

Strategic Research Plan 2021-2026 Summary
Canadian Mennonite University
2023-04-13

Institutional Context

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is an Anabaptist Christian university offering academic programs in the arts, humanities, sciences, and business. Located in Winnipeg and chartered in 1998 by the Province of Manitoba, CMU was granted membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC, now Universities Canada) in 2008. The university is guided by four commitments: educating for peace and justice; learning through thinking and doing; extending generous hospitality with radical dialogue; and modeling invitational community.

CMU's Strategic Research Plan (SRP) outlines a path for research growth at CMU over the next five years, from 2021-2026. CMU's SRP acts a gathering place for research at the institution, helping the institution to connect and present its research agendas, rather than a boundary excluding any particular research agenda. Because the SRP functions to connect research across a wide variety of individuals' work, and across disciplinary and departmental identities, this document names ethical, ideational, and procedural aspects of research that characterize CMU as institution, rather than focusing on particular disciplines or on any particular individuals' research agendas.

CMU's Research Distinctives: Community, Students, Interdisciplinarity, Teaching, Justice , Story

CMU is a community-owned, community-rooted institution; a student-centered, academically challenging institution; and a deeply interdisciplinary institution with faculty interests cutting across disciplines. CMU is also a university in which teaching is understood as a genuine intellectual intervention, rooted in and comprising an arena of research. Finally, as a Mennonite- and Mennonite-Brethren-affiliated institution, CMU is oriented towards building justice, peace, and meaningful, welcoming community.

CMU's research strategy builds on these distinctive qualities as a university and aims to contribute as a research institution through the following priority areas for research and research training:

- **1. Community-based research**, emerging from real relationships, in which research is developed with community partners for the flourishing of their communities;
- **2. Training undergraduate student researchers**, by providing widely available opportunities for undergraduate students to gain research experience and make contributions to research;
- **3. Interdisciplinary research**, rooted in a shared intellectual culture (not tactical partnerships) in which new questions emerge and can be addressed from complementary and different perspectives;

- **4.** Teacher research on **university pedagogy and curricula**, rooted in the significant work of CMU faculty in novel, innovative, and excellent teaching;
- **5.** Publicly-facing research focused on **social and environmental justice**, including peacebuilding and advocacy for vulnerable and marginalized populations.
- **6.** The work of **memory, story, reflection, and performance in community and land**, rooted in the widely varied ways that CMU faculty have sought to engage and be engaged by the imaginations of the congregations, constituencies, communities and lands that relate to CMU;

SRP Action Plan

Five key action areas to develop research and research training at CMU are:

1. Increasing research leadership and staffing
2. Fostering internal research incentives
3. Meeting upcoming Tri-Council standards and requirements
4. Growing research partnerships and collaborations
5. Expanding granting capacity related to infrastructure and program

Each of these supports research across the priority areas outlined above. CMU's research strategy focuses on areas that are not defined disciplinarily, but rather that articulate areas of and approaches to research that cut across areas at CMU, building on the interdisciplinary ethos that is a key strength and distinguishing feature of CMU.

Since this SRP was adopted in 2021, CMU has met significant goals across these action areas, including: increasing research staffing, leveraging our internal research incentives to shape proposals for external funding, meeting Tri-Council standards (and becoming eligible for NSERC and CIHR funding, in addition to CMU's longstanding eligibility for SSHRC), and building significant external research partnerships including a recent joint application with national and international partners for a fifteen-million-dollar Global Affairs international development studies grant.

Research Growth at CMU & the CRC Program

This SRP's action plan aims to significantly build Tri-Council and other funded research, and to enable both externally funded research more broadly and the CRC's flagship projects to flourish at CMU. The first CRC at CMU will develop a robust research program in interdisciplinary community health (engaging with CMU's SRP research priority areas 1, 2, 3, and 5) that will help set the stage for future CRCs at CMU, and that will build research capacity across the institution. The CRC's work will help define CMU, institutionally, as a leader in community-engaged interdisciplinary research focused on the social good, helping CMU to both retain our first CRC and to attract and retain future researchers of international prominence.

(Within the CRC's first term, but not at the moment of initial appointment, CMU plans to engage with CFI to bolster research at CMU both during the tenancy of the CRC and beyond; CMU's proposed first CRC program focuses on community-engaged health research, and our CFI proposal will therefore draw on the frameworks arrived at with those communities in the initial discovery stages of the CRC's program of work.)

EDI and Research at CMU

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are of paramount importance to CMU and to the CRC and CFI programs. CMU is prioritizing candidates from one or more of the four EDI priority areas (women and gender minorities, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and racialized minorities) in our first CRC nomination, underscoring the institution's commitment to creating a more equitable academic environment. CMU has engaged with campus-wide EDI planning, in an ongoing process seeking to meet both EDI requirements of the Tri-Council agencies, and the equity needs specific to our institution. For our first and future CRCs, CMU will monitor and shape both the nomination process and the institutional environment and supports in order to meet the equity targets of the CRC program.

Research Goals and Assessment

The above action areas aim at particular goals, which CMU is assessing in the following ways:

- To facilitate a strengthened and distinctive culture of research at CMU
 - *Measured and understood qualitatively by annually reviewing and accounting for CMU research projects in relation to the strands identified above*
- To maintain and increase CMU's current Tri-Council funds , which in turn will maintain and increase CMU's Research Support Funds, Canada Graduate Scholarships, and Canada Research Chairs
 - *Measured by an increase in year-over-year comparisons of Tri-Council funds won*
- To increase CMU's budget through: increased research dollars that then release other funds (as is the case with the CRC, which will fund a faculty member and off-set staffing costs in research and finance); increased program and infrastructure grants (which at times intersect with research)
 - *Measured by year-over-year comparisons of FTE and course releases related to research; and RSF and other overhead monies*
- To increase research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students in collaboration with faculty
 - *Measured both qualitatively (kinds of research collaboration; meanings and outcomes of research collaboration) and quantitatively (number of instances) each year*

Research Planning and Approval

Research-related policies are monitored and updated, or created anew by the Director of Research Grants, the Associate Dean of Research, and the VP Academic. The policies are reviewed at Senate for decision making.

As a member of Universities Canada, CMU has a mandate to support faculty members as independent researchers engaging in scholarly activity both within and across disciplines, while remaining subject to the methodologies and evidentiary standards appropriate to the disciplines engaged.

CMU provides resources in support of research, including course releases to faculty pursuing funded research, internal research grants and external grant writing supports, professional development funds often used in research, and other resources in conversation with individual faculty members. This planning emerges from faculty research and initiatives in conversation with Academic and Research leadership and staff. CMU also aims to align teaching assignments with areas of faculty research interests.

CMU has several committees that evaluate and may offer formal approval, or request changes, to research pursued by CMU faculty. These include the Research Ethics Board, which reviews human-subjects research; the Animal Care Committee, which reviews research with animals; and the Grants Review Committee, which provides review of external grants for compliance with granting body requirements.

Faculty research plans are reviewed on a routine basis in order to encourage the ongoing development of robust programs of research across the university. Further, faculty are encouraged to identify collaborative research ventures with other researchers within and outside of CMU. These moments of review are primarily generative, but also summative in processes of promotion and tenure.