



Report to Senate
March 7, 2018

Report to Senate of the Vice President, Research

1. Research Grants and Awards Update

Exciting days are coming for grant and award announcements; unfortunately, some of the best news remains embargoed until formally announced by the awarding authority. What I can announce is that, in addition to a range of confidential awards and honours nominations, ORS has submitted a substantial number of grant applications, including:

- 5 Connections Grants (\$102,778 requested)
- 10 Insight Development Grants (\$1,243,374 requested)
- 2 Partnership Grants (as co-applicants)

Internal competitions that have recently closed include the Match of Minds program, the Chancellor's Chair for Research Excellence, and the Distinguished Research & Creative Activity Award. Adjudication for all of these programs will begin shortly.

2. Office of Research Services Staffing

Ryan McCarthy, Director of the Office of Research Services, is leaving Brock to pursue another opportunity. His last day is Friday, March 9th.

On behalf of Brock's researchers, and the entire research support team, I would like to thank Ryan for the many contributions he has made during his time at Brock. Under his capable leadership, the Office of Research Services has served the university admirably in a time of sustained change. His insight, administrative gifts, and collegiality will be greatly missed.

I am grateful to Philip Thomas, Accounting Research Manager, for assuming the role of Acting Director of Research Services until the ORS Directorship is filled, and to the entire ORS team for working together for a seamless transition.

Finally, I expect that recruitment will begin soon for the position of Business Development Officer, based in the Office of Innovation and Commercialization. This is a replacement position, bringing the Office back up to its nominal personnel strength.

3. Federal budget

The federal budget, released on February 27, had considerable implications for research support at Canadian universities. Notable among its provisions are increased funding for all three of the Tri-Agencies, including an incremental bump for SSHRC that partially mitigates the relatively greater ground lost by the agency over the previous decade, which had left it closer to 15% of overall funding when the standing assumption was a 40-40-20 split between CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC. The total funding for the Tri-Council increases from roughly \$3.5 billion to about \$4.8 billion, with proportionally less of that increment being dedicated to topic-specific research programs than had become the norm in recent years. Some thematic support was committed, however, including for issues involving diversity and equity, indigeneity, and big data/analytics. NSERC is committed to consolidating a wide range of industry partnership grant streams, including Engage and CRD. And there will be some increase to the Research Support Fund for universities, administered by SSHRC. While the full impact of these changes will not be clear for at least a year, the overall theme is one of greater investment in research, and more support for curiosity-driven, grassroots research projects. This will be good time for researchers and institutions to bring winning ideas forward to the Councils.

4. AVPR

An appointment process for the Associate Vice President, Research position was initially launched through an internal call in late 2016. In spite of considerable efforts to complete this search, it was slowed by personnel changes - including my own appointment - and by campus feedback aimed at ensuring a collegial process.

In light of both this feedback and the delay, I have determined that the best course of action is to formally close this search process until language specifying an AVPR appointment process has been specified, which I expect will happen as soon as is practicable. The process will begin de novo at that time. I am reviewing options for shorter-term options to cover existing research administration needs in the meantime.

5. Research information: Pivot

One piece of feedback I have encountered occasionally in my time at Brock, including in the faculty input summarized in the Research Management Services report, is that researchers would appreciate more information about research funding opportunities outside the Tri-Council ecosystem. Many grant opportunities are highly specific to research areas or sub-areas, including smaller dollar value awards that can nevertheless be extremely useful resources for research. Researchers can benefit greatly from access to information about these programs.

This is an important point that I and my colleagues in the Office of Research Services take seriously. It does, however, lead me to think that perhaps the Brock research community has not yet become fully aware of the functionality of Pivot, a research information software system to which Brock University maintains a subscription.

Pivot covers a considerable range of discipline-specific funding opportunities; I encourage colleagues to explore it, if they have not yet or not recently done so. A link to the site will be (re-)posted to the ORS webpage, but I provide it here as well:

https://pivot.cos.com/funding_main

6. BrockLINC

The BrockLINC Working Group met on February 27, to discuss, inter alia, the development of an integrated operational plan for BrockLINC. It was determined that a sub-group of the Working Group would advise the VPR on the creation of an integrated operations group to draft elements of an operations plan, to be brought back to the Working Group for further input.

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Vice-President, Research