

VPR Report to Senate, February 2017

AVPR Search

As most Senators probably know, during Dr. Gary Libben's time as Vice-President, Research, there were two, half-time Associate Vice-Presidents, Research to assist him. I am currently seeking a full-time Associate Vice-President, Research, to assist me with the load I have "inherited". An advertisement was posted on January 23, 2017, requesting nominations and applications for the position, which will have a term of two years. The closing date for applications is February 13. This is an internal search, and I hope to have a successful candidate in the position by May 1.

An Advisory Committee has been formed to help me vet the applications and interview candidates. I have asked the following people to serve on the committee: the Vice-Chair of the Senate Research & Scholarship Policy Committee, three faculty members, one postdoctoral fellow, one graduate student and the Director of the Office of Research Services. One staff member from Human Resources will also participate, to advise on the process.

Review of the Transdisciplinary Hubs

In 2016 Vice-President, Research, Dr. Gary Libben, formed an Advisory Committee to review the five Transdisciplinary Hubs. The purpose of this review was to evaluate each Hub's progress, to evaluate each Hub's strengths and weaknesses and to recommend actions for next steps to maximize the effectiveness of the Hubs.

In the spring of 2016, each Hub completed a self-study document that was forwarded to external reviewers during the summer. The Advisory Committee reviewed the self-study documents and external referee reports over the course of nine meetings held between October 3 and December 12, 2016. I received their report on December 21, 2016. After reading the Advisory Committee's report, I sent it to each of the TD Hubs on January 13, 2017. Each hub was also sent anonymized comments of the external reviewers for that hub only. I asked each hub to comment on 3 things: (a) the Advisory Committee's summary findings regarding TD hubs generally, (b) the findings regarding that specific hub, and (c) comments made by the external referees. I asked them to refrain from commenting on findings regarding the other hubs. I have given the TD Hubs until February 13 to respond. Once their responses are received, I will bring the information to the Research & Scholarship Policy Committee for consideration. I anticipate that the matter will come to Senate before the end of the current Academic Year.

Brock LINC Project

Last fall, the federal government's Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund committed nearly \$8.5 million toward funding the Brock LINC (Learning, Innovation, Networking and Commercialization) project. The funds will be used for construction of an "Innovation Zone" similar to those at several other universities. The LINC will be housed in two floors at the main entrance to the Schmon Tower. Activities on the main floor will focus on fostering a culture of innovation and invention mainly among Brock students, but the facilities will be open to all members of the Brock community. Facilities will include an expanded version of Library's "Maker Space," in which students produce new creations, such as electronic devices, software and 3-dimensional art. There will also be a new Digital Scholarship Lab for data analysis, graphics, high-performance computing and other functions, a "Multi-use" space for webinars, meetings and pitch sessions, a "Collaboration Space" to facilitate community-based, applied research, and a "Service Space" for refreshments. The second floor will provide numerous facilities to help budding entrepreneurs start companies.

I have been given the tasks of developing a “user group” for the LINC project, determining the sort of activities that will take place and ultimately producing a structure for how the activities will be managed. I have engaged in discussions with many groups at Brock that have expressed interest in the LINC, such as the Library, some of the Transdisciplinary Hubs, CCOVI, the Centre for Digital Humanities, the Co-op Office, the Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre, BioLinc and the Goodman School of Business. I am in the process of identifying community groups and businesses that could help develop partnerships aimed at social innovation and/or entrepreneurship. I have visited innovation facilities at Ryerson and McMaster Universities, and I will be visiting facilities at Laurier and Waterloo in March. I am consulting with a team, including individuals from the Library, the Goodman School of Business and one of our innovation officers, to develop a model that suits Brock and the Niagara Region.

I will provide further up-dates as the project develops.