It has been an honour, a privilege and a pleasure to serve Simon Fraser University as Vice President, Research for the last eleven years. This has been a period of exciting developments and progress in research, in research funding and in knowledge transfer. While it is obviously impossible to capture all the events in a short article or to give all credit where credit is due, I would like to outline my lasting impressions of this very rewarding time.

There has been a tremendous growth in research funding at SFU in recent years. This growth mirrors the growth in funding available from the Canadian federal government via the three granting agencies, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and Genome Canada, and from the Province of BC via the BC Knowledge Development Fund (BCKDF). These increases in resources have resulted from the recognition by government – strongly influenced by intense lobbying from VPs Research and others – that Canada’s and BC’s success in the global, knowledge-based society and economy requires that Canada be a player in the generation of new knowledge and the development of highly qualified personnel. I am proud to have assisted materially in those lobbying efforts.

Credit for SFU’s successes in research and scholarship belongs, in the first instance, to SFU researchers. These achievements result from both the maturing research programs of strong, established scholars, and the new insights and approaches brought by the many brilliant new faculty members appointed in recent years. Also critical to our successes has been the support of SFU’s senior administrations under the strong, supportive leadership of Presidents Stubbs, Blaney and Stevenson, all of whom recognize the crucial importance of fulfilling SFU’s research mission. I must also acknowledge the other essential ingredients: highly capable staff in the offices that report to the Vice President, Research which include Research Services (ORS), University/Industry Liaison (UILO), Research Ethics and Animal Care, as well as the SFU Library, staffed by dedicated and innovative personnel who have made it a superb resource and leader in BC and Canada. The Library pioneered electronic access to journals and the implementation of our Information Commons.

Specific improvements in SFU’s research infrastructure and environment have made a difference. Our policy environment has been improved through the introduction of a policy on research integrity and substantial revisions to our policies on research ethics, animal research and intellectual property. The physical and intellectual infrastructure has been enhanced through major external capital funding from CFI and BCKDF, as well as very substantial increases to our Library’s budget.

Our human infrastructure includes our campus-wide network of Faculty-based Research Grants Facilitators, who provide support to faculty members seeking external funding. I was pleased to be able to build that network, based on the successful pilot in the Faculty of Applied Sciences. Central support for major projects is now also available through the nascent Major Projects Office. Our Awards Facilitator assists faculty members in receiving the recognition they deserve for their accomplishments. The UILO supports the development and commercialization of intellectual property arising from research through a number of measures, including Prototype Development Awards. All of
Material Transfer Agreements: A Primer

Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs) govern the transfer of biological, chemical and other materials from one organization to another. Usually the materials in question are proprietary and are not otherwise available, and they are provided for various research purposes under the restrictions that are outlined in the MTA. These agreements cover transfers of material from other institutions or corporations to Simon Fraser University, as well as transfers from SFU to other institutions and corporations and, like all agreements involving SFU, MTAs have their own set of internal approval procedures before they can be finalized.

For outgoing materials, an SFU researcher can either obtain a standard MTA from the Office of Research Services (ORS) and send it to his/her colleague at the receiving institution, or the MTA can be prepared and sent by ORS in consultation with the SFU researcher. When the same material is sent out routinely by an SFU researcher to various institutions using the standard MTA, then ORS is usually involved only when an agreement is to be signed or when the receiving institution requests changes to the standard MTA. When the MTA has been signed by SFU and the receiving institution, the SFU researcher will be advised of the transfer of material that can proceed.

For incoming materials, the institution providing the material to SFU will usually forward a copy of its own standard MTA to the SFU researcher who is to receive the material. When an SFU researcher receives such an agreement, s/he should review its terms to confirm that the limitations on use of the material are acceptable, and forward a copy of the agreement, together with a completed Material Transfer Agreement Checklist, to Alyse Kirlik, ORS Contracts Administrator. There the agreement will be reviewed and, if any changes or clarifications are required, the providing institution will be contacted directly by ORS on behalf of the researcher and SFU. Once the terms of the agreement are acceptable to the SFU researcher and ORS, the agreement can then be signed by SFU by the ORS Director. Usually the SFU researcher is also required to sign as “receiving scientist.” After the agreement has been signed by SFU and the providing institution, the materials are sent by the providing institution directly to the SFU researcher.

The Material Transfer Agreement Checklist is used by ORS to confirm whether the research for which the incoming material is to be used has funding in place, and that the appropriate certificates have been obtained for material that is hazardous, radioactive, or otherwise classified as “dangerous goods.” If SFU researchers have any questions regarding hazardous materials or whether material might be classified as a “dangerous good,” they should contact Stephen Caine, Occupational Health and Safety Advisor, at smcaine@sfu.ca.

For additional information regarding MTAs and the related policies and procedures at SFU, or for a copy of the Material Transfer Agreement Checklist, please contact Alyse Kirlik at 604-268-6684, email akirlik@sfu.ca.

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these programs were made possible in the first instance through the use of funds flowing to my office as the net income from SFU’s Discovery Park.

Discovery Parks and the TIME Centre, established by the UILO at our Harbour Centre campus, are key to our commercialization strategies; they provide real estate venues for spin-off companies and other companies that value proximity to SFU. Occupants of the Burnaby site have included MPR Teltech, IBM, Xantrex and Cayenta, as well as a host of smaller companies in our Business Development Centre. The TIME Centre is home to another group of start-ups and provides entrée to the Vancouver Enterprise Forum and the Vancouver Angel Network. SFU’s long-standing commitment to knowledge transfer has resulted in our leadership in North America in some quantitative performance measures of commercialization. Among the data are over $2.7M in total revenue returned to SFU to be shared with the researchers, more than 50 spin-off companies and over $34.4M obtained for investment in those companies.

External relations are a critical part of the responsibilities of the Vice President, Research. Lobbying in Ottawa and Victoria is very important, as are relationships with non-governmental organizations which can provide additional platforms for advocacy of SFU and its research mission. I have been privileged to serve as President of the Canadian Association of University Research Administrators and of Discovery Parks Incorporated, and on several Boards of Directors including those of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and the Association of University Research Parks. I served as convener of the group of Vice Presidents, Research for three national meetings. My service on the federal Interagency Panel on Research Ethics and its predecessor, the Tri-Council Advisory Group, has been invaluable to my guidance of SFU’s ethics environment and creation of the Office of Research Ethics.

In recent weeks, I have been a presenter at a Policy Roundtable of the Prime Minister’s Advisory Committee on Science and Technology, a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and the Innovation Council of the Conference Board of Canada. These invitations stemmed largely from studies I performed on the effectiveness of commercialization activities at Canadian universities and comparisons with universities across North America and around the world. As noted above, SFU looks very strong in these comparisons and I have not hesitated to point that out in fora far and wide. These studies are available on the VPR Web site at www.sfu.ca/vpresearch/vprreports.htm.

Looking ahead, as of the start of my research leave on September 1st, I will continue studies in these and related areas in my new role as Director of the Centre for Research in Science and Technology (CPROST). CPROST is the administrative centre for InnoCom, a network of researchers in western Canada studying various facets of innovation. In turn, InnoCom is part of the Innovation Systems Research Network. I look forward to working with these groups of world-class researchers to advance the state of knowledge in this exciting field. In doing so, I know that I leave the office of Vice President, Research in good shape and in good hands.
Meet SFU’s New Awards Facilitator

“When I saw the posting for the Awards Facilitator position, I thought to myself, “That is perfect for me!” Thankfuly, Bruce Clayman agreed, and here I am,” laughs Christa Ovenell, the new Awards Facilitator in the Office of the Vice-President, Research.

Ms. Ovenell joined the VPR staff in February 2004 after completing her degree in English at Simon Fraser University in Fall 2003. She graduated in the top five of her class, and has held more than one academic award herself over the years. Before she returned to school full-time to complete her degree, Ms. Ovenell worked in the hospitality industry, where she says she “learned a lot about facilitation.”

“Managing people and events is a highly transferable skill—between my paid work in the hospitality industry and my volunteer work in community agencies. I have spent a great deal of time helping people see the best in themselves, each other, or the project at hand. Whether I was writing applications for small grants for preschool funds or organizing a catered wedding for 150 guests, I used the same skills: being organized, creative, and positive.”

As Awards Facilitator, Ms. Ovenell identifies relevant awards and honours and matches suitable nominees to them. She sends frequent calls for nominations to the University community for various awards, and then helps to prepare the strongest possible nomination documents. “What I do for nominees really depends on two things: what kind of help is needed and how much time we have. With enough time, I can do everything from conducting interviews and writing the nomination letter to filling out the forms and gathering supporting documentation. Sometimes, though, all I can offer is a second set of eyes for a final edit. I find that some people only want that level of help; they just want to be sure they have done everything perfectly before they submit a nomination.”

Although she spent several years at SFU as she completed her B.A., Ms. Ovenell feels she is seeing the University from quite a different perspective. She says that one of her favourite things about the job is “…the chance to work with really inspiring people. In just the few months I’ve been here, I have met scientists who are passionate about dialogue, researchers who go the extra mile in giving back to the community, and educators who have made exemplary teaching their life’s work. As I get to know these people through their CVs and reference letters, I get so excited about what they do. When I am working on an award package for someone I strive to make it flawless, because I feel their work deserves a chance at this kind of honour and recognition.”

Ms. Ovenell’s position is currently part-time, and she can be reached in her office at 604-268-6818 or via email to christa_ovenell@sfu.ca.

Conscience & Science Forum at SFU

Who owns personal genetic information? Can discoveries of genome configurations be patented? If so, when? Our capacity to refine, reform, and redesign the world is outstripping our ability to foresee the social and ethical implications of our actions.

These issues were the subject of a public forum entitled Conscience & Science: Biotechnology, Ethics and The Future. Sponsored by Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria together with several public- and private-sector organizations, the forum was held at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue on April 28 and 29, 2004. It was an opportunity for the public to meet internationally known scientific, ethical and legal experts, and discuss with them ethical issues arising from new and projected discoveries in biotechnology. Through moderated discussion groups, participants expressed their concerns about the ways in which these new technologies may infringe on personal freedoms, as well as their hopes for the use of these technologies to help alleviate human suffering throughout the world. There was considerable analysis of existing and proposed Canadian and international legislation regarding prohibitions and controls of research related to reproductive technologies, genetic engineering and the use of stem cells for treatment of disease.

Two high school students debated the question of when or if new drug technologies should be used to control and regulate behaviours, and if the use of those drugs should be subject to patient consent. This issue was discussed in the context of what society now designates as undesirable behaviour, and the implications of the chemical control of behaviour on innovation, diversity and individuality.

Web-cast worldwide by Apple Canada, the forum included discussions with aboriginal students in the Queen Charlotte Islands and Prince George through iChat conference technology, and was available to the public through a live high-speed Internet connection at SFU.

The results of the forum have been developed into a white paper submitted to provincial and federal agencies for their consideration in the development of policies related to the control and regulation of biotechnologies.

For more information on the speakers, participants and discussion topics, visit the forum Web site at conscienceandscience.com

CONSCIENCE & SCIENCE FORUM

April 28-29, 2004

Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue
580 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC, V6B 5K3

Christa Ovenell
Awards Facilitator

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The Office of Research Services (ORS) routinely receives and forwards funding opportunity news to our list members (i.e., nserc-list@sfu.ca, sshrc-list@sfu.ca, cihr-list@sfu.ca). In addition, funding opportunities can be found in the databases available to SFU computer account holders on the ORS Web site at www.sfu.ca/ors by following the links from “External Grants” to “Funding Opportunity Databases.” Those wishing to join an ORS email list should follow the instructions at www.sfu.ca/ors/Listservers.html.

In accordance with SFU’s Research Policy R10.01, all letters of intent, proposals and applications, whether electronic or paper, must be approved by the ORS using an SFU Research Funding Application Signature Sheet prior to their submission. This form can be found at www.sfu.ca/ors/forms/sig_sheet.html and must accompany a copy of the application for ORS records. Applicants are strongly advised to allow sufficient lead time for the proper consideration at each level.

**Summer 2004 Upcoming Deadlines**

**Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)**

www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/aboriginal_e.asp
Program: Aboriginal Research: A Pilot Program
Deadline: June 30, 2004
Value: Development Grants up to $25,000 annually over 2 years; Research Grants: up to $100,000 annually with a maximum of $250,000 over 3 years.

This program has two overall objectives: to facilitate research on a range of policy-related issues that are of concern to Canada’s Aboriginal peoples, and to build the capacity of the humanities and social sciences community.

**Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)**

www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/journals_e.asp
Program: Aid to Research and Transfer Journals
Deadline: June 30, 2004 (every three years—2004, 2007, etc.)
Value: Grants up to $30,000 annually over 3 years

This program aims to assist in both the effective dissemination of original research findings and the transfer of knowledge to practitioners. It encourages journals within and across disciplines to attract a broad spectrum of national and international readers and contributors; to follow efficient management practices; and to optimize their financial practices.

**Natural Sciences and Research Council (NSERC)**

www.nserc.ca/professors_e.asp?nav=profnav&lbi=a1
Notification of Intent to Apply for a Discovery Grant Deadline: August 15, 2004
Application Deadline for a Discovery Grant: November 1, 2004
Application Deadline for a Subatomic Project Grant (requesting $500,000 or more per year): October 1, 2004
Application Deadline for Research Tools and Instrument, Category 1: November 1, 2004

**Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)**

www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/services/4567.shtml?
Operating, Equipment, Maintenance and Group Grants:
Registration Deadlines: August 15, 2004; February 1, 2005
Application Deadlines: September 15, 2004; March 1, 2005

**NSERC and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)**

www.nserc.ca/programs/jiirp_e.htm
Program: Joint Infrastructure Interdependencies Research Program (JIIRP)
Deadline: September 1, 2004
Value: The maximum amount of any grant will depend upon the proposed project costs, other projects under consideration, and funds available.

This program is jointly funded by NSERC and by PSEPC, which promotes research in the areas of critical infrastructure protection and emergency management. JIIRP will fund innovative research projects with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary research, in the area of infrastructure interdependencies. Non-traditional approaches and collaborations are expected and encouraged.

Research Grants Facilitators are available to assist SFU researchers to obtain research funding. These individuals have extensive knowledge of funding sources and successful grant writing skills. See www.sfu.ca/vpresearch/rgf.html for their names and contact numbers.