



April 10, 2024

VPR Report to Senate #719-April 17, 2024

Major Research Infrastructure Funding

On March 15, Brock welcomed Vance Badawey, Member of Parliament for Niagara Centre, and Chris Bittle, Member of Parliament for St. Catharines, to formally announce \$3.5 million funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) to launch the Clean Agriculture for Sustainable Production (CASP) Field Infrastructure project. This investment has been matched through the Ontario Research Fund to support this \$8.9 million research infrastructure project. Led by Sudarsana Poojari (CCOVI Principal Scientist) and Jim Willwerth (Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences and CCOVI researcher), Brock is now on its way toward establishing a world-leading, farm-based research site. Cutting-edge equipment and infrastructure will enable Brock scientists and their collaborators to establish Canada's first Clean Plant Program to produce virus-free planting materials for Canada's 11.6-billion-dollar grape and wine industry through partnership with the Canadian Grapevine Certification Network. Other phases of the project will involve examining how these clean grapevines interact with other plants and organisms and exploring crop selection to enhance resilience to the impacts of climate change. The research farm will eventually become a test bed to integrate agricultural innovations into urban settings. Other Brock research team members include Shengrong Bu (Associate Professor, Engineering), Kiyoko Gotanda (Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences), Debbie Inglis (Director of CCOVI and Professor of Biological Sciences), Ping Liang (Professor, Biological Sciences), Liette Vasseur (Professor, Biological Sciences), and Alonso Zavafer (Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences). The research insights, leading-edge equipment, and industry partnerships comprising this project will enhance critically needed integrated and sustainable approaches to Canada's agri-food sector.

Women in STEM Graduate Leadership Award

The Office of the Vice-President, Research has committed \$10,000 annually to support full-time Brock graduate students who have demonstrated exceptional advocacy, leadership, and accomplishments to advance women and under-represented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The inaugural recipients of the new Women in STEM Graduate Leadership Award are three phenomenal PhD students:

- First Place - Jessica Braun (Applied Health Sciences) has an extensive record of advocacy work for Women in Science, including travel around North America promoting science and founding a science mentorship program for Niagara.

- Second Place - Chimerem Amiaka (Applied Health Sciences) has done extensive advocacy work for women in healthcare-related research fields and for international students as newcomers to Canada pursuing STEM careers.
- Third Place - Alex Wilder (Biological Sciences) created the Future of Science Network to introduce high school students to the rich variety of STEM careers and to foster the belief that STEM is for everyone regardless of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or creed.

First NHKI-Brock University Summer Student Research Scholar

Last month, I reported the launch of the [Niagara Health Knowledge Institute/Brock University Summer Student Research Scholarship](#). This \$10,000 award will fund an undergraduate student to participate in a research-focused placement with the NHKI for a period of 12 weeks between May and August. The cross-institution adjudication committee faced the difficult task of selecting one recipient from 40 applications.

Safeguarding Research Guidance and Webinars for Researchers

ORS personnel have been engaging in continuing outreach to other universities and government research security experts regarding practices for safeguarding research. The federal granting agencies have also recently released the [Tri-agency guidance on research security](#) and have shared information on new attestation requirements that will be built into the grant application process for all future SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR funding opportunities. Members of the research community are encouraged to attend [upcoming webinars](#) on Safeguarding Research, Dual-Use Technologies, the International Student Immigration Process, and Export Controls that are being offered by the federal Research Security Centre.

Office of Research Services Staffing Update

Effective March 25, Jayne Morrish has moved into the role of Research Impact Manager. In her new role managing the Research Impact Unit in the Office of Research Services, Jayne works with stakeholders across and outside the institution on promoting the impact of Brock research and enhancing Brock's reputation as a research-intensive university.

Events and Outreach

The CCOVI Advisory Council met on March 18. This gathering of internal and external stakeholders is a valuable space to explore the extent to which CCOVI's three-pronged mission of research, continuing education, and outreach services responds to the needs of industry partners. A highlight of the meeting was CCOVI Director Debbie Inglis's presentation of the annual report.

On March 18, I delivered remarks at a reception for the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Board of Directors in conjunction with their meeting hosted at Niagara College. Several Brock researchers who have received CFI funding were in attendance. This speaking engagement provided an opportunity for me to highlight the breadth of research undertaken at our institution and the research impact made possible through CFI's investment in research infrastructure.

The formal launch of the new physical space on Lockhart Drive for the [Brock-Niagara Centre of Excellence in Inclusive and Adaptive Physical Activity](#) (CAPA) occurred on March 21. After 30 years of programming in various locations and formats, it was fabulous to see the Centre firmly settled into this space. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was a clear example of the ways that Director Maureen Connolly ensures community members lead everything that the Centre does.

Once again, UNESCO celebrated World Poetry Day on March 21. This year marked the tenth anniversary of the sustainability poetry contest at Brock introduced by Liette Vasseur, UNESCO Chair in Community Sustainability: From Local to Global. This year's theme of Climate Change and Biodiversity prompted powerful poetry from students and community members across Niagara, including a moving performance by the Office of the Vice-President Research's very own, Research Programs Award Facilitator, Snežana Ratković-Obradović.

The VPRI Advisory Council met on March 22 to consult on outreach targets and goals for the next phase of the Institute's expansion.

On March 28, I attended the Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR) meeting hosted by York University. The Council of Ontario Universities coordinates this discussion forum and network for Vice-Presidents of Research from across the province. The agenda included discussions with relevant Ministry of Colleges and Universities representatives as well as working group leads. Updates related to safeguarding research and the Canada Foundation for Innovation were also on the agenda. The meeting concluded with a tour and presentations by members of the [Connected Minds: Neural and Machine Systems for a Healthy, Just Society](#) program (funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund) and other research laboratories in the Sherman Health Sciences Research Centre.

I travelled to Paris and Brussels from April 1-5 as part of an OCUR delegation involving the French Embassy in Canada and France Universités. The two main priorities of these meetings were to (a) build research relationships between Ontario and French universities and (b) learn more about [Horizon Europe](#) funding as Canada moves toward finalizing association under Pillar II of this funding program.

On April 9, I joined the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to meet Brock researchers and tour CCOVI and VPRI before meeting with President Rigg. It was a rich opportunity to showcase Brock's agricultural research, industry partnerships, and community connections in rural and urban contexts.

Nancy Cummings from Mitacs visited Brock on April 9 and spent the day meeting with researchers alongside representatives from Brock LINC and the Office of Research Services.

On April 11, a sediment core extracted from Crawford Lake will be transferred to the Canadian Museum of Nature to be preserved and curated for educational and research

purposes. I am delighted to attend and provide remarks during the official induction ceremony in the afternoon and a public forum in the evening. This event marks a major milestone in Brock's long-standing contributions to understanding this unique site and all that it is teaching us about human impacts on the environment. The [event](#) will showcase multi-institutional research conducted under the leadership of Dr. Francine McCarthy, Professor of Earth Sciences. Dr. Martin Head, Professor of Earth Sciences will also give a presentation at the afternoon session.

M. McGinn
Acting Vice-President, Research