

Report to Senate
February 7, 2019
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Report to Senate of the Vice President, Research

1. Canada Research Chairs update

The Interim AVPR and the Director of Human Rights and Equity are working closely with Deans and hiring committees to ensure that our Canada Research Chairs appointment practices reflect the CRC Secretariat's requirements for equity, diversity, and inclusivity. These detailed requirements apply to the hiring process from ideation about a Chair proposal through to on-boarding a candidate. The CRC Secretariat has made clear that they are prepared to turn back nominations lacking documented evidence of compliance with EDI requirements. Naturally the university cannot risk submitting nominations needlessly open to denial on procedural grounds. The EDI processes can seem particular, but the motivation for ensuring fair and inclusive CRC hiring is both sound and overdue. Hiring units are working closely with HRE to facilitate training regarding unconscious biases - training that is of value also in mitigating *conscious* biases, also a persisting problem in the academy.

2. Grants update

The Office of Research Services is currently facilitating grant applications for a range of programs with upcoming deadlines, including SSHRC Partnership Grants, CFI JELF-Unaffiliated proposals, and the newly announced New Frontiers in Research program. The end of January moreover saw the official announcement of \$282,388 in Insight Development Grants to five Brock University researchers in 2018. I encourage colleagues to some details about these exciting research projects here:

<https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2019/01/excavation-of-abandoned-shipyard-among-innovative-brock-projects-awarded-federal-funding/>

3. CFI nationwide consultation

On January 28 the VPR participated in a Canada Foundation for Innovation town hall meeting as part of CFI's nationwide consultation exercise. This was an opportunity to hear about CFI's plans under the funding model prefigured in the 2018 federal budget, but it was primarily an opportunity to provide feedback on ways for CFI to enhance the service and capacity-building it provides for researchers and institutions. Some key points of input:

- CFI's existing criteria for fundable expenses can often work against the sustainability of research investments, because support personnel and upkeep costs

for major infrastructure are an increasing unfunded burden on institutions - and especially beyond the U-15.

- Enabling small to medium research institutions in Canada to contribute transformational research through CFI requires not just supporting them in activities common to larger institutions, but supporting them in activities unique to them, or at least highly characteristic of them. Community engaged research, regionally significant research, and inquiry performed in partnership with Indigenous partners are all part of the profile of Canada's smaller and mid-sized universities. CFO eligibility criteria and review committee training that welcomes applications for infrastructure essential to this sort of inquiry will create a large and cost-effective boost to research.
- Collaborative applications for CFI funding often involve smaller institutions contributing envelope to larger ones for infrastructure that then physically resides with the larger partner. Assessments of institutional "critical mass" and existing capacity as a criterion for subsequent funding requests need to take into account the portions of infrastructure that live elsewhere.

4. TDI debrief and Research Institutes strategy

On January 23, the VPR and Interim AVPR met with the Directors of Brock University's Transdisciplinary Institutes, as well as the Director of the Niagara Community Observatory. The first purpose of the meeting was to debrief on the conclusion of funding for the TDI initiative. The second was to solicit input for a management plan for University-level research institutes more generally, in order to identify next steps for research institutes at Brock, in keeping with the Strategic Plan's mandate to learn from and build on the TDI experience. The result was a useful conversation about the challenges of operating a research institute, and opportunities to foster a strong environment for centres and institutes.

5. Research impact via The Conversation

Brock researchers continue to make an impact and receive uptake on their academic work in a huge variety of ways. One venue for reaching the public is The Conversation, a curated clearing house for well-written and relevant applications of expertise to a range of topics. In 2018, The Conversation Canada published a total of 60 articles written by 23 Brock contributors. These articles drew a total of 615,000 reads around the world. Among the top 10 Brock stories in readership were these:

- "Buying pot in Ontario in 2018 will be like buying booze in 1928" (Michael Armstrong) 1 May
- "Is your 10:30 medical appointment really for 11:15?" (M Armstrong, Reena Yoonalingham, Ken Klassen) 21 Jan
- "What Donald Trump doesn't know about the War of 1812" (Renee Lafferty-Salhany) 10 June
- "Xi Jinping's chilling grab for absolute power in China" (Charles Burton) 27 Feb
- "What Quayside has taught us about smart cities and data governance" (Blayne Haggart, Zachary Spicer) 2 April

- “Education does not always equal social mobility” (John Jerrim, Louis Volante) 12 Nov

Congratulations to these and many other Brock researchers for bringing their work and their expertise to a world keen to learn about it. This sort of uptake of scholarship makes good on the university's obligations to share knowledge, and enhances Brock's reputation as an important contributor to scholarship.