in the process
Establish more defined employment equity test for preferential consideration of diverse candidates	Near Completion: language negotiated into new faculty collective agreement.
Imbed employment equity considerations into all stages of the hiring process for new faculty	Near Completion: language negotiated into new faculty collective agreement.
Enhance use of targeted recruitment tools to attract diverse candidates	In progress: advertising sites targeting Indigenous, Racialized, and other equity groups currently used on an ad hoc basis
Establish procedures for considering non-traditional backgrounds in determining rank and salary placement for new hires	Near Completion: language negotiated into new faculty collective agreement.

Keystone Objective 2: Expand current data collection, analysis, and reporting to improve MSVU's understanding of its community and improve benchmark setting

Establish a standardized self-id questionnaire for all campus uses	Complete: standardized self-id questionnaire finalized Spring 2026
Implement questionnaire for staff hiring, faculty hiring, and student admissions	In progress: currently implementing questionnaire into existing student admissions and staff hiring portals and exploring a data collection solution for faculty hiring
Collect data on existing community via a campus census	To be completed: exploring technology solutions to support the launch of a campus census
Initiate annual reporting	To be completed: commitment to provide annual reporting imbedded into new faculty collective agreement. (Workforce Analysis completed for 2025 using existing data (FT Faculty: 23 more women than expected; 3 more Indigenous People than expected; a gap of 17 racialized people (less than expected); a gap of 7 pwd (less than expected)).

Keystone Objective 3: Create a culture of inclusion and belonging that supports the retention and success of diverse faculty

Revise RTPP guidelines to reflect diverse forms of knowledge dissemination and ensure a review process free from bias	Complete: EDIA training required for all individuals participating in RTPP processes Near Completion: language negotiated into new faculty collective agreement to ensure processes are free from bias and conflict of interest. In progress: addition of a service stream for promotion to full-professor supports equity outcomes In process: streamlining processes for CRCs applying for tenure/promotion and CRC renewal in the same academic year
Establish additional EDIA resources, committees and resources to support the MSVU community	Complete: Establishment of an Office of Equity, Indigenous Relations, and Human Rights. To be completed: work with the faculty association to establish caucuses/communities for members of equity groups Complete: establish collective agreement language addressing impacts of equity tax on faculty members who are part of equity groups
Ensure appropriate supports and benefits for equity groups	Near Completion: expanded parental leave benefits negotiated into new collective agreement In progress: a comprehensive review of MSVU benefits plans currently underway with a focus on equity

Summary of Engagement

To create a thoughtful and responsive CRC EAP, many perspectives needed to be heard. The following information, gatherings and engagements inform this CRC EAP:

- The findings from the integrated scan of information for the Dimensions application
- Consultations with Deans from the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the Faculty of Graduate and Professional Studies.
- A variety of chairs and directors from the faculties who work with CRCs
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Institutional Research Team
- Senior Leadership Team

Equity Action Plan by Strategic Area

Not unlike the Dimensions program, the implementation and delivery of the CRC EAP takes place campus-wide in consultation with units across campus. This helps to promote alignment in reporting and approach and connects the CRC EAP with the overarching MSVU Research Strategic Plan and strategic research pillars.

Strategic Area #1: Gender, Sexuality, and the Advancement of Women and Girls and other Historically Underrepresented Populations.

Objective: Retention and Inclusive Environment CRCs have equitable access to the information they need in clear, useful and practical ways, when they need it, so they can make the most of their CRC experience and further advancement.

Future Actions

Project Name	Responsibility	Action
CRC Orientation Project	Inclusive Research Team	Create a package of supporting documents and helpful guides that all CRCs receive during their onboarding and have access to for reference throughout their term as a CRC.
CRC Membership Guidelines	Inclusive Research Team	Create guidelines to accompany the CRC Orientation package that supports Faculty leaders in matching CRCs in faculties for a

Project Name	Responsibility	Action
		support/touch point mentor when starting a CRC or at any other time.
CRC Renewal Supports Project	Inclusive Research Team	Create a package of supporting documents and helpful guides that all CRCs receive when they have one year to the end of any term and have access to for reference throughout their term(s).
CRC Transitions Support Project	CRC Team/Inclusive Research Team	Create a package of supporting documents and helpful guides that all CRCs receive when they have one year to plan and transition out of the CRCP and have access to for reference throughout their term as a CRC.

Strategic Area #2: Purposeful collaboration with internal and external change makers to address and remove systemic barriers in the research ecosystem

Objective: Barrier Assessment and Program Monitoring: Creating opportunities to collaborate and co-create transformational improvements to our CRC program. This includes understanding the contexts of our CRCs as well as the challenges women and gender equity-deserving groups, racialized and Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQ+ and people with disabilities face.

Future Actions

Project Name	Responsibility	Action
CRC Faculty Gatherings	Faculty Leadership	Faculty level meet and greet each year held with CRCs, Chairs and Deans.
CRC Women and Gender Equity-Deserving Groups Network	Inclusive Research Team	Plan and support two annual meetings, one formal and one informal, for women and gender minority CRCs hosted by the Vice President Research.
All CRC Network Meeting	Inclusive Research Team	Plan and support an annual meeting for all CRCs to provide a networking opportunity, a summary update to CRC EAP progress and CRCP updates.
Environmental Scan (ES)		Each 3 years, conduct an ES to identify whether there are barriers in the recruitment, nomination, appointment, retention, and support of CRCs, particularly for members of the FDGs.
CRCs with Disabilities Luncheon	Inclusive Research Team	Plan and support an annual lunch meeting for all CRCs with disabilities to provide a networking opportunity and opportunity to provide direct feedback on experiences to the Vice President Research.

Strategic Area #3: Commit to ongoing development and capacity building to support equitable and inclusive research practices

Objective: Institutional EDIA Capacity Building -Creating learning opportunities for CRCs that address their feedback and ensure priority access to training events along with specific contacts for CRCs for supports in the Research Office and Finance.

Future Actions

Project Name	Responsibility	Action
Training for Academic Unit Chairs/Directors on CRC Program requirements	CRC Team/ Inclusive Research Team	Create a package of supporting documents, helpful guides and checklists that all Academic Unit Heads receive to support administration of the CRC program/chairs.
Knowledge Mobilization of EDI Training for CRCs	Inclusive Research Team	Create an infographic outlining the training opportunities and pathways for building EDI knowledge CRCs can access. Update bi-annually.
Knowledge Mobilization of Indigenous Knowledges and	Inclusive Research Team	Create an infographic outlining the training opportunities and pathways for building understanding of wise practices of engagement with Indigenous communities and decolonization
Decolonization Training for CRCs		approaches CRCs can access. Update annually.
Priority Training Access for CRCs	Inclusive Research Team	Update internal policy to indicate that when specialized equity, diversity, inclusion and/or decolonization training is offered and ensure CRCs get access to training opportunities.
CRC and Single Points of Contacts Project	Inclusive Research Team	Create a support document with key points of contact.

Strategic Area #4: Pursue updates to business practices and processes across research administration

Objective: Accountability and Transparency The CRC program supports the dismantling of discriminatory barriers through systems reviews, surveys, equity target planning, while creating internal improvements that address internal efficiencies and program needs.

Future Actions

Project Name	Responsibility	Action
CRCs in Administrative Roles Review	Inclusive Research Team	Review and update guidance on CRCs in administrative roles at the time of initial nomination and during their term.
CRC Allocation Transparency Project	CRC Team/ Inclusive Research Team	Review how CRCs are strategically allocated, our approach to meeting CRC targets, how CRCs are assigned across the Institution, reviewing timelines for development of the nomination, faculty/department level and develop clear infographic and communications that are posted on CRC accountability website.
CRC Financial Guidelines Update	Inclusive Research Team/Research Finance	Review and update guidance on financial management of CRC and associated institutional financial supports (considering timeline limits at end of CRC term).
CRC Renewals and Expectations Project	Inclusive Research Team/Faculty Leadership	Review and update guidance to support clear and transparent expectations for renewal throughout the initial term, and expectations of academic leadership for CRCs at MSVU.
Comparative Review of Institutional Support and Equity Climate Bi-Annual Survey	Inclusive Research Team	EDIA Climate Survey every 3 years. Results will be used to help inform the next CRC EAP.

Conclusion

The CRCP EAP is a living document which is guided by the MSVU Research Strategic Plan and the overarching university Strategic Plan which address high impact teaching, research excellence and equity that drive the CRCP. At MSVU we know that by interweaving these priorities we can build an even stronger, more inclusive and robust research environment that will be an important research driver of innovation for Canada in the future. The goals outlined in MSVU's CRCP EAP, along with other campus-wide initiatives, are designed to enhance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility across the MSVU community.

The objectives aligned with specific action items in the Equity Action Plan (EAP) are complex and require careful implementation to achieve the three key goals: accountability, equity in the oversight of MSVU's CRC program, and an equitable and inclusive work environment. However, by introducing these changes in the spirit of fairness and by communicating our intentions clearly, we strive to rally the university community around a shared commitment to meet, and even exceed, equity expectations.

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ⁱⁱ 1 Government of Canada. (1984). Report of the Commission on Equality in Employment. Ottawa, ON. / Cohen, A. M. G., Forsyth, L., Joyce, G., Kobayashi, A., Mulay, S., Ollivier, M., ... Robbins, W. (2003). Human Rights Complaint Concerning the Canada Research Chairs Program. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Human Rights Commission

2 Canada Research Coordinating Committee. (2023). Best practices in equity, diversity and inclusion in research practice and design.

3 Goss Gilroy Inc. (2016). Evaluation of the Canada Research Chairs Program. Ottawa, ON: Goss Gilroy Inc.

4 Canada Research Chairs. (2023). Equity, diversity and inclusion requirements and practices.

5 Canada Research Coordinating Committee. 2023. 2023 International Joint Initiative for Research in Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation competition.

6 Canada Research Chairs. (2019). 2019 Addendum to the 2006 Canadian Human Rights Settlement Agreement.

7 Canada Research Chairs. (2023). Chairs administration guide.

8 Council of Canadian Academies. (2024). Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Post-Secondary Research.