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Report to Senate #684

1. Grant news

A major grant to celebrate is the recently announced \$6.2m national research project CLEANSED (CLEan plAnt extractioN SEquencing Diagnostics), funded through Genome Canada's Genomic Applications Partnership Program, or GAPP.

The academic co-lead for the project is Brock University's Dr. Sudarsana Poojari, a Senior Research Scientist with the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute. A Brock News story on the grant can be found here:

<https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2020/10/ccovi-to-co-lead-6-2-million-national-research-program-supporting-clean-plant-program-for-grapevines/>

The Genome Canada press release on the grant is available here (link is to a PDF):

https://www.genomecanada.ca/sites/default/files/gapp2020_english.pdf

Congratulations to the team of CCOVI researchers and academic partners, industry partners, and federal agencies who collaborated on this application.

2. Tri-Agency grant extensions and new grant application rates

Application rates for annual Tri-Agency research grant programs over the summer and fall of 2020 have generally been lower than in preceding years at Brock. The evidence is preliminary and drawn from small numbers, but a difference of 10 to 30 percent has been observed.

The primary explanation is that existing grants held through these programs have, for the most part, received a one-year extension of funding as a response to research project delays arising from COVID-19. Most researchers eligible for these extensions have chosen to accept them, thus continuing their existing projects and postponing their application for new grants under those programs. Discussions with researcher administrators at other Ontario universities indicate that this experience is common across the sector.

3. New supports for postdoctoral research fellows

Postdoctoral research fellows (PDFs) are important contributors to the scholarly enterprise and the vibrancy of a research-intensive university. In recent years, Brock has developed practices and tools to support the appointment and the experience of these researchers.

These include an FAQ for prospective supervisors and departmental administrators who recruit and host postdoctoral fellows. The process documents outline and provide guidance for the most common pathways by which PDFs are appointed.

<https://brocku.sharepoint.com/Research-Services/SitePages/Appointing-a-Postdoctoral-Fellow.aspx>

Moreover, unlike some universities, Brock takes PDFs to be eligible for support from the Office of Research Services when submitting applications to granting councils. They can also serve as principal investigators for applications to the Research Ethics Board, provided agreements are in place regarding the division of intellectual property with the supervising researcher.

As an additional support for PDFs at Brock, the Office of Research Services, in conjunction with the Dean of Graduate Studies, is working with Human Resources and academic Faculties to confirm a list of current postdoctoral fellows at the University. This is the first step in creating an email information list and online resources for PDFs, to ensure a more thorough and uniform understanding of the Brock University research resources available to PDFs, and of the support systems they may need in various circumstances.

The primary mentor and main contact for a PDF continues to be their supervisor, along with the Departmental officers in the programs of their appointment. The new resources will help to provide an institutional understanding of the number and type of PDFs at the university, and to reduce the chances of a PDF researcher finding themselves with too little or idiosyncratic information about the University, their opportunities, and their supports when needed.

4. Indigenous Research Fund

I attended the October meeting of Two Row Council to receive and discuss the Council's very helpful input on allocation criteria and processes for funding dedicated to support Indigenous research. This will also be brought to AEC for discussion by Dr. Bourgeois, Acting Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement. The Office of Research Services can then synthesize the aggregate feedback into a program guide.