

Memorial University Research Plan Process Document

November 2009
(Updated Nov. 19, 2009)

Introduction

The development of the Memorial University Research Plan is a direct response to the Strategic Plan for Memorial University, released in 2007, which includes “Research, Creative Activity and Scholarship” as one of 5 key pillars to advance the University’s Mission:

Memorial University is an inclusive community dedicated to creativity, innovation and excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, and to public engagement and service. We recognize our special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Memorial welcomes students and scholars from all over the world and contributes knowledge and shares expertise locally, nationally and internationally.

Research at a university is fundamentally about the creation of knowledge and the dissemination of the results of this research. In the context of the Research Plan, the term *research* encompasses the research, creative and scholarly activity. The spectrum of research at Memorial embraces curiosity-driven inquiry by individual or groups of faculty members that adds to the frontiers of knowledge in and across disciplines. It also includes the research of individuals and interdisciplinary groups working with external partners, which is motivated or informed by significant societal issues.

Dissemination of research spans presentation in peer-reviewed conferences and publications, through performances and other creative expression, to knowledge transfer with the purpose of influencing policies and practices and developing products and processes that impact on our society and economy.

The Research Plan will recognize the value of the full spectrum of research and the diversity of the modes of dissemination of the results of our research. The Plan will be based on the principle of freedom for researchers to pursue research that is based on their individual and collective intelligence, curiosity, inventiveness and creativity. It will be based on an objective of striving for excellence and of identifying the resources needed to be able to achieve excellence.

The process of developing the Research Plan will engage and challenge our academic units to look forward 5-10 years and consider the major research opportunities within and across our units and to identify how we can use these opportunities to build upon our

research strengths in our existing disciplines and add new research capacity in disciplines associated with strong opportunities. The process to develop the Research Plan will be informed by our assessment of opportunities to undertake world-class research but it is not driven by specific funding programs with pending external deadlines.

The Research Plan will be based on opportunities and strengths that exist at Memorial. It will consider the internal and external environment to identify resources to enhance investments in our research so as to maximize our ability to pursue excellence across our research activities.

Once completed, the Research Plan will serve to articulate a set of objectives and actions for Memorial that will be considered, along with other objectives/actions derived from the Strategic Plan related to other aspects of Memorial's mandate, when making decisions at all levels of the institution. The Research Plan will inform the considerations by the Senior Executive Committee, Deans and Directors and Heads of matters such as budget proposals and allocations, recruitment and retention of faculty members and support staff, infrastructure and capital needs, strategic initiative proposals to government, and growth of graduate programs. The Research Plan will also serve to advance our research aspirations and objectives with external stakeholders and partners, including government and other funding partners.

Background: The Memorial University Strategic Plan

The Memorial University Strategic Plan includes "Research, Creative Activity and Scholarship" as one of 5 key pillars.

There are 5 Goals under the Research Pillar of the 2007 Strategic Plan:

- Focus on high need areas (Goal 8)
- Research collaborations and partnerships (Goal 9)
- Research environment (Goal 10)
- External funding (Goal 11)
- Research engagement and productivity (Goal 12)

The first of these, Goal 8 of the overall Strategic Plan, commits to "Undertake an inclusive process to review and revise the thematic interests set out in Memorial's Strategic Research Plan," and to "Develop these research themes to recognize Memorial's strengths, support the needs of the province, and embrace global opportunities." It also commits to "Enhance the research presence at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, focusing on the strengths of the campus and needs of the region."

On November 10, 2009, Memorial's faculties and schools, including Grenfell College, the Marine Institute, as well as the University's research centres, commenced the process

to fulfill this goal. It will need to consider linkages with the other goals related to research, creative activity and scholarship.

Research collaborations and partnerships (Goal 9) involves multi-disciplinary research teams and local, national and international partnerships in areas of strategic interest. It also involves how research is disseminated, and it entails proactively engaging with the community to identify research ideas and opportunities, and to collaborate with researchers outside the university.

Goal 10, building and enhancing the research culture of Memorial and strengthening the *research environment* that supports success also needs to be considered under the Research Plan. This can range from support services for research activity and administrative policies and procedures that relate to research, to research mentoring for new faculty and processes to communicate potential applications of research outside the university in a timely and effective manner.

Memorial has experienced tremendous success in growing *external funding* for research (Goal 11). From 2002-2007, Memorial research funding grew by 116.7 per cent – the highest growth in research funding amongst Canada’s top 50 research universities. The Research Plan will help guide allocation of funding to seed new collaborative research initiatives in the thematic areas identified. It will inform how to provide competitive funding levels for graduate students and to create a new pool of funding to attract more post-doctoral fellows. And it will assist in efforts to continue our stellar record of recent success in growing the amount of research funding for the full range of research supports in areas of opportunity.

Finally, Goal 12, *research engagement and productivity* will see more effective measures established in conjunction with the Research Plan. These will include new measures to assess such issues as the impact and benefits of research, as well as participation levels, funding received, numbers of graduate students successfully completing research degrees, and faculty achievements relating to research.

Research also relates to the other 4 pillars in the Memorial University Strategic Plan. The first pillar is very clear that *Students* are the central focus of Memorial. Teaching and research are inextricably linked, and as we strive to increase the proportion of graduate students at Memorial, research takes on even more importance for student success and in Memorial’s success in attracting students.

Memorial is a recognized leader in Canada in knowledge mobilization and knowledge transfer. The third pillar, *Needs of the Province*, highlights Memorial’s special commitment to meeting the cultural, social and economic needs of the province. The Research Plan will play an integral role in advancing Memorial’s ability to build on this commitment, by identifying – in consultation with external partners – where the priority needs and opportunities are for research at Memorial.

Conditions for Success relates to the ability of the University to support the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge. Development and improvement of research infrastructure is one aspect of this pillar, as the University plans for growth in research and graduate student enrollment. The final pillar, *Institutional Responsibility*, includes a more coordinated approach to resource allocation, with explicit links to the strategic direction of the university. The Research Plan will provide one component in achieving this coordinated approach.

The identification of research themes will be a central focus of the research plan, informing and informed by the other pillars and goals noted above. Five Research Themes have been identified since the development of the Memorial Strategic Plan:

- Oceans
- Natural Resources
- Culture and Heritage
- Health and Well Being
- Energy and Environment

These Research Themes will inform the planning process commencing in November. An extensive process of analysis and consultation, internal to Memorial and externally, will validate, revise or add to these themes.

Memorial faculty and students will, of course, be free to pursue their own research interests. Independent, curiosity-based research is the foundation of research at a university. As stated by Dr. Chad Gaffield, President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, in a recent visit to Memorial, curiosity-based research is like the “gene pool” that underpins knowledge creation, innovation and exploration. The Research Plan will identify supports needed for all research, in addition to identifying those areas of opportunity where additional resource allocation will build on existing areas of excellence, or where strategic investments will foster excellence.

Engaging in this process, to shape it collectively, is essential if it is to succeed. We are acting to implement the Memorial Strategic Plan, in a process and on a timeline we have developed ourselves rather than responding to outside pressures. The next section outlines an iterative process that will maximize opportunities for a Research Plan to which we can all contribute.

Research Plan Team, Process and Timeline

The Team

The process will be led by the Vice President (Research), Dr. Ray Gosine, and the Vice President (Academic), Dr. Reeta Tremblay. Academic Deans and Directors will form a Steering Committee for the Research Plan.

The Senate Committee on Research will also play an integral role in the Research Plan process. They will provide input to the planning process and the plan formulation at regular intervals throughout the fall, winter and spring. They will review the draft plan and bring it to Senate for review, prior to review by the Senior Executive Committee of the University. The Board of Regents will have final approval of the Research Plan.

The Planning Process will be led by Dr. Rob Greenwood (robg@mun.ca). He has been assigned to the office of the Vice President (Research) for 60 per cent of his time to the end of April. He will continue to serve as Director of the Harris Centre during this period.

Dr. Greenwood will be supported by Dr. Kevin Keough, former Memorial Vice President (Research), who has extensive experience with many national and regional research funding bodies, and by a Research Assistant, Kate Reid-Shute (krshute@mun.ca). The Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning, the Research Office and Marketing and Communications, will also play key support roles to the development of the Research Plan.

An External Advisory Committee will also be established, with individuals bringing a cross section of perspectives from the community, industry and governments.

The Process and Timeline

The target for a completed Research Plan is Spring 2010. This timing will allow a President-Designate good opportunity to consider and have input to the plan. The Research Plan process will be iterative and consultative. It will be carried out in several phases, building initially on existing knowledge and priorities within the university (November-December), and then introducing analysis of internal and external data, trends and policy directions in a Background Document (December). Academic Deans and Directors will take the lead for their Faculties and Schools, as will the heads of Grenfell College, the Marine Institute, and of Research Centres and Separately Incorporated Entities that have research mandates. Initial input will then be rolled up to identify emerging themes, opportunities and gaps, and this will be provided back to Faculties and Schools and other units to determine how they see their strengths and needs aligning with emerging themes (January-March).

Simultaneously, external consultations will be held around the province and with key university stakeholders. A website will also allow individuals and organizations internally and externally to provide their views on the emerging research themes.

In March, the Steering Committee will review findings and input and develop the draft themes and related goals, objectives, actions and targets. The External Advisory Committee will provide input, open sessions will be held at the University and the Senate Committee on Research will provide input. The Steering Committee will then prepare the draft plan for review by the Senate Committee on Research, for it to then be reviewed by Senate. It will then be reviewed and finalized by the Senior Executive Committee, for consideration and approval by the Board of Regents.

The process will unfold as follows:

Phase 1: current research capabilities and preliminary assessment of opportunities / needs / themes (Nov. 10 – Dec. 10, 2009)

- Faculties and Schools identify current research strengths, weaknesses, fit with current University Strategic Plan Research Clusters, identified opportunities (within existing clusters; refining them; additional to them) and current gaps in maintaining strengths and/or realizing opportunities
- Templates provided to guide input (to enable roll up within Faculty/School and across university)
- Templates sent out November, with process document
- Research Plan Team available to present to Faculties/Schools and Departments if requested; workshop facilitation available if requested
- Completed Templates due back December 10, 30 days after sent out

Phase 2: background report (release Dec. 2009)

- Internal and external consultation document
- Background on Memorial, current MUN Strategic Plan; context for Research Plan
- National scan (funding council priorities / directions; federal government priorities / directions)
- Provincial scan (provincial government priorities / directions; College, Industry, Community initiatives)
- Memorial data
- Memorial comparison with other Canadian universities
- December release to inform Phase 3

Phase 3: 1st draft roll-up themes, common strengths / opportunities, and gaps / requirements for success (Dec. 2009 – Jan. 2010)

- Roll up Faculties/Schools Phase 1 template reports
- Identify common themes, common strengths / opportunities, and gaps/requirements for success
- Presentation developed with findings for internal and external consultation (built from Phases 2 and 3 findings)

Phase 4: Theme / Cluster / Opportunity / Need Identification (Jan. – March 2010)

- Faculties /Schools review Background Document and Roll-up from Phase 1; presentations / workshops provided on request
- Website postings by individuals / groups
- External consultations for input on provincial priorities (government, industry, community) and opportunities for Memorial research (findings communicated back to Faculties/Schools)
- Emerging Theme / Cluster Sessions with interdisciplinary and external participation: clarify goals, objectives, actions
- Identified Gaps / Requirements for Success Sessions: clarify goals, objectives, actions
- Faculty/School Research Priorities Submitted for final plan consideration, February 28

Phase 5: Draft Plan Goals, Objectives, Actions, Targets (March - April 2010)

- Phase 4 roll-up and draft plan presentation developed
- Academic Deans and Directors working session
- Review by External Advisory Committee
- Revised plan presentation university community open sessions
- Senate Committee on Research draft plan review and input
- Academic Deans and Directors plan finalization session

Phase 6: Plan Finalization (TBD)

- SEC Research Plan Session
- President-Designate Research Plan Review
- Senate Committee on Research Review
- Senate Review
- Board of Regents Review and Approval
- Research Plan Release