



**BRANDON
UNIVERSITY**

Founded 1899

Strategic Research Plan

2014 - 2017



Where we are

Brandon University began as a Baptist teaching college. It gradually added programming and staff, evolving into a college and ultimately into a degree-granting university in its own right. Over time, its culture has also evolved from a teaching college to a modern university where faculty seek to balance commitment to traditionally strong undergraduate teaching with publishing research and creative scholarly activity. Faculty themselves have largely driven this evolution, as individual academics have maintained and developed strong research careers. Brandon University today is a small primarily undergraduate university, with roughly 3,000 students spread across five faculties and schools, embracing traditional arts and sciences degrees and pre-professional programs and programs in Music, Education, Business, and Nursing. Accordingly, our departments and programs tend to be small, often with very small numbers of researchers working in a given discipline. It is rare that colleagues have a large critical mass working in a common area. Faculty members frequently cite relatively high teaching loads as a consistent impediment to high levels of research productivity. In spite of these limitations, however, Brandon University has developed a research culture.

Brandon University is increasingly becoming a graduate institution, with a graduate program housed in every faculty. Graduate education assumes an increasingly important role in developing and maintaining an active research culture, reflected by the increasing emphasis of Tri-Agency panels on training highly-qualified personnel.

A significant amount of Brandon University research is tied to communities, with active teams of researchers and individuals working in rural communities, measuring and improving health outcomes, and assessing and improving education in Aboriginal communities. Brandon University's current research culture has some exceptional scholars and considerable depth of research productivity. A recent study that seeks to assess universities' research strength through harmonizing citation indexes with results of Tri-Agency funding ranks Brandon University a respectable 36th out of 55 nationally in the social sciences and humanities, for example, ahead of all similar-sized Canadian universities and many much-larger campuses.¹

¹ Paul Jarvey and Alex Usher (2012), *Measuring Academic Research in Canada: Field-Normalized Academic Rankings 2012*. Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates.

The Research Plan

The Research Committee of Senate established a sub-committee with representatives elected from each faculty council, with an additional faculty member representing those who research Aboriginal issues. The sub-committee carried out campus and community consultations with researchers and community stakeholders through town hall meetings and soliciting feedback from across the campus. The sub-committee drafted this report for referral to the Senate Research Committee for its consideration.

This plan is consistent with the BUILD strategic plan, recognizing that Brandon University promotes “excellence in teaching, research, creation and scholarship.” As academics, “We create and disseminate new knowledge.” The university places a special emphasis on working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations. Those consulted as part of the preparation of this plan overwhelmingly sought to enhance research activities and to create increased collaboration across the campus.

Major Research Objectives

Brandon University’s major research objectives are:

- to continue to produce high quality research and creative activity building on existing strengths and partnerships;
- to increase research capacity and to expand research partnerships and collaboration;
- to maintain and to develop research that reaches and engages local, national, and international communities;
- to ensure that research engages and benefits our undergraduate and graduate students;
- to promote productive interdisciplinary research collaboration across the campus; and
- to establish mechanisms to increase knowledge mobilization.

Priority Area

Brandon University encompasses a wide spectrum of research, spanning diverse disciplinary approaches to inquiry and methods of knowledge creation and dissemination.

Faculty-driven inquiry has created a particular emphasis on community connective research that can cross traditional faculty boundaries and facilitate inter-disciplinary approaches. Community connective research often engages the public directly as part of the research team and communicates research results directly to community stakeholders. In other cases, community connective research represents more traditional research that has direct relevance for society, leading to improved health outcomes for patients or providing evidence to guide policy-makers, educators, or practitioners.

Brandon University researchers have a track record of attracting external funding to support community connective research and have demonstrated excellent research capacity and productivity. Community connective research directly affects local, national, and international populations and can lead to significant improvements in health outcomes, policies, environmental stewardship, and societal conditions. Community connective research can surmount barriers between traditional academic research and communication of research to a broader public audience.

The following examples demonstrate the range of community connective inquiry and communication of knowledge by Brandon University researchers.

- A Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [SSHRC] Community-University Research Alliance grant has enabled a multi-disciplinary research team, working in partnership with northern communities, to investigate how students respond to community and parental involvement, how improved learning spaces, technology, and instructional resources change students' development, and how the Cree language and culture can affect students' learning in the fine arts. This community partnership will lead to improvements in curriculum and learning outcomes for students in the north.
- Members of the jazz program in the School of Music are re-examining and re-thinking a seminal jazz album, Miles Davis's *The Birth of the Cool*. Their project will create an opportunity for a new audience to experience modern interpretations of the cool jazz idiom through production of a new recording and live performances.
- A researcher in the Department of Biology uses funding from the Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council and the Manitoba Health Research

Council to investigate drug-resistant pathogens in humans and animals and seeks to determine predictive bio-markers that explain organisms' potential susceptibility or resistance to pathogens. The research program investigates profound challenges for public and economic health in Canada, and offers hope for limiting the effects of drug resistant pathogens on humans, livestock and species in the wild.

- The Rural Development Institute and members of the Department of Rural Development bring together researchers from diverse fields to investigate a wide array of issues, including population migration, the rural-urban fringe, containment of invasive species, tourism, natural resources, local governance, and rural health outcomes. The goal uniting this research is to effect positive change in rural communities.
- Researchers in the Faculty of Health Studies are studying couples' challenges and capacities in dealing with change, problem solving, and loss related to Alzheimer's Disease. Responses from couples indicate that supports and resources are often inadequate, undermining their ability to continue to live together; this research provides important information for couples, families, caregivers, and health care providers that will better enable couples to live with and manage this devastating disease.
- A researcher in the Department of Religion investigates Chinese newcomers in Western Canada: their religious, political, and cultural practices, and ways in which they build intercultural understanding, networks and businesses to challenge and transform systemic, racist barriers. Community participation directly informed this research and created a rich archive that shows that the rural prairie is as important to Chinese Canadian experiences of racism and belonging as coastal Chinatowns.
- Research by a member of the Faculty of Science has helped the Province of British Columbia produce interpretive material along the trail to the Driftwood Canyon Provincial Park fossil beds, and for the ongoing management of the recently declared heritage listed McAbee fossil bed near Kamloops in British Columbia. Data from this research and his other projects informs us of climate change in the geological past that can help us to understand climate change in the 21st Century.
- Researchers in the Departments of Geography and Rural Development are using funding from the SSHRC Aid to Small Universities program to investigate the effects of tourism on diverse regions, from Manitoba, to Central America, to Germany. Analysis of local surveys and work with local partners identifies

potential marketing strategies, seeks to mitigate damage caused by development, and helps local communities to develop tourism opportunities.

- With funding provided by the Manitoba Arts Council, the Brandon Chamber Players recently commissioned a composer in the School of Music to write a song cycle entitled *Crazy*. Having the performers and composer working in close proximity during the creative process allowed for more freedom in experimentation with sound and exploration of the unique abilities of the musicians.

- Researchers in the Faculty of Health Studies collaborated with researchers from the University of Saskatchewan (Prince Albert site) on a Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Manitoba Health Research Council funded project entitled: “Rural Postsecondary Students Collaborate to Improve the Health of their Campus Communities”. Also known as the “Healthy Campus Project,” this research employed a participatory action framework to investigate health, well-being, and quality of life among rural university and college students in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; the primary focus of the study is on engaging with student communities to assess their unique health needs, identify factors contributing to health and quality of life, and to generate sustainable, healthy solutions that are community driven.

The inter-disciplinary priority area of community connective research recognizes one predominant characteristic of scholarly and creative inquiry conducted at Brandon University. At the same time, the university emphasizes its commitment to an academic’s freedom to pursue his or her own research inquiry outside the framework of any central plan; Brandon University continues to support and value all scholarly publication and creative work and will foster a creative research culture.

Recommendations

1. Brandon University needs increased seed funding for research. Currently, Brandon University funding available for research is largely distributed by the Brandon University Research Committee. Relatively little of this support generates subsequent replenishment of research funding, as few grants under BURC lead to Tri-Agency or other external funding. Brandon University will move to ensure that it is competitive

with other institutions regarding provision of research funds for new faculty.

- a) BURC members should continue to emphasize the ability of applicants to use their research grant as seed money in order to generate further research funding as part of their deliberations.
- b) The Research Committee of Senate, working in conjunction with the Vice-President (Academic & Provost) and the Research Office, should establish a mentorship network that will link prospective applicants with mentors who have been successful in securing Tri-Agency or other external funding. The parties should establish policy to provide consistent, predictable amounts of seed money as an incentive for scholars to participate successfully in this mentorship program.
- c) Brandon University needs to establish a policy to allocate appropriate start-up funds for new faculty members to enable them to establish and develop their research program.
- d) Brandon University should have continuing, active discussions between Institutional Advancement and researchers regarding fundraising opportunities to support Brandon University researchers, graduate students, and research infrastructure.
- e) The university needs a consistent policy framework regarding funding cash and in-kind contributions to Tri-Agency and other grant programs.

How do we measure success? Brandon University will increase both the numbers of Tri-Agency and other external funding applications and the success rate of external applications, and will increase awareness of fundraising opportunities to support research.

2. The Research Office is staffed by a single person. The Office of the Vice-President (Academic & Provost) is strained by the requirement to provide academic leadership and administrative support and to lead in supporting research. Currently, Brandon is under-represented in Tri-Agency deliberations, leading to direct and negative consequences for Brandon University researchers and students. The Research Office needs increased assistance to be able to provide sufficiently widespread support for grant applicants, researching faculty, and graduate students. Accordingly, it is essential to hire an Associate Vice-President (Research) and Dean of Graduate Studies and requisite support staff and establish an operating budget as soon as possible. The Office of the AVP (Research) will be able to expand our support for researching faculty and students,

will improve administration of grants, will increase our national representation, and will be able to work with faculty, granting councils, and other external funders to increase the pool of research money available for Brandon University researchers.

How do we measure success? Brandon University will increase its over-all research income, our national representation, and research output.

3. Brandon University needs to increase dramatically its promotion of research and scholarly and creative activity. The university can do more to acknowledge and honour substantive research accomplishments, and many faculty members and students are largely unaware of their colleagues' research, whether within their own faculty or across the campus. The Vice-President (Academic & Provost) should work with the Research Committee of Senate to develop a program of recognition for Brandon University researchers. Faculty Deans should work with their faculty colleagues to ensure that research accomplishments are recognized both publicly and within the framework of university administration. Deans and researchers will work closely with the Communications Office to publicize Brandon University research through the university website and with media sources. Brandon University should support colleagues' discussion of research interests and issues through events such as enhancement conferences, workshops, and webinars.

How do we measure success? Brandon University will establish an explicit policy framework to provide increased recognition of research accomplishments and create appropriate mechanisms for increased recognition of university research and scholarly creative activity.

4. Brandon University researchers, and especially those who seek funding through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, must demonstrate their ability to train Highly Qualified Personnel [HQP] as part of their application. The new Master of Environmental and Life Sciences degree provides an opportunity to recruit and train HQP, but there is limited scholarship funding available to attract high quality students until the faculty can restore previously higher rates of success in securing NSERC funding. In the interim, Brandon University needs to provide bridge scholarships in order to establish a good quality program that will attract HQP, thus enabling

faculty to compete successfully for NSERC grants and ensuring funding for future students.

How do we measure success? The Vice-President (Academic & Provost) will work with the Dean of Science to establish bridge scholarship funding for the first three to five years of the Master of Environmental and Life Sciences degree.

5. A continuing theme of research active scholars during the consultation was the difficulty of balancing high teaching loads and a substantive research output. Brandon University has traditionally higher teaching loads than some other Canadian universities, and these loads impede scholarly research. Brandon University needs to attend to these concerns.

How do we measure success? The Vice-President, Deans, Directors, Departments, and Programs should actively consider research and scholarly creative activity as part of their continuing effort to establish fair and equitable workloads across campus.

6. Establishing research centres, institutes, or groups can increase collaborative and inter-disciplinary research and can spark increased productivity and strengthen grant applications. Brandon University researchers should pursue cooperative research partnerships with colleagues where possible.

How do we measure success? Brandon University will increase its research output and its research funding.

7. Brandon University needs effective measures of research output that are sensitive to disciplinary and inter-disciplinary norms. Data will allow us to assess the appropriateness of policy decisions meant to improve research outcomes.

How do we measure success? The Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Associate Vice-President (Research), Deans, the Coordinator of Research Services, and researchers will develop methods for reporting research accomplishments on an annual basis to establish effective data on research productivity.

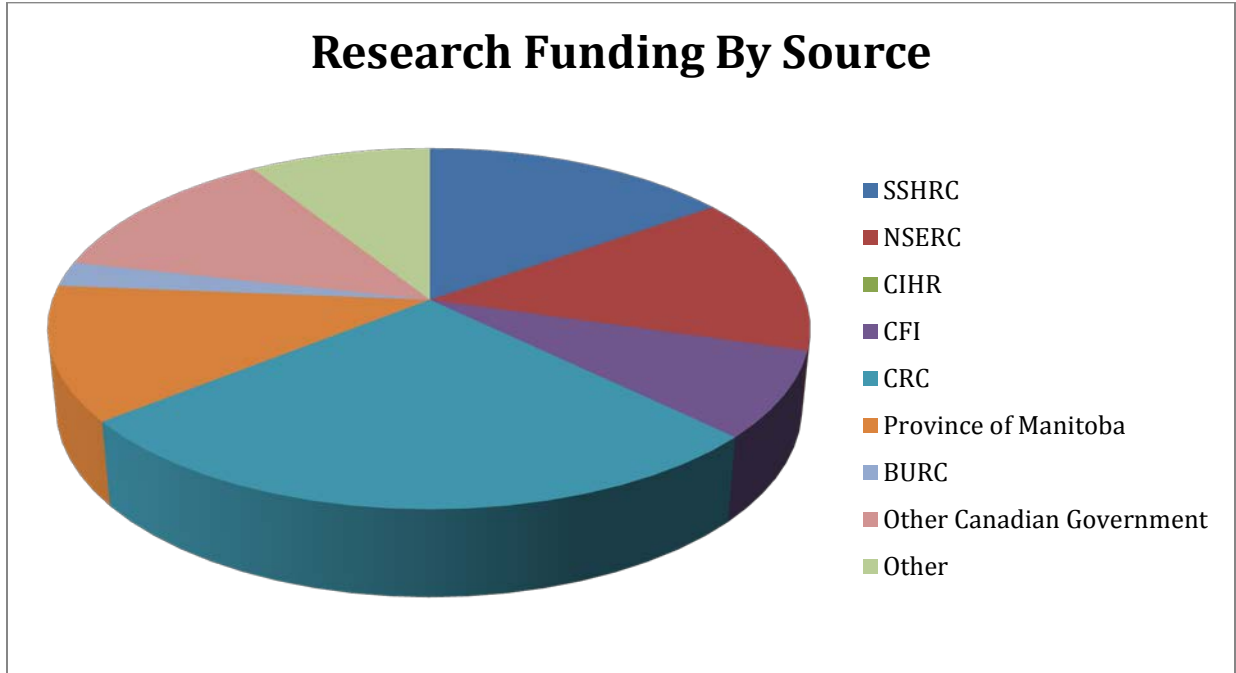
Recommendations and Implementation

Specific Objective	Responsibility	Timeline
BURC policy should continue to emphasize the ability of applicants to use their BURC funds as seed money in order to generate further research funding as part of their deliberations.	Senate, BURC Committee	Annually
Establish a mentorship network that would link prospective applicants with mentors who have been successful in securing Tri-Agency or other external funding.	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Senate Research Committee	June 2014
Establish policy to provide consistent, predictable amounts of seed money as an incentive for scholars to participate successfully in this mentorship program.	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Senate Research Committee	December 2014
Establish policy to allocate appropriate start-up funds for new faculty.	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Senate Research Committee	December 2014
Establish a policy framework regarding funding cash and in-kind contributions to Tri-Agency and other grant programs.	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Senate Research Committee	December 2014
Continuing, active discussions between Institutional Advancement and researchers regarding fundraising opportunities to support Brandon University researchers, graduate students, and research infrastructure.	Associate Vice-President (External), Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Associate Vice-President (Research), Dean, Researchers	On-going
Hire an Associate Vice-President (Research) and Dean of Graduate Studies and requisite support staff and establish an operating budget	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), President's Administrative Council	July 2015
Develop a program of recognition for Brandon University	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Deans,	June 2014

researchers.	Senate Research Committee, Senate	
Provide bridge scholarships to students in the Master of Environmental and Life Sciences	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Dean of Science, MELS Coordinating Committee	June 2014
Evaluate workload to ensure fairness for actively researching and publishing scholars	Programs, Departments, Deans, Heads, Directors	On-going
Seek increased collaboration through research clusters, groups, and institutes	Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Associate Vice-President (Research), Deans, Researchers	On-going
Develop consistent data on research outcomes	Senate Research Committee, Vice-President (Academic & Provost), Deans, researchers	June 2014
Key Performance Indicators		
Brandon University will increase both the number of Tri-Agency grant applications and the success rate by 25% by 2017.		
Brandon University will increase its external research funding by 25% by 2017.		

Attachments

Research Funding by Source, 2012-2013



Annual Research Funding

