

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR SFU'S 2023-2028 STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN

Simon Fraser University's (SFU) [Strategic Research Plan](#) (SRP) provides a list of priority areas and approaches to performing research and other scholarly work at the university from 2023-2028. It is (necessarily) a high-level document describing long-term strategic priorities. In order to support the SRP, concrete steps will need to be taken by the Office of the Vice-President, Research and International (VPRI) and by the university community as a whole.

This implementation plan describes the actions planned by the VPRI in response to the SRP and to community feedback. It is a living document, with regular updates planned throughout the five-year period of the SRP. It identifies projects and initiatives that are meant to support SFU scholars, lower administrative barriers and create new opportunities for the SFU community. Many of the initiatives have been selected as a result of the extensive community consultation undertaken as part of the SRP process.

Some of the initiatives listed below are short-term with clearly measurable outcomes. Others require deeper change over longer timescales in order to complete. For longer-term initiatives, milestones have been created for the first year of the plan. There are some initiatives that, due to capacity constraints, are listed in this plan but will not start in the first year.

PRIORITY PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Each initiative lists a challenge and a planned action (with timeline) to address the challenge. The descriptions in this document are brief but—as projects spin-up—more detailed documentation will be created for each. The first project is specific to the priority areas identified in the SRP. Those that follow it are cross-cutting initiatives, designed to lower barriers to success in all priority areas.

SUPPORTING SRP PRIORITY AREAS

Challenge: Solving society's great research challenges requires collaboration across departmental, institutional, sectoral and international boundaries. The strategic priority areas described in the SRP are each multi-disciplinary in nature. Researchers are sometimes faced with barriers to collaboration across departmental, faculty and institutional boundaries. Researchers also sometimes do not feel connected to the priority areas described in a Strategic Research Plan.

Action: Working with deans, chairs and directors, faculty members, postdoctoral fellows and graduate students, we will identify a program of support for internal community-building and external partnership tailored for each strategic priority area. We will also identify institutional barriers to collaboration and feelings of inclusion in these internal communities. In year one, we will implement a set of supports around one of the priority areas. In future years, external (including international) partnership strategies for each priority area will be developed.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH GRADUATE STUDENTS

Challenge: Graduate students are key drivers of research activity in an institution. Vancouver is an attractive destination, but the high cost of living presents a challenge to our graduate students.

Action: Working closely with the provost, the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies, SFU Advancement and with graduate students (through the Graduate Student Society), we will study ways to shift our limited resources to better support research graduate students. This includes study of tuition waivers, scholarships and bursaries. We will also work with SFU Advancement, provincial and federal funding agencies to grow resources available for graduate student support both for existing graduate students and to grow our research graduate student body. Within a year, we will set a university-wide minimum funding level for PhD students.

SUPPORTING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Challenge: SFU hosts a relatively small number of postdoctoral (postdoc) fellows for our number of faculty members. Existing postdocs sometimes feel like they “fall between the cracks” at SFU. They are neither faculty members nor students, and they have identified that many systems at SFU do not cope well with their *in-between* status.

Action: Working with the provost, the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies, SFU Human Resources, and the Postdoctoral Association we will identify the concerns of postdocs and—within a year—provide a central managed point for support of postdocs. We will work with SFU Advancement to create an institutional postdoc program.

VALUING AND MEASURING SCHOLARLY IMPACT

Challenge: The ways in which we generate scholarly impact are varied. They include publications in high-impact journals, publishing books, performances, exhibitions, the engagement of community in research and the mobilization of knowledge to the non-academic community. Current incentive and reward structures within the university do not always reflect modern measures of research impact.

Action: Working with the provost, deans, chairs and directors, the library, and SFU Faculty Relations, we will examine SFU’s incentive and support structures to assess whether they align with the way the university values research impact as well as equity, diversity and inclusion. Materials to support departmental processes (e.g., Tenure and Promotion Committee) will be developed and made available to the community. Within a year, a working group will be formed, a broad assessment will be completed, and needed materials and support structures will be identified.

DECOLONIZING INDIGENOUS RESEARCH ETHICS—RESPONDING TO THE ARC CALL #34

Challenge: Walk this Path With Us—the final report of the SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council—included call-to-action #34: “Convene an Indigenous Research Committee to establish respectful and ethical protocols and practices for researching in and with Indigenous communities; and to ensure that Indigenous perspectives, knowledge systems, and ways of knowing are respected and supported in the scholarship of faculty and students.”

Action: In the first year, we will continue to support the ongoing work in Ethical Foundations, led by Professor Vicki Kelly (Faculty of Education). We will then implement changes to our human ethics processes and approaches based on what is learned from the work of the ethical foundations group. We will also build principles of “two-eyed-seeing” and “walking on two legs” into major institution-led research initiatives such as the application to the Canada First Research Excellence Fund.

BUILDING WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH SPACE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Challenge: World-class research facilities are key to the performance of world-class research. The availability of high-quality research space is currently an important limiting factor in our research growth. The availability of appropriate digital infrastructure is key to many research programs.

Action: Working with the provost, SFU Facilities Services and deans, we will prioritize existing research space for capital improvements. We will continue to work as part of the team advocating for additional buildings on our three campuses. Within a year, plans for research space upgrades will be created and some upgrade projects will be underway. The VPRI will work with the library, ITS and others to prioritize digital infrastructure needed to support researchers.

SUPPORTING EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS (FACULTY)

Challenge: New faculty members at the university face a number of challenges in starting their SFU research careers. These challenges may include obtaining research grants, recruiting students and research personnel, modifying research space, and purchasing and installing research equipment at the same time they are teaching new (to them) courses and settling into a new community.

Action: Working closely with the vice-president, people, equity and inclusion, SFU Faculty Relations, deans, associate deans research (ADR) and early career researchers, we will examine mentorship programs, internal peer-review platforms for grants, educational materials and other resources for new faculty, and streamlining of processes for support including for research space and equipment.

PROTECTING TIME FOR RESEARCH

Challenge: Faculty members have identified “lack of time” as the biggest constraint in increasing their research output. For individual faculty members, balancing the competing demands of research, teaching and service is challenging. For department chairs, school directors and deans, balancing the need to deliver academic programming—and to support a dynamic research environment—is also challenging.

Action: Consulting with deans, chairs and directors, ADRs and SFU Faculty Relations, we will identify barriers to availability and effective use of research time for faculty members. Best practices across faculties, schools and departments will be shared and places where flexibility exists in the system (e.g., course scheduling/stacking) and within the current collective agreement will be examined.

FUNDING RESEARCH CHAIRS

Challenge: In priority research areas our university competes for talent with institutions around the world. Externally funded research chairs provide a mechanism by which the university can attract world-class researchers to our institution. Once they arrive, chair funding can support their program of research. SFU has a limited supply of research chairs that have been accumulated (generally) in an ad-hoc manner over time.

Action: Working with SFU Advancement and deans, we will develop fundraising cases for research chairs aligned with the SRP priority areas.

INVOLVING UNDERGRADUATES IN RESEARCH

Challenge: SFU is a research-intensive institution, doing world-class work across a wide range of disciplines. Our undergraduate students should have the opportunity to learn about and to participate in that research.

Action: We will review the VPRI Undergraduate Student Research Awards program to consider its goals, funding levels and accessibility. We will create web resources to highlight and support undergraduate

researchers. Working with the provost, deans, and the library, we will consider new ways to provide undergraduates with exposure to SFU research including opportunities to participate and potentially to earn degree credits for the work. With communications and marketing (C&M) teams across the university, including SFU's central C&M portfolio, we will consider how to raise the profile of SFU research among undergraduates at the institution.