

# York University Strategic Research Plan

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Building on Strength 2013-2018

Summary for the Canada Research Chairs Program

# YORK UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN SUMMARY

## RESEARCH VISION

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York University is committed to excellence in research and scholarship in all its forms. Informed by a strong commitment to shared values, including the promotion of social justice and the public good, we aspire through our research to better understand the human condition and the world around us and to employ the knowledge we gain in the service of society. Intensive engagement in research is a core institutional value that permeates the fabric of the University, and it is this foundation on which York's vibrant and exciting academic environment is built.

## OBJECTIVES

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- York seeks national research leadership and international recognition through building on areas of existing strength, fostering the development of new opportunities, broadening our base of research and increasing our intensity of engagement.
- Over the next five years, these goals will be reflected by increased recognition of our research, scholarly and creative work through enhancement of our ranking in national and international surveys, increased attraction of high quality undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, continued growth in our research income and publication quality and intensity, and the broadening of our external partnerships and engagement.
- In developing its research, the University is committed to critically engaged scholarship, advancing social justice and providing a lasting legacy of benefits to society.

## PRIORITY AREAS OF RESEARCH

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York expects to make its CRC appointments building on existing research strengths and research themes with an emphasis on strategic research opportunities as outlined in the institutional Strategic Research Plan, recognizing that these investments should largely align with areas where the research productivity that underlies our Chair allocations originates. These areas are underpinned by a strong vision of the York community achieving new levels of research leadership.

## COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH STRENGTHS

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Research at York is broad in scope, and has been developed with strong commitments to interdisciplinarity and social justice. The majority of this work is captured across six intersecting research themes. Each theme includes a broad segment of scholarship and is built upon research strengths that form the basis for the University's recognition as a leading Canadian research institution. York is fully committed to fostering the continuing development and support of research and scholarship across the breadth of these themes.

## ADVANCING FUNDAMENTAL DISCOVERY AND CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE

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- Whether in the humanities, social sciences, fine arts, natural sciences or beyond, pure research is emphasized across a large sector of York's research enterprise.
- Many of the greatest advances in the arts, humanities, social, natural and medical sciences are due to exemplary individual contributions. University-based research must provide ample space for scholars to explore uncharted territory in their areas of expertise.
- The advancement of knowledge entails the examination and critique of existing structures and thinking, as well as the creation of new forms and expressions. Universities must nurture the drivers of innovative and critical ideas.

## ANALYZING CULTURES AND MOBILIZING CREATIVITY

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- This theme explores culture and creativity at the intersections of social innovation and tradition.
- It addresses directly York's diverse and strong expertise in the fine arts, including dance, design, film, music, theatre, creative writing, visual arts and digital arts, as well as a broad spectrum of research in liberal-arts based disciplines that include literature, languages, linguistics, humanities and social sciences.

- As well, it encompasses scholarship from education and environmental studies and a range of other disciplines.

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#### BUILDING HEALTHY LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

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- This theme encompasses the study of health, from age-related ailments and disease prevention, through cognitive and physical health, to the influence of income inequality, the social determinants of health as well as the health of communities and global health.
- It includes but is not limited to needed changes in health policy, services and systems, as well as research in the biomedical and clinical sciences and population health.
- It speaks to the nature of well-being and the study of how to achieve high-quality, lifelong well-being for individuals and for society, including physical, mental and social well-being.
- Contributing disciplines include but are not limited to biology, psychology, law, sociology, political science, anthropology, education, economics, environmental and mathematical science, kinesiology, nursing and health policy, management and eHealth
- This theme provides a foundation of research and scholarship that will support the completion of the next phase of York's academic development. This initiative supports the ongoing development of the Faculty of Health and sets the stage for a medical school that focuses on integrative clinical and preventive medicine, interdisciplinary service delivery and health promotion.

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#### EXPLORING THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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- This theme explores the complexity of science and engineering, technological innovation and the fundamental challenges arising in our global ecosystem.
- The projects in this theme focus on research and development in biology, psychology, chemistry, physics, earth and space science, computer science and engineering and often include industrially relevant discoveries and innovations.
- Other disciplines included in this theme are mathematical and information sciences, humanities and social sciences, health sciences, law, environmental studies, and science and technology studies.

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#### FORGING A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD

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- Research in this theme extends from understanding the global and international environment to exploring identity, human rights, citizenship and the movement of peoples.
- Research focuses on challenges posed by the social, economic and environmental transitions shaping human activity, focusing on local and international policy making with particular emphasis on environmental sustainability and climate change, urbanization, socio-political systems, international political economy, history, security, governance and law.
- This theme explores public and international affairs and a broader examination of Canadian public institutions and the international environments in which they function, with particular emphasis on Canada's bilingual heritage, emerging multilingual contexts and Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples.

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#### INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURIAL INNOVATION AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

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- Innovation relies on the entrepreneurial spirit and courage, but at York its practice and study is animated and framed by principles of social justice and the public good. York is uniquely positioned to meet this multifaceted challenge and bridge these two pursuits.
- Research under this theme involves disciplines such as business, engineering, ethics and law, corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, sustainable economic development and human rights.
- This theme is closely linked to "Forging a Just and Sustainable World." The development of knowledge and good practices must be tested from the perspective of sustainability.

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#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH

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Within the breadth of outstanding research at York, there are some more focused areas, where past accomplishments, new developments, momentum and timing provide particular opportunities for building research success. Over the next five years we see opportunities to significantly advance research strengths within our six themes as well as particular

research opportunities in five strategic areas. Strategically, by committing to supporting and building these areas of opportunity, through the recruitment of outstanding new researchers and students, the development of cutting-edge infrastructure, and the promotion of engaged collegial and collaborative research we are enhancing York's National and International Leadership in areas of research highly relevant to Canada's future.

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#### DIGITAL CULTURES

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Research in this area supports new applications, interfaces and content creation, scientific inquiry, design, policy development and critical discourse in digital media. This area of opportunity builds on an existing range of cross-disciplinary research from the Fine Arts, Computer Science and Engineering, Education, Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, Health, Law, Environmental Studies, the Libraries and other areas from across the University. Through broad coordinated investments across the disciplines, we are extending our recognized leadership at the interface of an expanding cluster of creative industries in film, TV, informatics, data visualization, games and applications development.

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#### ENGINEERING RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

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Building on existing strengths in applied sciences, business management, law and engineering, York University's newly formed Lassonde School of Engineering is implementing a new approach to engineering that leverages the specific strengths of the broader York community. Existing research areas will be complemented by new and expanded research programs in electrical, mechanical, civil and chemical engineering that push forward explorations of smart technologies for a green environment and healthier lives, and for enhanced public safety and security.

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#### HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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York's research in this area will build on our established strengths in cognitive science, mental, creative and physical health, critical disabilities, nursing and critical health studies. Broadly defined, health research at York begins with a focus on the individual, with the benefits of this scholarship being extended to the global community; an application that transcends national boundaries. In this work, the disciplines of public health (biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental science, social-behavioural science, health policy and management) intersect with the social sciences (demography, political economy, law and human rights, and sociology) to address problems that can arise locally but have interconnected global implications affecting health and health equity.

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#### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD

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York researchers are building an international reputation for ground-breaking critical and collaborative research through their broad focus on urban environments and public policy. Through this research, they are contributing new knowledge and innovative approaches to understanding and addressing the complexity of the urban environment in all its parts and manifestations. Building on our rich history of research and our remarkable range and depth of expertise, York is developing even stronger research programming that informs and addresses a range of challenges in urban environments that includes governance, planning, land use, infrastructure, economy, security, educational engagement, transportation energy and quality of life.

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#### SCHOLARSHIP OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH

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York is working to maximize the opportunities and returns of socially engaged research across all the disciplines. Our established leadership and reputation forms the basis for continuing investments in this area so as to advance York's achievements and strengthen our expertise on the scholarship of engagement. We are committed to increasing the critical mass of scholarship at York that focuses on socially engaged research and on understanding how we can maximize the benefits of this research. As well, we are committed to fostering a stronger appreciation for the academic importance of both the traditional and non-traditional outputs of this research and its benefits to society. York's ongoing investment in this area will enhance our reputation as a leader in an area of research that is relevant to real world problems and enables social innovations that address society's persistent challenges.

Implementation of the Strategic Research Plan and alignment of our research investments with our strengths and opportunities will be refined on a continuing basis through collegial discussion within and between our units and Faculties. Faculties set expectations for their response to the SRP objectives, measure progress in research development against the objectives, and report on their progress within the collegium. Responsibility for overall institutional progress lies with the Office of the Vice-President Research & Innovation (VPRI).

More broadly, the success of York's Strategic Research Plan "Building on Strength" will be measured by growing the national and international recognition of our faculty and their scholarship and creative activities, advancing our position within the top ten universities for research impact and further acceleration of the strong pace of growth of our research funding and outputs. Over the next five years, this will be reflected by increased recognition of our research, scholarly and creative work through enhancement of our ranking in national and international surveys, increased attraction of high quality undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, continued growth in our research income and publication quality and intensity, and further broadening of our external partnerships and engagement. In five years, we expect that the progress made under "Building on Strength" will have positioned York as a national leader in research, scholarship and creative activity in Canada.

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## CHAIR INVESTMENT, EXPECTATIONS & SUPPORTS

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As an outward-looking institution seeking to grow its international reputation for research, York is committed to utilizing its CRCs to build research capacity through the recruitment of outstanding new researchers to the University, enhancing our research profile, and recognition, and attracting top graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. In order to maximize the opportunities for strengthening our priority research areas and building our complement, York is placing an emphasis on attracting outstanding researchers from around Canada and the World to its Canada Research Chairs.

Holders of Canada Research Chairs at York will be internationally recognized or emerging leaders of scholarship, research and creative activities (SRCA). As such, there is an expectation on the part of the University that CRCs will exhibit leadership in promoting the overall development of SRCA at York that extends beyond their personal research programs. Meeting these expectations will be a key internal consideration when considering Chair renewal.

All CRCs are expected to be highly active in the training of graduate and postdoctoral trainees, and to provide leadership in the development of graduate and postdoctoral training programs within their disciplines. Chairs are also expected, as appropriate, to be sensitive to the importance of translating their scholarship, research findings and /or creative activities into tangible benefits to society through the translation and mobilization of the knowledge developed through their scholarship, research and creative programs. Lastly, Chairs should be highly active in pursuing external funding support and research awards, particularly from the Tri-Council. Overall, the CRC program will serve to enhance research capacity and strengthen research around our priority research areas, guided by the Institutional Strategic Research Plan.

At York we are committed to using the CRC program, and other internal research support tools, to build our research capacity and leadership across our areas of research opportunity. The SRP will also be used as a primary resource to determine how York will maximize its infrastructure investments through CFI support. York's internal prioritization and review processes for institutional projects including CFI are guided by the SRP to ensure that York maximizes its investments in meeting its infrastructure needs. It is expected that the majority of CFI investment at York will be in areas of opportunity and strength that are identified in the SRP. New CRCs will be prioritized for the submission of a CFI leader's opportunity fund application. The amount of the allocation they receive for the LOF application will vary according to their individual needs and the availability of LOF funds under York's umbrella.

Among other initiatives, we are building a base of collegially engaged mentorship and re-engineering support that will assist researchers in the successful development of strategic partnerships, and the execution of large partnership and large institutional funding projects. In meeting this increased need we have developed a new programs group that will focus on supporting York faculty with large-scale and institutional grant applications and enabling coordinated and strategic approaches to these opportunities. Additionally, York strongly supports the development of research and scholarship and does so through a number of support programs that are accessible to all researchers, for both individual and collaborative projects. As focal points for the best in individual research at York, CRCs present additional philanthropic opportunities to bring together community interests with cutting-edge research. In further utilizing the CRC program, York has developed

support structures and long term plans for CRC Chair holders through the development of naming opportunities, term support, scholarship and fellowship contributions and junior research Chair positions, among others.

The University is dedicated to continuing its tradition of engaged scholarship, as faculty members continue to develop relationships with external partners in community, industry and other post-secondary institutions to further its collaborative mandate. York boasts a number of collaborative research initiatives that both build on and demonstrate leading expertise in several of our priority research areas and allow our CRCs to engage in world-class research. Some recent examples of large-scale success include multiple digital media research initiatives led by York in collaboration with numerous partners, as well as a new research unit established. York is the lead organization on several large health and wellness research collaborations working with prominent industry, academic and healthcare organizations, advancing healthcare technology. Further, York is conducting several joint initiatives and large-scale research collaborations in physics and astronomy initiatives, as well as leading joint initiatives with top researchers, and key stakeholders in the non-profit sector and government, focusing on effective long-term solutions to homelessness within urban settings. These are just some examples of how the institution is committed to partnering, networking and collaborating to develop and maintain our areas of opportunity.

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## EQUITY

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York University's Academic Plan, as well as numerous policies and collective agreements, enshrine York's strong commitment to equity and affirmative action in the promotion of all minority groups protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code including women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and Aboriginal persons in all of its appointment procedures. The Chair selection process will be proactive in acknowledging differences in career path and career development for women, minority faculty and faculty with disabilities so as to achieve an appropriate balance. York is working closely with leadership from [relevant areas of the University, including] its Centre for Human Rights, to ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to ensure fair representation of its CRC complement. Plans are reviewed and updated regularly. Additionally, York is also engaged with senior university officials on several internal measures to ensure that equity considerations are taken into account:

- The University's Affirmative Action Program requires that hiring units have approved Affirmative Action Plans in order to be able to proceed with full-time faculty appointments, and full-time faculty hiring files are reviewed by a standing Affirmative Action Committee with respect to their consistency with individual units' Affirmative Action Plans prior to the President's approval of recommended candidates for appointment; workshops on the Affirmative Action Program are also provided annually for members of appointment committees.
- The commitment to affirmative action is included in York's agreement with the York University Faculty Association regarding CRC appointments. Specifically, the University's internal selection committee is expected to "seek to respect the principles of affirmative action that are contained in the collective agreement;" and "the recommendations of the Selection Committee will be post-audited by the joint affirmative action committee, which will make recommendations to the parties for further affirmative action goals."
- The Affirmative Action Director (or designate) sits as a voting member of the internal CRC Selection Committee.
- The Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President Research & Innovation regularly discuss with the deans the importance of equity considerations for Canada Research Chairs, and in all their Calls for Nominations strongly encourage deans to take proactive measures to attract outstanding under-represented candidates.
- York has not set any formal quotas for nominations, but will continue to monitor carefully its progress towards the objective of increasing the number of minority groups, women and people with disabilities appointed as CRCs.

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## PLANNING AND APPROVAL

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Within the context of regular complement planning, guided by the Institutional Strategic Research Plan, York will undertake institutional consultations across the York community to identify interest in recruiting Chairs within the potential focus areas that would most benefit from the infusion of CRCs. In those areas in which recruitment is agreed upon, Faculties will advertise the availability of Chairs broadly and will recruit in accordance with University's procedures and practices for the hiring of faculty members. Potential CRC candidates will be nominated for a Chair to the institutional CRC Chair Selection Committee, who will make a final recommendation on Chair nominations to the President for approval.