

Report to Senate  
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## Report to Senate of the Vice President, Research

### 1. Grants update

- Major Tri-Agency grant programs have been gradually announcing results and (more gradually) releasing them from embargo. Brock researchers have been enjoyed success in the NSERC Discovery Grant program and the SSHRC Insight Grant program, among others. Further detail will be available when all program results are out of embargo.
- As a result of Spring 2020 grant results, Brock University's Research Initiative Award program has now made 22 awards to researchers who applied for external funding and were temporarily unfunded, for a total of \$102,000 to support research activity and facilitate reapplication.
- Congratulations to Professor Andrea Doucet (Sociology), Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, who has been awarded a \$2.5 million SSHRC Partnership Grant as PI for the project, "What is the Best Policy Mix for Diverse Canadian Families with Young Children? Re-imagining Family Policies." The research project includes dozens of co-investigators, collaborators, and partners from across Canada and across the world, and is funded through 2027.
- Brock University submitted nine funding proposals related to COVID-19 research through the provincial Ontario Together portal. At the time of writing, four of these proposals have been selected for second-round resubmission for funding.

### 2. Mitacs Research Training Awards

In early May, Mitacs announced a new program, the Research Training Award, that would provide 50% funding with an institutional match for graduate and undergraduate students to engage in research projects. Brock University was assigned an envelope of up to 35 such positions, and the Office of the VPR committed the full financial match to enable all 35 to be filled.

On May 20, Mitacs revised its projections in light of issues with its own funding agreement. The most recent information to universities from Mitacs is: "Without the ability to use the new money, and because the existing funding is committed to our current suite of programs, we have had to cut this program back quite dramatically." The Office of Research Services is in communication with Mitacs to determine at what scale the RTA might be able to proceed.

### 3. DRCA and ECRA

The Brock University Distinguished Research and Creative Activity Award is co-sponsored by the University and the Brock University Faculty Association. The University and BUFA have collaborated on a proposal to extend and widen this partnership, agreeing in principle to increase the funding allocated to the DRCA Award (\$10,000, up from \$5,000), and to support an *Early Career Researcher Award* version of the award (\$5,000). Terms of the revised and new awards have been reviewed by R&SPC and are coming to Senate for approval.

### 4. Provincial reopening plans and expanded access to facilities and sites for university research

On May 14, 2020, the Province of Ontario announced its [Stage One reopening plan](#), slated to take effect on May 19. The plan falls within the scope of existing [provincial emergency orders](#), thus applying to “workplaces that can operate safely by following public health and safety guidelines.”

Within these constraints, the plan incorporates some language applying to research organizations, including universities. The associated [detailed list](#) notes that permissible activities include: “Professional services related to conducting research and experimental development in physical, engineering and life sciences including electronics, computers, chemistry, oceanography, geology, mathematics, physics, environmental, medicine, health, biology, botany, biotechnology, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, pharmacy, veterinary and other allied subjects.”

As the Province’s communiqué makes clear, this component of the announcement does not itself represent a material change regarding operations in research organizations. The examples in question are flagged as being listed merely “for clarity,” given that, in general, “these services are already permitted under the ‘Research’ section of the [List of Essential Workplaces](#).”

The earlier provincial designation already permitted research in all disciplines, not only the illustrative examples provided in the May 14 announcement, conditional on the requirement to follow public health guidelines, emergency orders, and workplace safety regulations. In keeping with that designation, a wide range of research, scholarship, and creative activities at Brock have continued throughout the pandemic.

Limitations on access to research facilities, at Brock as at other universities, have reflected and continue to reflect broader institutional limitations on access to facilities. These are premised on the need to respect public health guidelines, and to prioritize the safety of students, staff, faculty members, and the wider public.

In recent weeks, prior to the provincial announcement, Brock has expanded access to field site research, and to infrastructure needed for critical real-time support of organizations deemed essential under provincial orders, where researchers have been able to present

plans that clearly meet the criteria, mitigate risk, and provide assurances the public health guidelines are being met.

The discussion of core principles and the survey of researchers recently undertaken through Brock University's Research Access Task Force will enable research considerations and priorities to continue to inform the University's plans to modify campus access and activities in the weeks and months ahead.