

# **St. Francis Xavier University Strategic Research Plan Summary (2012)**

## **Major Objectives of the Research Plan:**

StFX will build and enhance an environment that supports scholarly research in its many different forms, and meaningfully engages students in research experience. To achieve this goal, StFX will

Facilitate synergy and increase research collaboration by building and supporting research clusters that reflect research strengths and areas of growth;

Increase the training opportunities and skills development of highly qualified personnel by ensuring opportunities for productive research involvement of undergraduate and graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows;

Develop research and disseminate knowledge at the regional, national and international levels;

Strengthen the physical and technological infrastructure that supports high quality research by accessing funding opportunities,;

Support faculty applying to external research granting agencies, and continue to develop services and infrastructure that supports knowledge transfer and exchange;

Monitor institutional progress in advancing the research profile of the University, and Celebrate the research achievements of faculty and students.

## **Major Research Thrusts**

The University has through collegial process identified the following as collaborative research cluster themes for which the university has existing or developing concentrations of expertise.

### **Culture and Human Development Cluster**

The study of culture and human development spans a wide range of topics aimed at increasing our understanding of how humans develop individually, and collectively. Research may focus on any psychological, social, educational or artistic aspect of the human experience, from the level of the individual to the global community. This cluster is grounded in the knowledge that understanding and celebrating human diversity is critical to the functioning and sustainability of a multicultural world.

### **Energy, Natural Resources and Environment Cluster**

The primary themes of this cluster draw together a vast range of investigation, from basic, curiosity driven research to applied, product-driven outcomes. Research in this cluster encompasses some of the most relevant areas of current human endeavour in today's rapidly changing world, and includes subjects such as alternative energies and environmental sustainability. Researchers in this area seek knowledge that will not only contribute to further,

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fundamental understanding of these themes and closely related areas, but will also be key to improving on humanity's ability to cope and co-exist with its environment in the future.

### **Health and Wellness Cluster**

Human health and wellness are determined by many known factors, including social justice and ethical issues impacting public system and policy leadership as well as the biological and environmental causes of illness and disease. This cluster includes health service, policy, and outcomes research that examines the multi-dimensionality of health inequities and the development of healthy and sustainable communities, public systems, and public policies. This cluster also includes biomedical research that examines the biochemical, biophysical, genetic, and psychological aspects of human health and wellness as well as the burden of illness and disease and associated treatments. Research in this cluster is often interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, and cross-sectoral in nature and it draws on pivotal aspects of other research clusters at StFX.

### **Humanities Cluster**

Humanities research is focused on fundamental concerns of humanity, particularly as expressed in a wide variety of cultural and historical artifacts, such as philosophical treatises, religious texts, works of literature or art, cultural traditions, and historical documents. Humanities research carefully collects and interprets these materials in order to arrive at an understanding of the patterns and values by which humans have given shape to their experience over time.

### **Leadership and Organizational Development**

This cluster examines issues related to individual and collective leadership, both separately and jointly, regarding the administration, management and evolution of organizations. We describe *organization* as any collective of two or more individuals who foster meaningful relationships, develop aligned interests and/or shared goals, and expend considerable energy toward achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. Such outcomes can either be manifest at the individual (learning, personal growth, leadership, meaning and identity), organizational (increased efficiencies, sustainability), industry (market forces, change management), community or international levels (cross-cultural and multinational studies) and examined through lenses of the economic, social, political, legal, technological and/or the natural environments. Outcomes can be either at the micro, meso, or macro level, or focused on the movement in between.

### **Public Policy, Governance and Social Justice**

This cluster is rooted in the study of power relations between states and societies. Public policy analysis asks questions about the determinants and impacts of decision making by state authorities. Governance posits that such relationships extend beyond the predominantly hierarchical processes of conventional states to include complex networks of authority in civil society and market systems, in parallel or in concert with traditional hierarchies.

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### **Canada Research Chairs**

Currently, all of the Canada Research Chairs allocated to St. Francis Xavier University are assigned in support of the research clusters described above. The following table shows the distribution of Canada Research Chairs.

Dr. Todd Boyle	CRC in Integrative Technologies (Tier II SSHRC)
Dr. Petra Hauf	CRC in Human Development (Tier II NSERC)
Dr. Lisa Kellman	CRC in Environmental Sciences (Tier II NSERC)
Dr. Derek Leaist	CRC in Colloidal Chemistry (Tier I NSERC)
Dr. Leslie Jane McMillan	CRC in Indigenous People and Sustainable Communities (Tier II, SSHRC)
Dr. Peter Poole	CRC in Modeling and Simulation (Tier II NSERC)
Dr. Ricardo Scrosati	CRC in Aquatic Ecology (Tier II NSERC)

As Canada Research Chairs become available the University will make strategic appointments to these Chairs in order to build research capacity in the areas indicated by the research cluster themes.

### **Support for Research Development and Research Training**

The University will continue to seek external funding to support research and to apply its own resources to the development of research in the areas identified above. Infrastructure funding through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and the Nova Scotia Research Innovation Trust (NSRIT) have and will continue to play an important role in developing research infrastructure at StFX in support of the identified research clusters.

The University will continue its commitment to providing undergraduates with research experience and will expand the opportunities for undergraduates to engage in research. For example, it has recently initiated summer research internships for Bachelor program students that are distributed across the identified research clusters. Moreover the University will continue to highlight the research achievements of its undergraduates.

The University will continue to selectively expand its support of graduate studies where this complements and supports faculty research. Emphasis will be placed on areas of graduate studies consistent with the research clusters and cross-cutting themes described above.

The University will continue to welcome post-doctoral fellows and visiting researchers by recognizing their vital contribution to the research life of the University.

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## **Inter-institutional and Inter-sectorial Collaborations: Research with Communities**

Research at StFX expands and enriches the knowledge of the academic discipline based academic communities and is the foundation of interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems.

The University has a strong tradition of working with communities at local, regional, national and international levels to achieve community sustainability and empowerment. The University will support research and knowledge exchange that is consistent with this tradition and which seeks to achieve social justice.

Structures of the University which promote these aims and which reflect the University's leadership in working with communities include the Coady International Institute, the Service Learning Program, and the Centre for Regional Studies. The University collaborates with external partners to foster knowledge synthesis and exchange, including the hosting of the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health.

## **Evaluation**

Within the context of evaluating institutional research progress, and taking into account the range of activities that contribute to research as defined in this document, measures of research activity may vary from discipline to discipline and may contain quantitative indicators as well as qualitative measures appropriate to the discipline

Progress towards the research vision and fostering of achievements consistent with the research mission will be monitored through a consultative process allowing for a range of indicators and measures. The Associate Vice-President Research following consultation with the Research Advisory Committee will issue a report on progress in research to the University Community at a General Faculty meeting at least annually. The structure of this annual report will be designed to address the research goals and actions as described in this Strategic Research Plan.

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## **Planning and Approval Process**

The Academic Priorities and Planning Committee gave approval of the University's first Strategic Research Plan in 2002. Versions of the Strategic Research Plan that retained the structure of the original plan were developed between 2002 and 2010 to accommodate the developing research program of the University.

In 2010/11 the University undertook a renewal of its Strategic Research Plan through a process that was meant to be both representative and inclusive. The ad-hoc committee on research, including elected members of faculty, members of the existing ad-hoc research advisory committee and ex officio members (Chair, Graduate Studies and Associate Vice-President Research), developed the draft of this document.

During its deliberations the Committee used both informal and formal means of consultation. Formal consultations included presentations to the Department Chairs and to the General Faculty of the University. The final draft was posted on the RSG website for comments prior to being forwarded to the Academic Priorities and Planning Committee.

The Strategic Research Plan was approved by the Academic Priorities and Planning Committee on January 17, 2012, and approved by University Senate on February 6, 2012.