

February 2, 2021

Report to Senate #687

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The thousand days of January are behind us, the days are getting longer, and spring is distantly visible on the horizon. It is a pleasure to share some developments and good news regarding research at Brock.

1. Grant news

a. Launch of Indigenous Research Grant

I'm very happy to report that the Brock University Indigenous Research Grant program launched in the last week of January. This program, the first of its kind at Brock, supports Indigenous researchers and Indigenous-focused research in any Faculty or field at Brock University. It will fund research or creative projects, provide a foundation for the development of external grant submissions, and build research capacity across disciplines to collaborate on transdisciplinary topics.

The Institutional Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance both of building research capacity at Brock, and of decolonization and reconciliation across the University. This program serves both broad goals, supporting Indigenous researchers and research promoting Indigenous engagement.

The funding for this program was put in place for 2019-20; however, the advice I received from Two Row Council in December 2019 was that a careful and unhurried consultation would be the best way forward. The result, in my view, confirms the wisdom of that advice. I would like to thank both Two Row Council and the Aboriginal Education Council for contributing invaluable feedback that shaped the program guide. Professor Robyn Bourgeois volunteered her time to facilitate that consultation, and to review and make revisions throughout the development of the program. I would like to express my gratitude for her contributions.

The program is open on an ongoing basis while its funding lasts. [Program details are now online.](#)

b. SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant results are announced

Congratulations to Professors Corliss Bean (RECLS) and Heather Ramey (CHYS), each of whom was successful in the recent COVID-19 Special Initiative of the SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant program. The PEG program promotes direct impact of academic research, providing "timely support for partnered research activities that will inform decision-making at a single partner organization from the public, private or not-for-profit sector," enabling them to "respond to immediate needs and time constraints facing organizations in non-academic sectors." Details on the work of Professor Ramey and Professor Bean is available in [this Brock News story.](#)

c. Match of Minds

The 2021 Match of Minds program is now [open for applications.](#) The application deadline is March 12. This established internal program provides research employment opportunities

for students in all faculties and non-faculty units. The program encourages the development of skills and abilities of students, to complement academic training, improve employability of students, and support a talent pipeline of skilled Research Assistants available to faculty researchers at the graduate level.

2. Canada Research Chairs reallocation exercise delayed

The Canada Research Chairs Program conducts periodic reallocation exercises to determine the total number of CRCs and the Chair types (Tier I/II; NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC) allocated to each institution. Due to delays arising from COVID-19, the 2020 exercise was deferred to January 2021. However, the CRCP has announced that the results will now not be known until February or March.

3. Pandemic access changes and data

The emergency stay-at-home order issued by the provincial government in January 2021 remains in force at the time of writing this report, and Niagara Region remains under the most restrictive Grey/Lockdown provincial designation. The University remains in [Brock 1](#); with respect to research, this includes time-critical research, prioritizing access for student degree progression.

Notwithstanding, on January 28 the Emergency Management Group approved an increase in the occupancy cap of CRN 431 and its connected labs from 10 to 30 people. This represents a return to the usage authorized in June 2020, and adopted under Brock 3. This increase is possible due to the unusual size of this space, and to the [extensive safety protocols](#) already in place for authorized users of the space.

A review of research access authorization data indicates that 363 authorizations have been approved since this system was introduced. Reflecting the prioritization of student access and time-critical research, this includes authorizations for 191 graduate student researchers, 55 undergraduate students, 10 postdoctoral researchers, 68 faculty researchers, and 39 staff members, technicians, and others. The restrictions to in-person human participant research that came into effect with the introduction of Grey/Lockdown status and the return to Brock 1 in late December resulted in modifications or suspension to 16 authorizations, representing barriers to degree completion work for 13 students. These numbers are for submitted access requests; hence they do not reflect the large number of researchers whose work has not required sustained access to facilities to proceed, nor those whose work requires or would benefit from access, but who have not applied for authorization.

4. Meetings and outreach

The January 21 meeting of OCUR (Ontario Council for University Research) included a meeting with Minister of Colleges and Universities Ross Romano, to discuss the province's evolving plans for IP mobilization and protection. Other guests included Michael Pierce, Assistant Director Intelligence, CSIS; Steve Orsini, President and CEO of the Ontario Council of Universities, and Dr. Mona Nemer, Chief Science Advisor to the Government of Canada.

The January meeting of OCUR led to a multi-institutional collaboration on research-based micro-credentialing, seeking provincial funding through a short-term [eCampusOntario program](#). Brock staff and research units are contributing to the proposal with expertise on Data Sharing and Intellectual Property, and Community Collaborations. Phillip Gingras,

Interim Executive Director of Brock LINC, is coordinating input from the Office of Research Services and Lifespan Institute, among others. Trent University is taking on the overall coordination of the application for funding.

On January 22, I was joined by Professor Debbie Inglis, Director of CCOVI, and Professor Jeff Stuart, Chair of Biological Sciences, in a meeting with the Vice-President Research, AVPR, and senior staff at the University of Guelph, to discuss possible collaborations between Brock researchers and the [Agri-Food Data Canada project](#) based at Guelph. This is a program falling under Guelph's \$76.7m Food From Thought CFREF grant, and involves hosting, coding, and making usable large-scale agri-food research data. A further meeting and discussions will follow.

Finally, Universities Canada hosted a meeting with NDRIO (New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization) CEO Nizar Ladak, late of SHARCNET, on February 1. Dr Ladak emphasized his openness to a range of conceptions of the best ways of achieving NDRIO's mission, and announced that a general survey to this effect would be forthcoming, as will a one-time call for research proposals.

T. Kenyon, Vice-President, Research