

Mount Saint Vincent University

Canada Research Chairs Program Strategic Research Plan 2015-2018

Our Mission

Mount Saint Vincent University (the Mount) is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge: scholarship, teaching and intellectual endeavour of the highest quality. Discovering and sharing knowledge to understand society and nature and to improve the human condition defines, in broad terms, the Mount's commitment to making a difference through research. At the Mount, we are committed to academic excellence, and our passion is a rich and rewarding university experience. We are inspired by our strong tradition of social responsibility and our enduring commitment to the advancement of women. Our people are our foundation and our relationships are built on respect and accountability.

Objectives

The major objectives of the Mount's Strategic Research Plan are to:

- support research and scholarship diversity across disciplines;
- enhance the Mount's research capacity in five key research areas;
- increase the social impact of research with a focus on community outreach and engagement;
- strengthen research capacity through the support of opportunities for local, regional, national, and international partnerships;
- enhance and enrich student research opportunities;
- create and sustain a research environment that attracts, retains, and educates excellent scholars.

Major Areas for Research and Research Training

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.

- I. Gender and the advancement of girls and women. This key area of emphasis is inspired by the Mount's enduring commitment to the advancement of women. It is a recognition of the very significant focus on gender in research across many disciplines (e.g., Education, History, English, Business, Political Studies, Science, Sociology, Women's Studies, Family Studies). "Gender" as a primary area of importance to the University is clearly evidenced by the University's commitment to three Chairs in this area: Canada Research Chair in Gender, Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Atlantic Region). By identifying "gender" as a strategic research area of emphasis, we acknowledge the Mount's significant historic and continuing role in knowledge advancement through research and scholarship in this area.

- II. “The Social” and Public Policy. Across programs and disciplines, Mount researchers, individually and in 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, 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 maths. Support for research in these fields will complement and strengthen our social research and policy-making.

- III. Aging. 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 (Lifelong Learning, 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 a goal of enhancing its regional, national, and international reputation as a leader in aging research.
- IV. Childhood and children’s well-being and learning. 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.

- V. Healthy living, healthy environments, and food security. 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.

Chairs Distribution

Dr. Maya Eichler	Canada Research Chair in Social Innovation and Community Engagement	Tier 2 SSHRC New 2014-2019
Dr. Marnina Gonick	Canada Research Chair in Gender Identity and Social Practices	Tier 2 Special SSHRC Renewal-Lost 2015 2012-2017
Dr. Patty Williams	Canada Research Chair in Food Security and Policy Change	Tier 2 Special SSHRC Renewal 2012-2017
Dr. Zachary Zimmer	Canada Research Chair in Aging and Community	Tier 1 Special SSHRC 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. Our new Tier 1 Chair will be held by a scholar returning to Canada from the United States.

The Research Context

The University has dedicated resources to support its research environment. The Research Office, 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, and Administrative Assistant/Ethics Coordinator. In addition to the monies awarded through the SSHRC Institutional Grant and the Aid to Small Universities funds, the University supports faculty research directly through financial assistance for internal grants. The Mount established an Internal Release Time Award competition in which ten awards are granted competitively to faculty every year.

The research context is also supported by a variety of centres and facilities that make the University unique. Examples of these are:

- 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 Project (opening 2016);
- Food Action Research Centre,
- 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: A Scholartistry Connective;
- Food and Nutrition Training Centre;
- Measuring Cooperative Difference Research Network (Atlantic Cluster);
- World Heritage Tourism Research Network.

Measuring Success

The Mount 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 the Mount'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.