

March 17, 2021

Report to Senate #688

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If it seems like you are seeing a lot of Brock University in the news, you are not imagining it. The NASA Perseverance Rover mission to Mars has drawn an enormous amount of media coverage, and at the centre of much of this coverage is Earth Sciences [Professor Mariek Schmidt](#). I would like register my congratulations to Dr Schmidt for securing such a key position in this literally astronomical opportunity, as well as my admiration for the generosity and great educational clarity with which she has engaged so many media requests, precisely when her research obligations have been so heavy. What a great inspiration!

Thanks and congratulations are due also to Mariana Garrido de Castro, PhD student in the Faculty of Mathematics and Sciences, for her work in organizing an outstanding [online event](#) celebrating the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on February 11. The sold-out event featured a speaker list including Brock professors and students, as well as breakout discussion groups, and was accompanied by many readings and resources that have been made available to participants. This sort of research leadership is a striking indication of the calibre of research students working at Brock, and prefigures the positive impact these students will have on the research enterprise around the world, for years to come.

This Senate cycle represents the one-year mark since the first major impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the University. On one hand, it seems like it could not possibly be March again already. On the other hand, it feels like a decade has passed. The pandemic has sometimes seemed a series of overlapping emergencies that researchers and research staff have raced to address. For example, the extraordinary round-the-clock effort by researchers and staff to inventory and share research PPE with local health authorities in the early stages of the pandemic already seems like the remote past; in fact it was eight months ago. This rotating crop of urgencies has made routine and steady progress on projects difficult for all of us. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our colleagues on the creativity, initiative, commitment and tenacity they have showed over this time.

In some respects the pandemic remains in a dangerous and quite lethal phase; yet the advent of mass immunization means that we can see hope fast approaching for a return to many familiar research, scholarship, and mentorship practices. I look forward to a very different situation in March 2022!

1. New CRC position for Brock

I'm delighted to announce that Brock has been allocated a new Canada Research Chair position in the just-released TIPS reallocation exercise. This new CIHR Tier II Chair results largely from an increase in the value of CIHR awards made to Brock researchers in 2019-20, an increase from around \$417,000 in 2017-18 to over \$600,000 in 2019-20, mainly due to researchers' success in special CIHR calls. This brings to three the number of additional

CRC positions (2 Tier II, 1 Tier I) that Brock has received in the past three years, all of them designated CIHR. This leads quite happily to the second item.

2. Call for proposals, CRC Tier I (NSERC) and Tier II (CIHR)

Faculties are invited to submit proposals for two available Canada Research Chair positions: a Tier I NSERC) position, and a Tier II (CIHR) position. Details on the proposal process have been circulated by the Office of Research Services, and are available on the ORS Sharepoint Site.

3. DRCA and ECRA

Further very happy news: The 2021 Distinguished Research and Creative Activity Award winner is Dr. Bareket Falk (Kinesiology), and the (inaugural) 2021 Early Career Research Award is Dr. Rebecca MacPherson (Health Sciences). These are the first award holders under the new funding levels and model for these programs. I am advised by the adjudication committee that a remarkable slate of nominees was considered for the award. Many congratulations to these outstanding award holders. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Brock University Faculty Association, who co-funds these awards. Further information about Dr. Falk and Dr. MacPherson and the DRCA/ECRA is forthcoming in the Brock News.

4. Brock access to CITI training

CITI is the acronym for the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. Through Brock University's membership in N2, the [Network of Networks](#), all Brock faculty, staff, and students have free access to a range of CITI online courses. Simply register for an account with your Brock affiliation at <https://citiprogram.org/> to access these resources. Courses available through the N2 membership include:

- Social and Behavioral Research Course Canada
- Biomedical Research Ethics Tutorial
- CITI Canada Good Clinical Practice
- French Good Clinical Practice (en français)
- CITI Canada Privacy Course
- Health Canada Division 5 - Drugs For Clinical Trials with Human Subjects
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Life Science
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Physical Science
- Transportation of Dangerous Goods TDG/IATA (note: This module provides a useful overview, but does not lead to certification.)
- COVID-19: Back to Campus (Fall 2020)
- COVID-19: Insights for Higher Ed Leaders
- Participating in Vaccine Research
- Remote Contact Tracing

5. Pandemic and Recovery Level Brock 2

Brock University is slated to move to Stage 2 in the institutional levels of the pandemic and recovery framework on March 8, 2021. From a research perspective this enables some human participant research and onsite training activities, subject to authorization. Further details are summarized in the linked [chart](#).

6. Library research news

In Spring 2020 Senate approved Brock's new Open Access Policy, which sets an institutional expectation that copies of academic journal articles published by Brock researchers are deposited in the Brock Digital Repository. I'm grateful to Mark Robertson, University Librarian, for sharing some excellent news: the Brock Library is in the process of upgrading the Digital Repository to a cloud-based platform that should markedly improve the Repository's performance and provide new features. Key benefits of this upgrade include:

- Improved user experience and search interface
- Improved workflow for depositing research into the repository
- A more robust cloud-hosted platform
- Increased technical support

In addition, this platform has features that may be of interest to researchers that extend beyond enabling Open Access compliance. For example, this updated platform allows for:

- Author profiles
- Enhanced google analytics statistics
- ORCID-IDs lookup during submission
- Social media integrations
- Altmetrics integration
- Reference exports in BibTex, RefMan, Endnote and Refworks

Other very welcome news was the return of Inter-Library Loan services on March 8. ILL had been suspended due to widespread individual institutional restrictions across the RACER system consortium. Congratulations to the Brock Library team for keeping the university prepared to re-engage with the ILL system as soon as circumstances permitted.

7. Spending out GRF

In keeping with general Tri-Agency policies, when Brock researchers hold SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR grants that are partially unspent at the conclusion of their grant periods, the remaining funds are transferred into General Research Funds, or GRF. The University may use GRF for other research support purposes, consistent with the broad field/topic areas of the agencies from which the funding originated. These funds can support internal grant programs, for example. However, Brock permits researchers to request a period of continued individual access to unspent grant funding after it has migrated to GRF, at the discretion of the Vice President, Research. Normally this request is granted.

However, the Tri-Agencies continue to monitor the GRF for signs of its appropriate and effective use. These funds are for supporting research activity, after all, not for institutional hoarding. It is within the rights of the funding agencies to reclaim the funds if they are not being used; and in any case, a large scale pattern of under-use of GRF may also communicate to funders a lack of efficacy in research planning and implementation. For this reason, there is a strong assumption that only a single extension of access to funding will be granted to researchers, who are encouraged to create fallback plans for how to put superannuated grant funding to good use in the event that their primary plan doesn't come to fruition. Under pandemic conditions in 2020, extensions were automatic. In 2021 too the intention is for second extensions to be the norm; the past year has been difficult for planning expenditures, with a steep learning curve for pandemic operations.

However, with both increasing knowledge of how to conduct research through the pandemic and the prospect of a return to campus activities, it will be important to have active, resilient plans for spending out GRF authorizations within the extension period.

8. HOPA MOU

The Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority is an agency overseeing port operations in Hamilton and Oshawa, under the Canada Marine Act. HOPA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the municipalities of Welland, Port Colborne, and Thorold in September 2020. Brock University now has a Memorandum of Understanding with HOPA that creates the possibility of academic partnerships, including research partnerships, with the Port Authority. Any researchers with interests in relevant fields or topics (e.g., transportation, trade, marine ecology, shipping, waterfront development, etc.), who have not already been in touch about these possibilities, are encouraged to contact [Dr. Bradley McLean](#), Associate Director Innovation and Commercialization, in the Office of Research Services.

T. Kenyon, Vice-President, Research