

## **MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY**

### **Strategic Research Plan Summary 2018-2023**

Discovery & Change-making through Research & Scholarship

*Mount Royal University is situated within the homelands of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Îyârhe Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina Nations in what is currently the City of Calgary, which also is home to the Metis Nation, Region 3. Mount Royal is committed, through our Indigenous Strategic Plan (2016-2021), to “doing its part to address the legacy of broken promises and rebuild the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Calgary and across the country.”*

#### **Mount Royal University fosters excellence in undergraduate education enriched by research and scholarship for knowledge generation, application and positive change.**

Mount Royal University is an Undergraduate University under the Alberta Post-Secondary Learning Act (amended February 2019). The Act stipulates that we may conduct applied research and foster innovation, and may conduct scholarly research related to approved programs of study provided by the institution that lead to granting of baccalaureate degrees. The mandate of Mount Royal is anchored in teaching and learning informed by research and scholarship. We have an opportunity to refine the meaning and practice of this mandate as we continue to evolve as an institution.

The Mount Royal learning community strives for excellence through the nexus of scholarly teaching and diverse research with a strong emphasis on liberal education in an undergraduate context. Our faculty pursue research and scholarship to advance and apply knowledge, as well as to enhance the quality of teaching. As an undergraduate institution, we maintain relatively high teaching loads and apply creative and efficient time management for research. We value research and scholarship across the full spectrum of creative, disciplinary, interdisciplinary, professional and applied realms. We are committed to community-based research and strongly value our partnerships with Indigenous communities. Research and scholarship at Mount Royal are enhanced through the leadership of our institutes and centres. We will continue to enhance our research capacity through the acquisition of external grants, scholarly partnerships and research chairs. We value the quality and impact of scholarly activity over purely quantitative counts of output.

In addition to outlining ways to support research at MRU, this plan highlights areas of existing and emerging research strength that provide a road map for future funding applications and institutional differentiation. We hired our first CRC (Tier 2) in July 2017. Our aim is to have four more CRCs in place during the term of the current plan – 3 nominations in fall 2019, 1 nomination in spring 2020 with additional applications if we have growth in our allocation. MRU has never held a CFI, but we have three active applications: 1 resubmission, 1 new application associated with a CRC and another smaller, independent application. A summary of our CRC intentions and CFI plans are summarized in Table 1. We are actively assessing our allocation and hiring for CRC with consideration to EDI. Postings are crafted to solicit diversity of applicants and hiring committees receive unconscious bias and diversity training. Our EDI strategy is under development as we are currently below the requirement threshold. Our aim is to use CRCs primarily as tools to recruit new faculty. Where applicable, we will pair CRC nominations with CFI applications to increase our research infrastructure. We support the development of research and scholarship through the Office of Research, Scholarship and Community Engagement. Areas for CRC nomination are developed through consultation with the Deans through the Office of the Provost with alignment to the Strategic Research and Scholarship Plan.

Table 1. Summary of CRC and CFI Allocations

Priority Research Area	Tier 2 – Council Pool	Time Period	CFI
Resilience and Sustainability/Indigenous	SSHRC	2017-2022 (with potential for renewal)	No
Resilience and Sustainability/Community Disaster Research	SSHRC	2020-2025 (with potential for renewal)	No
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning	SSHRC	2020-2025 (with potential for renewal)	No
Science, Technology and Society (Human Physiology)	NSERC	2020-2025 (with potential for renewal)	YES (JELF application)
Social Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Systems Design	SSHRC	2021-2026 (with potential for renewal)	No
Science, Technology and Society (Env. Forensics)	N/A	2020-2025	YES (JELF application)
People and Places	N/A	2020-2025	YES (JELF application)

There is great opportunity for innovation and undergraduate research in Canada and beyond. The experiential contribution of scholarly inquiry in undergraduate education is transformational for students. Whether this experience fosters the development of highly qualified personnel (HQP) or cultivates critically engaged citizens, research and scholarship provide opportunities for intellectual and creative development. Mount Royal is ideally positioned to build upon our strong foundations and advance significantly in this realm. We are also poised to make valuable contributions to federal and provincial innovation priorities related to diversifying the economy, mitigating environmental impacts, enabling cost-effective discovery, the development and production of natural resources, and enhancing the health and well-being of Albertans and Canadians. Research and scholarship at Mount Royal will contribute to the development of talent, ideas and knowledge mobilization for a prosperous future.

### **Core research and scholarship characteristics at Mount Royal**

The SRSP is rooted in a set of core values that arise from our institutional identity and provide aspirational guidance. These are the crosscutting elements that are essential to the effective implementation of the plan.

*Undergraduate research.* Research and scholarship at Mount Royal emphasize student-centred approaches with diverse opportunities for undergraduates to benefit from the experience of faculty scholars and, where appropriate, work directly with faculty to conduct research. Programs thoughtfully weave the integration of scholarly inquiry into an educational trajectory that includes explicit learning outcomes and may lead to the conduct of undergraduate research. Research philosophy, methods, ethics and responsible conduct will be core to skill and concept development at the program level.

*Commitment to a dynamic plan.* The SRSP exists within an environment of uncertainty and changing conditions. Although the intent is to provide directions for a five-year period, this document will be reviewed annually through the Research and Scholarship Standing Committee with discussion at the General Faculties Council, Deans' Council and other relevant venues to ensure that it is best serving the needs of the research and scholarship community and Mount Royal broadly.

*Indigenous research.* Mount Royal is situated within the homelands of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Îyârhe Nakoda and Tsuut'ina Nations in what is currently the City of Calgary, which also is home to the Metis Nation, Region 3. Mount Royal is committed, through our Indigenous Strategic Plan (2016 – 2021), to “doing its part to address the legacy of broken promises and rebuild the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Calgary and across the country.” The plan calls for us to foster respect for Indigenous perspectives and knowledge-production to increase capacity for Indigenous scholarship in three principal areas: Research Protocols and Partnerships, Supporting Research Capacity, and Environmental Change. The areas emphasize the need to develop reciprocal, mutually beneficial research partnerships with Indigenous communities; honour and implement Indigenous research ethics and protocols; acknowledge and prioritize Indigenous communities' research needs and priorities; and commit to sharing all research findings.

*Diversity and inclusion.* Implementation of the SRSP will be mindful of our institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion in the development and conduct of research. We will conduct fair and transparent recruitment, hiring and retention processes for faculty researchers as part of the national goal to achieve a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Canadian research enterprise. We will also initiate tracking of diversity metrics around research award applications. The evidence is clear that diversity strengthens the quality, social relevance and impact of research and scholarship.

*Creative scholarship.* Mount Royal values and supports creative scholarly activity. The knowledge and innovation arising from critical approaches to artistic expression are vital to the full spectrum of scholarship conducted at Mount Royal. The contributions of imaginative insight are essential to understanding, interpreting and transforming our world. Qualitative and personal modes of inquiry include, but are not limited to, narrative inquiry, fiction-based research, poetry, music, dance, theatre, film and visual art.

*Community-engaged research for positive change.* Mount Royal has a long tradition of connection and relevance with our local communities. This has evolved into a commitment to collaboration between the institution and communities for the mutually beneficial co-creation of knowledge and betterment of society. The designation of Mount Royal as an AshokaU Changemaker Campus and collaboration with Mount Royal's institutes is testament to our strength, leadership and commitment in this area.

*Scholarship of teaching and learning.* Mount Royal is dedicated to the advancement of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Research will support the continuous improvement of innovative instructional approaches. We are emerging as a vital hub of SOTL research and practices in North America.

*Collaborative approaches to research and scholarship.* Working together across individual, disciplinary and institutional boundaries creates the potential for broader insights and better innovation. Multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches are encouraged. Collaboration also affords opportunities for Mount Royal scholars and institutes to participate in larger, longer and better-funded research initiatives.

*International research.* Internationalization is an institutional priority for Mount Royal in the near term. Research and scholarship are one of the pillars of the plan to advance internationalization. We are

committed to expanding our international academic partnerships to increase the extent of research conducted by Mount Royal researchers outside of Canada and in collaboration with scholars globally.

### **Current and emerging strengths for external funding priorities**

Mount Royal faculty members have developed an impressive breadth and depth of scholarly activity that has grown over the past decade. Internal research and dissemination grants have been instrumental in supporting these activities. We value all scholarly activity equally and the competitive awarding of internal funds will continue to reflect this core value. Likewise, we will continue to provide support for faculty members seeking external support for their individual projects and programs.

In addition, Mount Royal recognizes strategic acquisition of external funds is essential to supporting activities that require specialized equipment, space or other infrastructure additional time or administrative support. Expanding our research capacity through program such as Canada Research Chairs, Canada Foundation for Innovation grants, Alberta Innovates and Tri-Agency awards requires setting priorities for investment. Likewise, the ongoing contribution of institutes and centres to Mount Royal scholarship necessitate development activity targeted at providing external funding support.

The following are categories of existing and emerging research strengths generated through the consultation process for this plan. These thematic areas constitute the priorities for focusing our institutional efforts to grow our research and scholarship capacity through external grants, awards and contributions. The themes provide evidence and potential for significant collaboration across departments and faculties.

*Resilience and sustainability.* In a rapidly changing world characterized by uncertainty, Mount Royal researchers are addressing challenges to create resilient communities and sustainable societies. Advancement in this area requires both disciplinary concentration on constituent elements and interdisciplinary methods to embrace complex social-ecological systems. The Institute for Environmental Sustainability, the Centre for Community Disaster Research and the Miistakis Institute figure prominently in this realm.

*Social innovation, entrepreneurship and systems design.* Mount Royal has noteworthy strength in social innovation as evidenced by the AshokaU Changemaker Campus designation. Spanning the non-profit and for-profit spectrum, applied research in business and beyond is conducted by individual faculty members and through the Institute for Community Prosperity, the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and the Trico Changemaker Studio.

*Scholarship of teaching and learning.* Mount Royal's focus on undergraduate education means a strong affinity for research on understanding student learning within and beyond disciplines, innovative classroom practices and the future of higher education. Catalyzed by the Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, this is an area in which we are currently recognized and are continuing to build momentum.

*Health and well-being.* Research into individual and community health and wellbeing is robust and continues to grow at Mount Royal. Some particularly strong themes include: human physiology; connections between nature and health; violence prevention; child well-being; and health-care delivery and simulation. Ongoing evolution and development of centres and institutes will be a priority in this area.

*People and places.* With a commitment to liberal education, Mount Royal has significant scholarly strength across a broad and diverse range of humanities and social science research, including, but not limited to: politics, policy and justice; security; Indigenous studies; women, gender, sexuality and equity; creative

writing; media peace studies; refugee studies; and religious studies. There are also growing capacity and interest in environmental humanities and digital humanities and the scholarship of liberal education overall.

*Science, technology and society.* Including traditional scientific discovery, as well as integrative and community-oriented work such as science communication, Mount Royal researchers study the physical world and our place in it, as well as current corners such as digital arts, virtual realities and social media. There are also emerging strength and interest in data science, machine learning and analytics. Investment in research infrastructure (e.g., labs, instrumentation and technology) is a significant need in this thematic area of research.