

Bishop's University

Strategic Research Plan (2013-2016)

Objective 1

Further develop and maintain areas of research that are recognized nationally and internationally

The University is committed to strengthening all areas of research and creativity. However the University recognizes that institutions built on a smaller scale must develop and support specific areas of excellence if they wish to have an impact on the national and international research stage. In 2009, we identified four such areas through a University-wide, bottom-up process. The main criteria in selecting those areas were established excellence and possibilities for further development. The four selected areas of research priority are:

➤ *Stellar Astrophysics and Relativity (STAR cluster)*

This cluster specializes in the study of gravitational fields applied to cosmology and the study of compact objects in various astronomical contexts, with a focus on topics relating to high-energy astrophysics. This field has been a traditional strength at Bishop's; indeed, one cluster member (Lorne Nelson) held a Tier I Canada Research Chair (CRC) for several years and the other researchers, like the current coordinator Valerio Faraoni, are also senior and externally funded. World class research infrastructure is already in place, and there is also clear evidence of international collaborative work and strong interest in developing further international partnerships.

➤ *Multi-scale Climate and Environmental Change (MUSCLE cluster)*

This cluster proposes to study the mechanisms of climate and environmental changes at small, intermediate and large scales; it also addresses questions related to their impacts on land, water, biodiversity and society, including vulnerability assessment, mitigation and adaptation measures. Under the coordination of Matthew Peros, Canada Research Chair in Environmental and Climate Change, the cluster includes professors from the Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, at both junior and senior ranks. New cutting-edge laboratories have recently been set up and equipped at a cost of approximately 800,000 dollars.

➤ *Psychological Health and Well-being (PHWB cluster)*

This cluster studies the means to ensure that individuals, and the communities that they live in, are healthy, sustainable and vibrant. Research foci include self-perceptions, health and well-being; chronic illness and pain management; occupational well-being; use of health services; promoting well-being; as well as stress, health and well-being. It includes professors from the Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Business at different stages in their careers. It is led by Fuschia Sirois, Canada Research Chair in Health and Well-being, The cluster builds on existing research since a number of its members have external funding for projects directly related to its themes and axes. This cluster is also committed to working in collaboration with the Eastern Townships community, while being active at the national and, increasingly, international level.

➤ *Construction of Social and Cultural Identity (Crossing Borders cluster)*

This cluster studies socially constructed categories and boundaries that mark differences among nationalities, ethno-linguistic communities, genders and social classes---particularly how these boundaries are constructed, challenged and transcended (with relevance to our immediate community where possible). The research axes are identity, gender, culture, class, ethnicity and space/geography. The group is led by Cristian Berco, Canada Research Chair in Social and Cultural Difference, and draws upon several researchers in the Humanities (History, Modern Languages, English, Religion, Études françaises et québécoises), Social Sciences (Politics, Psychology) and Education. Members of this group span the full spectrum of junior to senior ranks.

In 2000, Bishop’s University was allocated one Tier I CRC which was awarded to Dr. Lorne Nelson in 2002. In 2008, the re-allocation exercise resulted in a gain of one Tier II CRC. Dr. Nelson decided not to renew his CRC. The University then decided to split the Tier I Chair into two Tier II CRCs in order to have three Tier II CRCs to fill. To that end the University proposed a series of principles and criteria by which the CRCs would be allocated which takes into account research priorities, but integrates some teaching factors, and disciplinary distribution.

Chair Level	Category	Research Theme	Appointed
Tier II	Special	Environmental and Climate Change	July 2011
Tier II	Special	Health and Well-being	July 2011
Tier II	Special	Social and Cultural Difference	July 2011

These three Tier II CRCs are central to our research success in the coming years and for developing our research infrastructure, attracting and retaining additional strong researchers, increasing our collaborations, and enhancing our overall research profile.

Bishop’s University is committed to employment equity and encourages applications from women, aboriginal people, people with disabilities and visible minorities. Currently, the CRCs are held by two men and one woman.

The cluster strategy has helped researchers with NSERC and SSHRC funding, the PHWB cluster has quickly secured a large CIHR catalyst grant, and two of the CRCs have secured major Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) infrastructure grants. In the same vein, success in securing provincial grants has also increased. For example, Adrianna Mendrek from the PHWB cluster has secured a Chercheurs-boursiers grant from the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Santé (FRSQ). Three years down the road, we must now evaluate the clusters to explore options for further improving their performance.

Although progress has been made, the University must continue to develop its research infrastructure so as to further support the growth of its research activities. Priority will be given to the research that falls within the selected themes of research excellence. The University must also continue to provide meeting space and offices required for research groups, visiting

scholars, post-doctoral fellows, graduate students, and student research assistants. Finally, we must continue to develop our common research infrastructure such as library and information resources, video-conferencing, additional computer servers, and other specialized computer hardware, specialized program/software via individual and other resources to allow our researchers to participate in international and national research initiatives.

Objective 2

Increase the number of faculty members that can devote most of their time to research (i.e. research chairs) and increase the time available for all faculty research

Traditionally, the Bishop's environment was teaching intensive (6 courses per year), and scholarship was mainly seen as informing teaching. Over the past ten years, steps have been taken to provide faculty with additional time for research activities. The regular teaching load was reduced to 5.5 courses a year in 2003, and further reduced to 5 courses in 2009. Externally funded researchers have also been granted an extra course relief per annum, and further course reliefs for graduate study supervision ("box tops") were also introduced over this period. In 2010, the University welcomed three Tier II CRCs and gave them the mandate to lead and develop the three largest multidisciplinary research clusters.

Increasingly, a very large proportion of any University's research output depends on a small number of excellent researchers who are given optimal conditions in which to work. The most common paradigm is the "research chair" or its equivalent. In order to continue to prosper, Bishop's must increase its number of chairs to the level of comparable institutions by approximately doubling our number to six or seven.

In the same vein, the institution must continue to give productive researchers working conditions that are comparable to those found elsewhere so that they can remain competitive in national and provincial competitions. Steps are being taken towards this goal in collective bargaining.

Objective 3

Attract more new faculty with excellent research profiles as well as post-doctoral fellows

Over the past five years, Bishop's has had the opportunity to renew part of its faculty, and this trend will continue over the next three years. Even in the face of financial constraints, the University must continue to expand its professorial ranks, and to attract talented young academics. Recent successes include SSHRC funded historian David Webster, SSHRC funded psychologist Heather Lawford and neuroscientist Adrianna Mendrek, who holds an FRSQ Chercheurs-boursiers.

In the same vein, the University has also recently attracted visiting scholars and post-doctoral fellows. For example, in 2012-13 we hosted 4 research fellows in Physics, Mathematics and

Computer Science. The University will endeavor to foster this trend, and to extend it to other priority research sectors such as Climate Change (Geography, Environmental Sciences) and Psychological Health and Well-being (Psychology).

Objective 4

Further increase external funding for research

Over the last three years, annual external funding for research has more than doubled. This is encouraging but Bishop's continues to lag behind comparable universities. One key date in our history is the opening of the Research Office in 2001. However this office has remained staffed by a single person and it may be time to expand both its mandate and its human resources. Indeed, both external (e.g. grant management) and internal (e.g. Research Ethics Board) activities have increased substantially. In the same vein, the position of Associate Vice-Principal of Research was created in 2011, but at this time this position can only be held by someone already shouldering another large portfolio (at this time the Dean of Arts and Science). The University commits to reviewing the way research is administered in accordance with best practices.

In addition, the University commits to better promoting an external grant culture within the institution, and to better liaise with funding agencies to maximize successes. Another avenue that has been increasingly followed is that of collaboration with research intensive institutions such as, among others, the Université de Sherbrooke, the Université de Montréal, McGill University, Concordia University and the University of Toronto.

Objective 5

Develop and launch graduate program in strategic areas

In order to be even more competitive in attracting new faculty and in securing external research funding, we are committing to the strategic expansion of our graduate activities. More specifically, we will create selected multidisciplinary graduate programs in well-targeted niches within the research priorities listed in Objective 1. Already Psychology is preparing to launch a Master's degree focused on Health and Well-being issues, and both the MUSCLE and Crossing Borders clusters are looking into possible foci and designs for graduate programs of their own. It also goes without saying that our current small (Physics, Computer Science) or part-time (Education) graduate programs must be further developed and supported.

Objective 6

Better promote research achievements in order to increase visibility and reputation

Traditionally, Bishop's has promoted itself as a small, residential, nurturing, teaching-focused institution. Of course this remains true, but the University must include research excellence as part of its brand. This will involve including research in promotional and recruitment material, developing new promotional material centered on research, and indeed changing the mindset

of all University leaders and promoters so that they mention research as one of the attractive aspects of the University.

In order to increase our visibility within the academic community, we must be more intentional in tracking and promoting the successes of our students at the graduate level. We must also continue to be present at national and international conferences, and increasingly so in leadership roles (e.g. symposium or panel organizers, moderators, keynote speakers etc.).

Over the last three years, efforts have been made to be more visible in the media, and indeed a Communication Officer has been hired to that effect. There have been initial successes, with frequent coverage in local newspapers *La Tribune* and *The Record*, as well as occasional coverage on Radio-Canada (SRC), the CBC, TVA, *Le Devoir*, etc. These efforts must be maintained and increased, and must be more often centered on research successes.

The University garnered considerable media coverage when we co-hosted the congress of the Association Francophone pour le Savoir (Acfas) in 2011. In the following year, the Psychology Department and the Health and Well-being cluster organized the annual conference of the *Société Québécoise pour la Recherche en Psychologie* (SQRP). The Physics Department and the STAR cluster are hosting Theory Canada 8 in 2013. The University must continue to host these conferences, and expand to include international conferences, in order to increase its visibility in both the scientific community and in the media. We commit to hosting another major conference within the next 5 years.

Beyond raising our profile within the academic community, faculty will continue to pursue knowledge mobilization through our leadership and professional development relationships with practitioner and professional institutions and networks (e.g. business community, school boards). Finally, the University will be more strategic in developing its patent development and knowledge transfer activities. Indeed these issues have until very recently only been addressed on an ad hoc basis. As these activities increase, it will be important to develop both internal expertise and a strategy to both promote and handle these activities.

Outcomes and assessment

The Strategic Research Plan is approved by the Senate and the Board of Governors. It will be reviewed every three years by the Senate Research Committee and its recommendations for change will be tendered to the aforementioned body. All stated objectives will be evaluated on an annual basis by the Vice-Principal Academic with the assistance of the Associate Vice-Principal of Research. Since all components of the plan are integrated with the actions of the Senate Planning Committee and the Senate Research Committee, the functions of the Development and Research Offices, and the activities of various other committees (e.g. Graduate Studies, Experiential Learning) the Vice-Principal Academic will be responsible for institutional coordination.

Approved by Senate on March 11, 2013; revised by the Board of Governors on October 4, 2013 and by Senate on October 21, 2013