

## University of Prince Edward Island Strategic Research Plan (2023-2028) - Summary

### Introduction

The University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) has a strong reputation for research and scholarly work that makes a positive impact on society. The exploration and discovery of new knowledge is a core mandate of the University. UPEI's research activities contribute tangible outcomes of benefit to the province. Often the research is conducted in collaboration with local community partners. Through these activities, UPEI researchers are developing innovative solutions to challenges facing the province and world.

### Research Vision

The University of Prince Edward Island will be one of the most distinguished research universities nationally, when compared with other universities of comparable size, while fulfilling its special obligation to PEI as the only university in the province. In pursuing this objective, UPEI will foster the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenous reconciliation.

### Major Objectives

- **Fostering Research Excellence:** UPEI aims to leverage its existing strengths and support emerging areas of research to maintain and develop excellence.
- **Developing Talent:** The university is dedicated to nurturing talent for impactful research through various programs and initiatives.
- **Strengthening Outreach and Partnerships:** UPEI will enhance collaboration with other institutions and stakeholders to broaden its research impact.

### Signature Areas of Research Excellence

Based on existing research strengths, UPEI identified 5 signature areas of research excellence. These clusters highlight the breadth of the University's research. Within each signature area, and at their intersections, researchers are working individually and in collaborative teams to address challenges of community and global significance. All Canada Research Chairs and Canada Foundation for Innovation projects align with at least one of the signature areas of research excellence, often spanning multiple areas.

#### Humanity, Justice and Organizations

Research in this area focuses on understanding and improving the systems that shape human experiences—social, educational, political, cultural, and organizational. Researchers examine questions of equity, inclusion, Indigenization, human rights, and governance to advance social justice and ethical leadership. By analyzing the ways people learn, organize and interact within institutions and across cultures, this research supports

the development of more just, resilient, and inclusive societies. Research focus areas include:

- Social Justice
- Indigenous Studies
- Humanity, Arts and Ideas
- Community and Culture
- Economics, Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Business Management
- Educational Studies

### **Environmental Stewardship**

Environmental Stewardship emphasizes the responsible use and protection of the natural environment. UPEI researchers work on issues such as climate change, ocean health, and biodiversity conservation. The goal is to understand environmental challenges and create innovative, science-based solutions that protect ecosystems while supporting the communities, rural and urban, that rely on them. Research focus areas include:

- Climate Change
- Wildlife Conservation
- Environmental Sciences
- Macromolecular and Molecular Sciences
- Biophysical / Chemical Sciences
- Aquatic Health Sciences

### **Healthy Communities**

This research area addresses the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals and populations. It encompasses biomedical science, public health, healthcare delivery, and social supports, with a focus on equity and accessibility. UPEI researchers aim to identify the factors that contribute to healthy, vibrant communities and to develop strategies and policies that promote resilience, inclusion, and quality of life.

Research focus areas include:

- Applied Human Sciences
- Human Medicine, Nursing and Human Development
- Nutrition
- Public and Occupational Health Studies
- Clinical Psychology and Mental Health
- Preventative Health Management

### **Healthy Animals**

As the home of one of the 5 Canadian veterinary schools, UPEI is a hub for animal health research in Canada, spanning companion animals, livestock, and wildlife. Researchers recognize the vital connection between animal and human health and are studying diseases that impact both. UPEI supports innovations that improve animal health outcomes and the well-being of those who depend on animals. Research focus areas include:

- Veterinary Medicine
- Aquaculture Health Sciences
- Veterinary Epidemiology
- Animal Welfare
- Models of Disease
- Diagnostic Test Evaluation
- Treatment Trials
- Health Management

## **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable Development research seeks to address the interconnected challenges of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. UPEI researchers explore topics such as clean energy, food security, sustainable agriculture, and climate adaptation. Their work aims to inform policy, industry, and communities in creating a more just and sustainable future locally and globally. Research focus areas include:

- Sustainable Design Engineering
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Advanced Materials and Energy Systems
- Sustainable Livestock Management
- Clean Technology

Additionally, UPEI has several research strengths that transcend the boundaries of multiple signature areas. Bioscience combines Healthy Communities, Healthy Animals, and Environmental Stewardship by using natural products to create commercial products that are typically health-related. Data Science spans all five Signature Areas of Research Excellence. Analytics and artificial intelligence are used in business optimization, climate change and pandemic modelling, analyzing healthcare data, and precision agriculture. Island Studies incorporates Humanity, Justice and Organizations, Healthy Communities, Environmental Stewardship, and Sustainable Development to study the politics, economics, culture, and literature of small islands as well as the human health, environmental issues and sustainability of island ecosystems and communities. One Health is also linked to each of the Signature Areas of Research Excellence; it builds and expands on Island Studies research. PEI's rural landscapes and coastal ecosystems provide the perfect living laboratory to study the intersection of human, animal, and environmental health. Researchers explore the social impacts of these interactions and develop new sustainable advancements.

The Signature Areas of Research Excellence at UPEI are characterized by outcomes of beneficial impact on local communities, regionally, across Canada, and internationally. The research activities often involve collaborative team-building that benefits UPEI, not only in research programs, but also in the development of academic programs that span multiple disciplines. As research programs grow at UPEI, it is anticipated that these Signature Areas will continue to develop, evolve, mature, and transform.

## **Emerging Priority Areas of Research**

UPEI has established a new Faculty of Medicine and interprofessional health education facility, which will serve as the home of Memorial University's regional campus for the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program. This program will expand on the already strong Health Communities Signature Area of Research Excellence. The facility includes significant space which will support Medicine and other connected UPEI programs including Nursing, Nurse Practitioner, Paramedicine, Doctor of Psychology, and Veterinary

Medicine. The medical program will also have partnerships with the Medical Society of PEI, Health PEI, and the PEI Department of Health and Wellness.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**

UPEI is committed to promoting EDI within its research programs, while aligning with the principles of reconciliation as outlined in the TRC Calls to Action. In 2021, UPEI released an institution-wide [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy](#). The Strategy is intended to guide UPEI in identifying and removing barriers, encouraging participation, and working towards an inclusive campus culture. The new Department of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Human Rights (EDIHR) oversees the implementation of the EDI Strategy. The EDIHR Office is a centralized resource to offer training and resources to all university community members.

UPEI also has a Joint Equity Committee comprised of members from the Faculty Association and the UPEI administration. Chairs at UPEI fall under the Faculty Collective Agreement and are protected under Article A-7, which addresses Non-Discrimination.

Finally, UPEI has created a CRC EDI Action Plan to monitor and track progress towards meeting its EDI commitments to the CRC program. The University is committed to attracting, recruiting and retaining members from traditionally under-represented groups, including Indigenous people, persons with a disability, racialized individuals and women and other gender-equity seeking groups. Due to the small number of chair positions at UPEI, and the need to protect the personal information of chairholders, the University will not be disclosing information on the identities of chairholders. Full details about UPEI's EDI targets are available in our [Canada Research Chairs Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan](#) and the [2024 Addendum](#).

### **Allocation of Canada Research Chairs**

The university will prioritize chairs that align with the five Signature Areas of Research Excellence, the areas that connect the boundaries of these regions, and new emerging priority areas. The CRC focus areas were purposefully built because they lend themselves well to expanding UPEI's collaborations and partnerships. The university will offer Chairs to current faculty to enhance their opportunities and to researchers within and outside Canada.

The initial allocation of UPEI CRCs was four Tier 2 and one Tier 1 chair. To expand the number of chairs and extend the breadth of research across the institution, one Tier 1 chair was split into two Tier 2 chairs. UPEI currently holds four active and two vacant CRCs as outlined in Table 1 below.

### **Planning and Approval Process**

The SRP is supported by UPEI's most senior administrators and involves a comprehensive planning and approval process. UPEI's Research Advisory Committee (RAC), a Senate subcommittee, led the process. It involved iterative participation and

consultation with academic units, faculty members, staff, students and external partner organizations.

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Signature Area of Research Excellence</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Tri-Agency</b>
2	Geospatial Humanities	Humanity, Justice and Organizations & Environmental Stewardship	2023-2028	SSHRC
2	Socio-Psychological Epidemiology for Healthy Animals	Healthy Animals & Healthy Communities	2025-2030	SSHRC
2	Remote Sensing and Water Security	Environmental Stewardship & Sustainable Development	2023-2029	NSERC
2	Biomedical Genomics	Healthy Communities	2023-2028	CIHR
2	Vacant (recruiting) <i>Children, Youth and their Educational Geographies</i>	Humanity, Justice, and Organizations & Healthy Communities	2026-2031	SSHRC
2	Vacant (recruiting) <i>Equity in Nutrition, Physical Activity or Health</i>	Healthy Communities & Humanity, Justice, and Organizations	2027-2032	SSHRC

Table 1. UPEI’s Active Canada Research Chairs during the SRP period to 2023-2028

### **Monitoring Progress**

The university will assess its progress in meeting the objectives set out in the SRP through regular evaluations and adjustments. Progress reports on objectives are gathered annually by the RAC and presented to UPEI’s Senate. Feedback from faculty, staff, and student representatives will be considered throughout the monitoring process.

### **Conclusion**

UPEI's Strategic Research Plan (2023-2028) is a roadmap to research excellence, aiming to foster multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary work that crosses traditional boundaries of disciplines. The plan celebrates the successes of researchers and promotes a supportive and inclusive research environment. UPEI has a proud tradition of excellence in research that has made impactful contributions to society and the province, as well as nationally and internationally. The Strategic Research Plan aims to build on UPEI’s existing strengths and seize new future opportunities. The recommendations in this plan will allow the University to enhance its national reputation and visibility as one of the most distinguished research universities in Canada, when compared with other institutions of comparable size. The plan aims to raise UPEI’s profile by leveraging world-class research and facilities for national leadership in strategic areas of strength.