

# Trinity Western University's Strategic Research Plan Summary: Our Vision for 2020

(Approved by University Senate May 5, 2015, updated Oct 2017)

Trinity Western University aspires to be an international centre of scholarly excellence, where discovery research, applied research, integration research, and research creation generates innovative knowledge in service of the world's present and emerging needs. As a Christian liberal arts university, Trinity Western University seeks to unite reason and faith through mature scholarship and research, and to lead the discussion on integrating faith perspectives in all academic areas within religious and academic communities, as well as in the public sphere (*Strategy Map, 2014*).

Trinity Western University uses its small size to its advantage, by cultivating cross-disciplinary collaboration and agility to address research questions of societal importance. As a community of scholars, we affirm that there are multiple ways of knowing and appreciate all types of knowledge and their contribution to human flourishing. Founded on a strong traditional knowledge-base, research generates new insights about the natural world, quality of life, and culture. Knowledge acquisition leads to deep reflection and dialogue seeking to understand the meaning and value of truth, and to promote positive action in the world.

Over the next five years we will grow in our engagement of culture by increasing our support for and promotion of research, a goal which has specifically been identified in the *Strategic Academic Plan, 2015*. We champion the particular value of research within the educational experience: developing curiosity, imagination, and creativity; advancing disciplinary knowledge; transforming culture; and serving people (*Strategic Academic Plan, 2015*). Moreover, we value pedagogical research that advances teaching excellence in the academy. Trinity Western University will positively impact the world through building a local and an international network of scholars, colleagues, alumni, and partners who will collaborate in the areas of research, educational programming, service, and outreach (*Strategy Map, 2014*).

## RESEARCH STRANDS:

The five intersecting strands outlined below have emerged as priority areas of committed growth over the period of the next five years.

### 1. Religion, Culture and Ethics

In recent decades, religions' role in shaping society and culture has become an important area of study in the humanities and social sciences. Increasingly, the positive role of religious belief for human flourishing, normative values, human rights and solidarity are becoming important foci of scholarly inquiry in the academy. Scholars at TWU research the formative role of religion in the shaping of society and culture; religion and religious minorities in North America and globally; sacred texts and their historical-cultural and sociological context; biblical interpretation, the importance of culture for interpretive frameworks, and the reciprocal influences between theology and culture; how religious perspectives can inform legal and ethical dimensions of public interest; science and religion in dialogue; religion and its relationship to vocation and identity formation; and how religious and cultural perspectives influence pedagogy and perceptions regarding education. The **Canada Research Chair in Dead Sea Scrolls Studies** and the **Canada Research Chair in Interpretation, Religion, and**

**Culture** are recognized international leaders in this field of study.

## **2. Health and Human Flourishing**

This strand seeks to promote interdisciplinary scholarship about biological, social, historical and cultural perspectives of personal and public health, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. Through this research, we aspire to enhance personal and population health and improve health care services that address the needs of patients, families, and society. This theme amalgamates a range of research activities informed by health sciences and related disciplines, including biomedicine, social sciences, psychology, and education. We seek to contribute to innovations that prevent and treat disease, promote patient centred health care, enhance capacity and coping skills, and lead to greater inclusion and well-being for persons with disabilities. We endeavor to develop and integrate knowledge about broader historical and structural factors such as class (income and education), gender, ethnicity and spirituality in relation to health and human flourishing. Research capacity in this area has grown significantly through the activities of two *Canada Research Chairs*, one in *Developmental Genetics and Disease*, and the other in *Patient-Reported Outcomes*. Previous grants from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) created and equipped the High Resolution Microscopy Laboratory and the Research Analytical Chemistry Laboratory.

## **3. The Environment**

This strand reflects TWU's ongoing focus on stewardship and sustainability of the environment. This stewardship begins locally with ecological restoration and conservation research projects on our own field study sites in Langley and Salt Spring Island, and extends more broadly to research studies focused on agroecology and best practices in agriculture, chemical ecology, green chemistry, mathematical modelling of environmental processes, and pedagogical research.

## **4. Aesthetic expression and interpretation**

The arts have always been linked to human flourishing by questioning, expressing, seeking and interpreting what it means to be human. This research strand affirms that the ways human beings come to insight are multiple and that knowledge is not always reducible to discursive language. Scholars at TWU in this research theme produce new knowledge that manifests in visual, auditory, text-based and narrative ways. The artists and scholars in this research theme have longstanding performative, practice-led, research-creation and text-based scholarly practices that are located in the intersections between the arts, media and society. Through inquiry-based practices, they discover the spaces where being, doing, creating and interpreting meet with spiritual expression. Seeking to balance academic rigour and cultural relevance with spiritual vitality, artist-scholars at TWU scrutinize self and society, and foster critical engagement with culture.

## **5. Organizations, Industry, and Global Enterprise**

This research strand focuses on understanding the challenges facing organizations, industry, enterprises, and entrepreneurs as they strive to complete in a competitive global environment. The scholarly activities explore insights into business through both basic research, and applied research involving consulting projects with business and industry. This strand links researchers from multiple areas within the academy including business, education, health care, science, social sciences, and human kinetics as they seek to address issues facing business, industry, and society through

innovation and the study of best practices from a local, regional, and global perspective.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Over the next five years, Trinity Western University will provide facilities, specialized equipment, and library resources that facilitate excellent, innovative research and scholarship to meet the following objectives:

### **i) *Build a campus research culture:***

As a small liberal arts and sciences university, TWU strategically promotes research by encouraging faculty to develop collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to research that enable them to pool limited resources and bring together diverse interests in a creative manner. Opportunities to network are provided at the annual faculty retreat, professional development sessions hosted by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, scholarly and public events hosted by the research institutes, and through a number of seminar/lecture series, and thesis defenses that are publicized broadly through our *Academic Events* website. Student research activities are celebrated as a campus community through the annual Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition for graduate students and the undergraduate research conference. Faculty and student research will be profiled annually in our Research magazine *Conscientia* which is published both in electronic and print format.

### **ii) *Broad dissemination of research results:***

Besides publication of research through established academic channels of monographs and journals, we will cultivate the broad dissemination of research through hosting conferences, workshops, symposia, and public lectures. Transfer of knowledge to end users will be facilitated through public workshops for health care and business professionals. In addition, TWU's internal grants supports dissemination of research results by funding three different categories: research grants (which fund particular projects); travel to conferences (which enables researchers to travel to conferences and give papers); and research conferences/symposia (which allows researchers to apply for funds to host conferences and networking events).

### **iii) *Develop highly qualified personnel through synergistic connections between research and teaching:***

We affirm research as a valuable learning experience for both graduate and undergraduate students. TWU's *Strategic Academic Plan, 2015* specifically cites strengthening the connection between research and education as a measure of excellence in student engagement. For this reason, our faculty champion research and inquiry based learning as a means to achieve the *Student Learning Outcomes, 2014*. Students receive direct training from faculty supervisors in research methods and theories; experimental techniques; quantitative and qualitative research; digital literacy; data management and analysis; and will be expected to present their research in on-campus seminars, at conferences, and at the 3 Minute Thesis competition. Trinity Western University has developed a robust undergraduate research program where students receive training opportunities through summer research assistantships, co-op placements and internships in industry, and senior research thesis courses. The Office of Research and Graduate Studies holds

regular professional development workshops for faculty and student researchers on a variety of topics including grantsmanship, research ethics, internships, intellectual property, knowledge mobilization and community engagement, interdisciplinary research, and collaborative research.

**iv) *Promote the activities of research institutes and centres:***

Trinity Western will provide an environment conducive to experimentation, dialogue, and creativity by supporting existing and establishing new research, scholarship and culture-transforming foci of excellence.. The institutes offer cross-disciplinary and multi-institutional venues for knowledge generation while work undertaken by researchers in a given discipline is concentrated in a research centre.

**v) *Determine the optimal balance between teaching and research:***

Trinity Western University takes pride in the quality of its faculty and educational programs. A focus on high touch mentorship ensures that class sizes remain small and fosters a high level of student engagement. Teaching excellence ensures that research advances are passed on to the next generation of scholars and translated into societal benefits. At the same time, the University aims to provide protected time for faculty led research and training of students by providing teaching release to recipients of major external grants, and to those mentoring students in research based thesis projects.

**viii) *Develop research based graduate programs:***

Trinity Western will build on existing and new research based graduate programs through increased financial aid for students, flexible program delivery methods, and a centralized research and graduate studies office. In the next five years we will introduce at least one research based Doctoral Program and one new Masters Program.

**ix) *Increase the number of research chairs:***

Trinity Western will cultivate international leaders in research niches and areas of public interest through the support of Canada Research Chairs and the creation of new chairs. In addition to government funded chairs, TWU actively seeks to establish research chairs in partnership with external foundations, corporations, and donors. Nominations for two new Canada Research Chairs will be submitted under the themes of *Health and Human Flourishing*, and Religion, Culture and Ethics. Trinity Western will work towards the goal of equal gender representation by intentionally encouraging female researchers to apply for chairs as they become available.

**x) *Develop research programs of national and international significance:***

We aim to identify and support understudied research niches where faculty and students can engage in innovative, internationally recognized research. We will also promote multi-institutional collaborations through the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE), and other research networks.

**xi) *Increase international collaboration and partnerships:***

In the next five years we will strengthen existing relationships with academic partners and selectively engage new partners (*Strategy Map, 2014*). TWU currently offers the **International Master of Business Administration (Tianjin, China) Program**, a MBA degree delivered in Tianjin China

through a partnership with Tianjin University of Finance and Economics (TUFE). Through various funding opportunities, TWU provides unique internship and exchange opportunities for student researchers. For example, both undergraduate and graduate students have opportunity to complete an internship at the Laurentian Leadership Centre, TWU’s satellite campus in Ottawa, as well as in international locations such as France, and China. In addition, we welcome visiting scholars on sabbaticals and international student interns to work on research projects with TWU faculty.

**Assessment of Objectives:**

To assess attainment of the SRP objectives we will track both the quality and quantity of research outputs including citation indices, books and peer reviewed publications, conferences and exhibitions hosted or attended by faculty, the number of grant applications submitted and the success rate at obtaining funding, knowledge translation events open to the public, and the number of alumni who proceed onto graduate programs and research based careers.

**Planning and Approval Process:**

The submitted Strategic Research Plan was developed through a campus wide consultation process over a two year period. Led by the Academic Research Council, the process engaged faculty and Deans at the University. The *Strategic Research Plan: Our Vision for 2020* was approved by Trinity Western University Senate on May 5, 2015.

**Plan for Distribution of Canada Research Chairs**

AREA	TIER	DISCIPLINE	AGENCY	THEME	DATES
Dead Sea Scrolls	1	Religious Studies	SSHRC	Religion, Culture and Ethics	2004-2016 (renewed 2011)
Interpretation, Religion and Culture	2	English	SSHRC	Religion, Culture and Ethics	2006 – 2016 (renewed 2011)
Developmental Genetics and Disease	2	Biology	NSERC	Health and Human Flourishing	2007 – 2014 (renewed 2012)
Patient- Reported Outcomes	2	Nursing	CIHR	Health and Human Flourishing	2013-
Early Temple Judaism	2	Religious Studies	SSHRC	Religion, Culture and Ethics	2017 (anticipated)
Cardiovascular Adaptation to Exercise	2	Physiology	CIHR	Health and Human Flourishing	2018 (anticipated)