

Interim Strategic Research Plan 2019-2021

I Rationale and Objectives

Mount Saint Vincent University's (MSVU) Interim Strategic Research Plan (2019-2021) will inform the future direction of research at MSVU.

MSVU has umbrella mission statements around social responsibility, inclusion and the advancement of women and girls. These statements broadly inform the research culture of the University. An explicit goal of the University's Strategic Plan is to: "Promote the centrality of research to the pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence and to the intellectual life of our community members."

At the core of this plan are major objectives for enhancing and leveraging research at MSVU:

- Objective 1: Supporting Research Diversity and Excellence
- Objective 2: Building Inclusive Partnerships
- Objective 3: Creating, Developing, and Sustaining Research
- Objective 4: Sustaining A High-Caliber Research Culture

These over-arching research objectives set directions to:

- Continue the current trajectory of growth in both research expression and in research funding across all disciplines;
- Strengthen MSVU's research in its breadth, foci, interdisciplinary potential;
- Promote research and scholarship diversity and excellence;
- Support student engagement at all levels;
- Encourage community outreach and engagement;
- Foster regional, national and international collaborations.

Strategic Research Pillars

The Interim Strategic Research Plan is guided by four interdisciplinary research areas, identified by a comprehensive analysis of 5 years of internal and external research grant topics at the University, and supported by results from a survey of MSVU faculty. They include:

1. Gender, Sexuality, and the Advancement of Women and Girls
2. Inclusive Ways of Knowing and Dissemination
3. Health and Wellness Across the Lifespan
4. Life, Computational, and Physical Science

II Deployment of Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) and Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Infrastructure Support

The strategic research pillars and related areas will inform MSVU's plans to deploy Canada Research Chairs and necessary CFI infrastructure. MSVU deploys CFI support where research infrastructure can be demonstrably required to advance research and/or when the

capacity to increase faculty research outcomes can be maximized, especially for Canada Research Chairs.

Fostering a culture of research excellence, from Canada Research Chairs to students, is an over-arching goal of MSVU. The consultation about designated research areas for CRCs occurs in a coordinated effort by the Associate Vice-President Research (AVPR), the Vice President Academic and Provost and the three Deans, all of whom contribute to the discussion of the Strategic Research Plan in the determination of areas to be designated, based on growth potential of a discipline/or disciplines.

We currently have 4 CRCs: 3 in place (2 women, 1 man), 1 nominated (woman) and 3 named chairs (all women). We are currently both meeting and exceeding normative gender equity targets.

Named Chairs	Council	Department	Time Period	Research Pillar
Tier I Canada Research Chair Global Aging and Community	SSHRC (Special)	Family Studies and Gerontology	2016 - 2022	Pillar 3
Tier II Canada Research Chair Social Innovation and Community Engagement	SSHRC	Political Studies/ Women's Studies	2019-2024 (renewed)	Pillars 1 and 2
Tier II Canada Research Chair Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions	SSHRC (Special)	Education/ Child and Youth Study	2018-2023	Pillars 1 and 3
Tier II Canada Research Chair Interdisciplinary Studies in Neuroscience	SSHRC (Special)	Psychology	2020-2025	Pillars 2, 3, 4
Named Chairs	Council	Department	Time Period	Research Pillar
WISE Atlantic NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering	NSERC	Biology	2011- Present	Pillars 1 and 4
Gail and Stephen Jarislowsky Chair in Learning Disabilities	N/A	Education	2011 - Present (reappointed in 2019)	Pillars 2 and 3
Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies	N/A	Women's Studies	2019-2021	Pillar 1
Lena Isabel Jodrey Chair in Gerontology	N/A	Family Studies, Gerontology	1994- Present	Pillar 3

MSVU's enthusiasm for cross-campus collaboration and partnerships with Mount colleagues, as well as other researchers in the region, brings together researchers in multiple disciplines. Creating an environment that supports CRCs in forging these internal and external partnerships allows researchers to share and develop new knowledge, and to address policy challenges on a global scale.

III Major Objectives of the Interim Strategic Research Plan

Objective 1: Supporting Research Diversity and Excellence

The Mount is committed to supporting the breadth of research and scholarship across disciplines conducted by members of our community at all career levels and at all phases of the research process.

As highlighted in the results of the Interim Strategic Research Plan survey, the collaborative nature and supportive research environment at MSVU is considered a strength among faculty members. The Mount's various research centres are dedicated to research across disciplines and encourage inter-institutional and inter-sectoral collaborations.

For example, MSVU's new Centre for Applied Research in Human Health (CAR), a renovation of an existing research facility, now includes the *Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre (ECCRC)* and *FoodARC*, the Food Action Research Centre. CAR provides the space and resources for Mount researchers to study various aspects of childhood and family health. Additionally, the *Nova Scotia Centre on Aging (NSCA)* in the Margaret Norrie McCain Centre for Teaching and Learning continues to build new knowledge focused on the health and well-being of older persons. The *Global Aging and Community Initiative* does collaborative research across broad global and national scientific communities. The *Centre for Social Innovation and Community Engagement in Military Affairs* has attained international recognition for innovative work on gender, militaries, and veterans through numerous peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations, and support new and ongoing work on military families.

Research on reading and learning disabilities among low socio-economic status children, advocacy of women in STEM disciplines, biochemical research on Alzheimer's disease functional food development for seniors and young children to reduce sugars, research on imagery in the literature of William Blake and J.R.R. Tolkien, critical studies on gender identity, critical work on moral evolution, progressive atheism and debates on the existence of God, food security for immigrants and refugees, historical work on Africa, cross disciplinary archival work on gender on the gendered components of psychosis in youth and new work on cannabis consumption are just some of the examples of the breadth and range of research here at the Mount. Numerous ongoing inter-institutional and inter-sectoral collaborations in the aforementioned research centres and by individual faculty interests, in addition to training and employing students and highly qualified personnel at all levels, exemplifies MSVU's mission of knowledge, scholarship, teaching, and intellectual endeavor of the highest quality.

Objective 2: Building Inclusive Partnerships

At MSVU, collaboration across disciplines, institutions, and sectors is encouraged. As identified by faculty, MSVU's research pillars include partnerships intra- and extra-university which are characterized as community/non-profit, interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral and international in nature. These partnerships present key sites for Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) research training for students at all levels, including an increasing number of post-doctoral fellows.

Objective 3: Creating, Developing, and Sustaining Research

The Mount will continue to strive towards creating, developing, and sustaining a research environment that attracts and retains excellent scholars who are committed to the Mount's mission, vision, and goals, and that provides opportunities for students to learn and grow through research. This commitment will involve attention to assistance and support along a career continuum for members of the Mount's research community; enhanced promotion and visibility of research; research infrastructure; and continued development of a research culture. MSVU believes that research excellence depends on the integration of diverse perspectives and lived experiences. Inclusive excellence is a cross-cutting theme across our research pillars, and serves to identify and prioritize future programs to attract researchers in interdisciplinary and/or themed areas that may focus on one or more Research Pillar.

Integral to achieving this objective is an over-arching focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in research, and a commitment to exploration, collaboration, and interdisciplinarity.

Objective 4: Sustaining A High-Caliber Research Culture

The Mount values research and scholarship in all forms and levels of career. High-caliber research culture is vital to the success of the university, faculty, students, and community. MSVU will continue to work across departments to develop policies and procedures to facilitate research. MSVU was founded on a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, and is committed to an open, collaborative and innovative research culture for all researchers across different disciplines.

As exemplified in the results of the faculty survey, direct support to new and junior researchers in grant writing and research development is one of MSVU's strengths that is not enjoyed at larger universities.

MSVU continues to create opportunities for researchers to collaborate through workshops, faculty information sessions, and public events. MSVU encourages faculty to create student research opportunities in their labs, fieldwork, courses, and grants to train a new generation of researchers in their field.

To foster research among Mount faculty, the Committee on Research and Publications (CRP) has three internal grant competitions each year. They are held in October, January, and April. Internal grant opportunities include:

New Scholars Grant: Funding for all faculty new to the university in their first few years gives support in developing their research programmes, leading to tenure and/or promotion.

SSHRC Explore and Exchange Grants: Funding for small-scale innovation and experimentation to develop a research project or conduct pilot work and enable researchers to hire students at any level to participate in their research projects, thereby contributing to their professional development.

Standard Internal Grants: Seed money to faculty research projects with potential for future external grant application to Canadian Tri-Council agencies or other leading funders. Standard grants may also be used as bridge funding between grants, to hire students for smaller projects, to purchase small, necessary research equipment or to fund pilot projects.

The CN Student Research Internship: Endowed by the CN Management Development for Women Excellence Fund, the CN Student Research Internship provides experiential learning opportunities to graduate and undergraduate students, preparing them for careers in the private, public or not-for-profit sectors.

Aid to Scholarly Publications and Communications Grant: Funds for technical assistance with peer-reviewed papers, books or reports or costs associated with open access publishing. In addition, costs associated with non-print scholarly work, such as CD/DVD production, an exhibit or a performance are eligible under this opportunity.

To showcase the high quality of our researchers at MSVU, the **Research Excellence Award** is given to a faculty member on an annual basis. The award recognizes an individual's contribution to the research community and to the research climate at Mount Saint Vincent University. The award also serves to showcase the high level of scholarly research at Mount Saint Vincent University. By rewarding excellence in research, we not only recognize the achievements of a given faculty member, but also affirm the important role of research in university life. The **Early Career Research Award**, instated in 2019, achieves the same for faculty under 8 years of appointment at MSVU.

Integral to sustaining a high-caliber research culture, MSVU will embrace the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls-to-Action that impact research with Indigenous peoples and communities. Culturally appropriate practices in research ethics, including forms and processes, are crucial for research in partnership with indigenous communities – MSVU intends to support research with indigenous partners through decolonizing internal and external research practices.

Supporting trainees and highly qualified personnel is critical to this objective. MSVU provides all students, from undergraduates to post-doctoral fellows, an exceptional training environment to develop research skills that may be transferred to professions outside academia. The development of a Post-Doctoral Protocol will assist the transition of and expectations for post-doctoral fellows coming to MSVU.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Canada Research Chair Nominations

MSVU is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in employment and believes that the research excellence for which MSVU is known is enhanced through the diversification of Canadian Research Chair nominations. MSVU's overall research culture benefits from shared experience with people from diverse backgrounds who bring new and varied perspectives. As MSVU's commitment to the advancement of women is historically embedded within our policies and practices, we will include members of all equity-seeking groups within the frameworks created by our legacy. MSVU will continue to uphold excellence in the attraction, recruitment, and retention of a diverse pool of candidates for future CRC nominations. MSVU has been recently selected as a pilot university for the federal Dimensions: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion program: one of 17 universities and colleges in the country. The process followed in the pilot will encourage the gender-inclusive environment at MSVU: of past and current CRCs, two Tier 1's and 8 Tier II's, only one incumbent has been male. The University takes very seriously its Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion pilot status and will develop university-wide plans to address capacity in this regard.

Throughout its history, MSVU has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing the education, support, capacity building, and career opportunities of women. Explicitly, MSVU promotes research on women and related issues of gender and equity that includes representation from most academic departments. Integrally linked to this overarching and interdisciplinary focus on women and gender is an Interim Strategic Research Plan that emphasizes social responsibility and community engagement. Many of the University's educational programs and departments, as well as many faculty members, have a developed and mature record of accomplishment respecting these commitments.

Development of Research and Research Training

MSVU has increased its capacity to support research, researchers, and research trainees. MSVU will continue to support its faculty members with professional development workshops at the new faculty and mid-career levels to enhance knowledge and use of administrative structure to leverage research outcomes, events to share and learn about research happening on campus, and the provision of both assistantships and internships that foster transferrable skills for future graduates.

To assist MSVU faculty in hiring and training students, all faculty are eligible to apply for the CN Student Research Internship, an endowed internal grant that aims to provide experiential learning opportunities to undergraduate and graduates students for careers in private, public or not-for-profit sectors.

New faculty members are encouraged to meet individually with the AVP Research 2-3 times during their first few years to discuss funding opportunities, professional development options and to assist with the development of a research programme. Additionally, MSVU

provides internal funding support for faculty initiatives; such as the SSHRC Exchange grant to enable knowledge dissemination, Aid to Scholarly Publications grants to assist with both open access funding and the preparation of monographs, and Large-Scale Collaborative grants to support applications to large capacity granting competitions.

Inter-institutional and Inter-sectoral Collaborations

As a strategic research priority area, developing partnerships is a crucial aspect of MSVU's Interim Strategic Research Plan. MSVU researchers will strengthen current collaborations between disciplines, sectors, nations, and community groups, as well as seek novel partnerships that reflect our priority areas. Mount researchers have vibrant and established research relationships with colleagues, organizations, institutions, governments, and industries close to home and around the world. Forging and fostering these relationships is an integral part of contributing to the global intellectual community.

Planning and Approval

The Interim Strategic Research Plan is approved by MSVU Senate, on behalf of the Committee on Research and Publications. The Associate Vice-President Research is responsible for institutional processes and coordination of the Plan.

The Strategic Research Pillars were determined by:

- 1) A survey of MSVU faculty members, developed by the Office of the Associate Vice-President Research, approved by the Vice-President Academic and Provost and the Deans of Faculties;
- 2) An analysis of external and internal grant application titles over the past 5 years.

The planning and approval process for nominating Canada Research Chairs at MSVU is governed by the Collective Agreement between the MSVU Board of Governors and the Faculty Association. Area determination for CRC nominations falls to the AVPR in consultation with the three Deans of Faculties and the Vice President Academic and Provost guided by the Strategic Research Plan.

Assessment of Success

Since all components of the plan are integrated within the framework of the institutional research enterprise, oversight of the Interim Strategic Research Plan is governed by the Associate Vice-President Research, with support from the Vice-President (Academic) and Provost, the MSVU Research Office and the Senate Committee on Research and Publications, comprised of seven faculty members with at least one representing the areas of humanities, social sciences, education, sciences, and professional programs, and one professional librarian.

Assessment of this plan by the University will be accomplished in five-year cycles, drawing on multiple success indicators appropriate to MSVU disciplines. **Success indicators** include additional CRC and CFI allocations, based on a three-year rolling average of Tri-Council funds, the development of additional student capacity for research, as well as the usual indicators of academic success, including publications, awards, honours, creative works,

presentations at professional meetings, colloquia, industry, government or community venues and other spaces of public and professional interest.

Acadia University. *Rural and Coastal: Local to Global, Acadia University Strategic Research Plan Summary*. Strategic Research Plan. Wolfville: Acadia University, 2015. Print. 2019.

Bishop's University. *Strategic Research Plan (2013-2016)*. Strategic Research Plan. Sherbrooke: Bishop's University, 2013. Print. 2019.

Cape Breton University. *Strategic Research, Innovation, and Commercialization Plan Summary 2014-2019*. Strategic Research Plan. Sydney: Cape Breton University, 2014. Print. 2019.

Mount Allison University. *Strategic Research and Creative Activities Plan Summary 2016*. Strategic Research Plan. Sackville: Mount Allison University, 2016. Print. 2019.

Mount Saint Vincent University. *Mount 2017: Making a Difference*. Strategic Plan. Halifax: Mount Saint Vincent University, 2017. Web. 2019.

Mount Saint Vincent University Research Office. *Research Plan 2015-2018*. Strategic Research Plan. Halifax: Mount Saint Vincent University, 2015. 2019.

Nipissing University. *Strategic Research Plan 2019-2024*. North Bay: Nipissing University, 2019. Print. 2019.

St. Thomas University. *Strategic Research Plan February 2014-2019*. Strategic Research Plan. Fredericton: St. Thomas University, 2014. Print. 2019.