

**Mount Saint Vincent University  
(MSVU)  
Canada Research Chairs Program  
Strategic Research Plan 2023-2028**

## **Our Mission**

The mission of Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) is the advancement of women and girls, inspired by our strong tradition of social responsibility; the delivery of academic excellence through a rich and rewarding university experience; the pursuit of knowledge: scholarship, teaching and intellectual endeavours of the highest quality; and the promotion of accessibility through flexible learning opportunities and services.

## **Objectives**

The overarching objectives of the MSVU Strategic Research Plan are aimed at advancing research, scholarly work and professional activity among faculty, staff and students, especially as it relates to the advancement of women, girls and other marginalized and underrepresented groups, social responsibility, and social justice.

The specific research objectives include:

1. Enhance and expand research and scholarly and professional activity in support of the advancement of women, girls and other marginalized groups, social responsibility and social justice.
2. Enhance and expand community-based research activities.
3. Enhance undergraduate and graduate student research and encourage faculty to engage their undergraduate and graduate students in their research endeavours.
4. Encourage women and other marginalized and underrepresented faculty, staff and students in their research endeavours.
5. Increase the university's impact on local, national and global issues through research and scholarly activity.
6. Undertake creative knowledge-mobilization activities with relevant communities to share research/knowledge and influence decision makers.

## **Major Areas for Research, Scholarly Work, and Professional Activity**

The following areas of research emphasis are areas of interdisciplinary strength in which the Mount already has invested and which help to define our uniqueness. Building on these key areas of emphasis will strengthen our profile as a research community. These areas are explicitly tied to the Mount's overall strategic goals and values.

1. **Gender, Sexuality and the Advancement of Women and Girls and other Equity-Seeking Populations.** The strategic research goals of this research pillar include enhancing research opportunities through existing and new academic programs such as the Queer Studies minor, the MA in Women and Gender Studies, and the securing of additional research resources to train the next generation of researchers through the Alexa McDonough Institute (AMI) Research Fellows program, the Lesbian Pulp Fiction Collection, and the MSVU Archives. In addition, MSVU recognizes the significant focus on gender in research across many disciplines (e.g., Education, History, English, Business, Political Studies, Science, Sociology, Women's Studies,

Family Studies), in the Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies, and in the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Atlantic Region).

2. **Intersectional Ways of Knowing and Knowledge Mobilization.**

Across programs and disciplines, Mount researchers, individually and in the community, work to critically examine and address pressing social matters. Researching "the social" is an area for which the Mount is known and could be better known. The Mount was founded on a strong tradition of social responsibility. That tradition is well represented in our research in areas such as social economy, social inclusion, social movements, social innovation, citizen and community engagement, socially-important scientific issues, and other areas inspired by a commitment to social justice—Aging, Health, Food Security, and Education. Participatory modes and methods of research and research communication reflect our commitment to democratic engagement. Placing emphasis on research that, through substance and form, addresses complex social issues will enhance the Mount's capacity to make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities and to be recognized for its contributions in these areas.

Across disciplines, a predominance of Mount research that is primarily grounded in the social sciences and focused on issues of social importance also has an explicit goal of policy change and development. Acknowledging the Mount's role in leading, debating, and influencing public policy and making this an area of strategic priority will highlight opportunities for Mount researchers from across disciplines to lead and be recognized for leadership in this area.

The understanding of issues of social importance and the development of appropriate public policy are enhanced by the empirical and analytical perspectives of the natural sciences and math. Support for research in these fields will complement and strengthen our social research and policy-making.

3. **Health, Wellness and Social Justice Across the Life Course.**

With two research chairs in aging, the CFI-funded Maritime Data Centre for Aging Research and Policy Analysis and the forthcoming Global Aging and Community Project, as well as the University-supported Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, it goes without saying that research in aging is a key area of research strength at the Mount. Research on aging cuts across programs (Family Studies and Gerontology, Sociology, Chemistry, Business and Tourism) and variously focuses on health and healthy living, positive aging, learning, care and caregiving, dementia and contexts for and contributors to healthy aging. The Mount will continue to build research capacity in this area with the goal of enhancing its regional, national, and international reputation as a leader in aging research.

4. **Life, Computational and Physical Sciences.**

The study of childhood and children's and youth's well-being and learning is a predominant theme on the Mount's research landscape. From the perspectives of Child and Youth Study, Education, Nutrition, History, Literature, Political Studies, Psychology, Biology, and Family Studies, Mount researchers study various aspects of childhood and children's health, learning experiences, trajectories, challenges,

influences, and contexts. Regionally, the Mount is unique in its capacity to contribute to knowledge advancement, policy change, and practices that promote the health and well-being of future generations. The Mount will enhance its profile by acknowledging and supporting our interdisciplinary strength in this area.

**5. Supporting the Research Lifecycle.**

Consistent with the Mount’s commitment to social responsibility and addressing complex social problems through research, the fifth opportunity for strategic development of research is in the areas of healthy living, healthy environments, and food security. The Mount supports an impressive amount of research focused on understanding and improving individual and community access to proper nutrition as a vital part of healthy living and growth. The Mount has become noted for its role in advancing understanding of and informing practice and policy related to food security. A significant part of this research also supports our commitment to community-engaged scholarship. Researchers also investigate the role of foods in chronic human diseases and the development of dietary and educational strategies towards reducing the burden of obesity and diabetes. Research at the Mount also focuses on environmental issues such as the impacts of climate change, ecosystem productivity and conservation, as well as human developmental processes. Across departments and disciplines such as Applied Human Nutrition, Biology, Business and Tourism, Communication Studies, Child and Youth Study, Education, Family Studies and Gerontology, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Women’s Studies, researchers contribute to understandings about aspects of healthy living and development in healthy environments. Fostering the continued development of research in these area will enable the Mount to build on our significant research strengths and contributions to these fields.

**CRC Distribution**

Dr. Maya Eichler	Canada Research Chair in Social Innovation and Community Engagement	Tier 2 SSHRC renewal 2019 - 2024
Dr. Jenifer Khoury	Canada Research Chair in Interdisciplinary Studies in Neuroscience	Tier 2 SSHRC (Special) New 2021- 2026
Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac	Canada Research Chair in in Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions	Tier 2 SSHRC (Special) New 2018 - 2023
Dr. Zachary Zimmer	Canada Research Chair in Aging and Community Initiative	Tier 1 SSHRC (Special) New 2016 - 2023

**Monitoring Gender Representation**

Until the appointment of our most recent Chair, the Mount has appointed women to all four of its Canada Research Chair positions. The profile of current full-time faculty (65% women) indicates that the University has attracted a high proportion of women to faculty positions.

Consistent with the University's equity and fairness policy, the preferred hiring of women, who meet other employment criteria, continues to apply to the Canada Research Chairs program.

## **The Research Context**

Our Strategic Research Plan and related Strategic Research Pillars are supported and advanced through a greater focus on issues of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility through the creation of new research partnerships. The Research Office at MSVU, created over three decades ago to support and encourage faculty research and to facilitate international activities, is staffed with a full-time Associate Vice-President (Research), who is released of teaching duties, a Research Grants Coordinator, a Research Ethics Coordinator, and an Administrative Assistant. In addition to the monies awarded through the SSHRC Institutional Grant and the Aid to Small Universities funds, MSVU supports faculty research directly through financial assistance for internal grants. Further, MSVU has established an Internal Release Time Award competition in which awards are granted competitively to faculty every year.

The MSVU research context is also strengthened by a variety of centres, institutes, and networks, including:

- Catherine Wallace Centre for Women in Science;
- Alexa McDonough Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice;
- Nova Scotia Centre on Aging;
- Child Study Centre;
- Centre for Women in Business;
- Maritime Data Centre for Aging Research and Policy Analysis;
- Global Aging and Community;
- Atlantic Centre for Research and Education of Girls and Women;
- Centre for Social Innovation and Community Engagement in Military Affairs;
- Centre for Arts-informed Research and Teaching;
- Food and Nutrition Training Centre;
- Measuring Cooperative Difference Research Network (Atlantic Cluster);
- World Heritage Tourism Research Network.

## **Measuring Success**

MSVU expects that all of our Research Chairs will meet the usual measures: success in competitively funded research and the dissemination of results through peer-reviewed publication or other appropriate means. It will be important for Research Chairs to make an original contribution to MSVU's local, regional, national, and international research profiles. We also intend our Research Chairs to act as catalysts and capacity builders within the Mount community to:

- inspire collaborative productivity and research among current faculty;
- enhance recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty in the core research areas;
- attract post-doctoral scholars and foster cross-institutional collaborations;
- foster interdisciplinarity;
- promote the growth of our graduate programs; and
- attract undergraduate students whom we train through to honours degrees in preparation for further scholarship.