

# STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN

## 2024 PROGRESS REPORT

## MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Year 10 of our Strategic Research Plan implementation is now complete! It has been an incredibly busy year with a lot of dedicated faculty, staff and students doing and supporting research across all disciplines and schools.



### Development of the CI platform

To support with: communications, fundraising, HQP & partnership development, co-creation, knowledge mobilization

- Hired inaugural director of strategy & operation for SFU Climate Innovation to activate fundraising, budgeting and communications capacities.
- Hired a CI program coordinator (split 50% with ACT- Action on Climate Team).
- Interviews for the CI strategic grants writer position (Jan 2025 start) were completed in December.
- Launched CI website and LinkedIn page, over 200 researchers/partners engaged through the website.
- Developed a marketing & communications plan to establish and promote the CI brand to internal and external audiences.

### Align C3i research community network

To identify community-engaged researchers; develop best practice co-creation methods; promote staged research-to-action - diagnose, plan, implement, evaluate, revise.

- Successfully applied for research ethics approval for CI survey and workshop(s).
- Used analytics to identify over 300 climate-related researchers with RIO, and began discussion on impact reporting.
- Delivered a research intersections workshop in May 2024 to climate-related researchers, 78 attendees.
- Promoted branding of CI-related researchers with a yellow dot on REE database/website to help identify.
- Convened 3 meetings with emerging cluster of interdisciplinary SFU heat, drought, wildfire and smoke-related researchers to target high impact, community-centred funding opportunities (e.g. SSHRC Connect, NSERC CREATE) and other co-creation workshops with CERi/FHS.
- Mentorship of 6 Masters RAs, 2 PhD's, and one post-doc on CI-related projects through ACT; 5 graduated.
- Helped design and host a symposium on Community-Centred Climate Innovation as part of SFU hosting the Royal Society of Canada.

### Advance C3i funding

To identify strategic funding opportunities and catalyze philanthropic opportunities

- CI Case for Support developed, continued to work closely with AAE and SPH to finalize.
- Principles for CI partnership developed in collaboration with AAE and SPH.
- Seed funding design and initial adjudication process has been established.
- Established a CI database of high-impact funding opportunities, to build a longer strategic runway for CI researchers.
- Target list of CI sponsorship partners has been developed.

### Develop and nurture partnerships

To identify partner needs, co-develop relevant research for action; work in cross-sectoral, transdisciplinary way; co-identify high impact evidence-based implementation opportunities; co-create research framing and delivery (in-kind/cash contributions); implement, monitor, and revise

- Partnerships are in development with municipalities, governments, indigenous communities, federal and international agencies.
- Partnerships are also in development with major international universities.
- Identified a list of 60 high impact community partners to invite to the next CI workshop Jan 2025.

**Develop & mobilize research, resources & tools**

To build climate action, equity, and sustainable communities as strategic and cross-cutting SFU community-centred approach

- The following research tools and resources have been published this year: Natural Solutions Initiative Regulatory Mechanisms Resource, Natural Solutions Initiative Co-benefits Resource.

(f):

- Some confusion, for internal and external audiences with SFU Sustainability
- Lack of awareness of C3i internally at SFU, and need to establish new CI brand with key audiences & stakeholders
- Limited support from Communications & Marketing which has hindered the roll out of the CI platform & brand
- Limited capacity of some pod members to meet & work on CI goals & activities due to competing priorities

: [SFU Climate Innovation - Simon Fraser University](#)

**SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF INDIVIDUALS, POPULATIONS AND COMMUNITIES**

: Supporting health and wellness of individuals, populations and communities is a priority area identified in the Strategic Research Plan. In recent years, SFU researchers have been engaged in responding to public health issues such the global COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis and other profound issues that can be addressed through world-class research. Researchers generate wellbeing in the communities they work with by engaging in mutual, respectful and empathetic processes of knowledge production which can make important contributions to both individual and collective wellbeing.

However, the researchers are sometimes faced with barriers to collaboration across departmental, faculty and institutional boundaries, so it is important to identify and implement supports for internal community-building, and strategic external partnership tailored for the strategic priority area.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

: Work in this priority area started in summer 2024 under the leadership of Valorie Crooks, Associate Vice-President, Research.

: Fraser Health Authority (FHA) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) officially endorsed the idea of creating a joint research institute that will leverage SFU's vibrant research community as well as patient data and real-world insights to advance excellence for the benefit of individuals and communities. To further advance this priority area, expressions of interest have been invited from faculties to allocate one centrally allocated Tier 1 Canada Research Chair at SFU.

VPRI portfolio lead: Valorie Crooks, Associate Vice-President, Research  
Faculty lead: N/A

Develop strategic external partnerships with research activities centred around the identified institutional priority of supporting health and wellness of individuals, populations and communities

- Fraser Health Authority (FHA) and Simon Fraser University (SFU) have endorsed the idea of creating a joint research institute to bridge the gap between clinical care and cutting-edge research by establishing a dynamic hub for research excellence, collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- The FHA-SFU Joint Research Institute will bring together expertise and partners from SFU, FHA and across B.C.'s health sector to accelerate discovery and translate ideas into practice for improved health and wellbeing.
- The search for the inaugural scientific director for the FHA-SFU Institute is underway.
- The office of Vice President Research and Innovation has agreed to provide \$75k in start-up funding for the institute.
- A case for support has been developed by SFU Advancement to explore partnership and funding opportunities.
- Work is in progress to prepare the R40.01 application that is needed to get the approval to establish the institute at SFU.

Identify a program of support for internal community-building

- Faculties have been invited to submit Expressions of Interest to allocate one centrally designated Tier 1 Canada Research Chair (CRC) at SFU that aligns with this SRP priority area: Supporting Health and Wellness of Individuals, Populations and Communities and fosters inter-disciplinary and inter-faculty collaboration.
- SFU School of Medicine is searching for the inaugural Associate Dean, Research. The AVPR is on the search committee for this position and will support integrating this person into SFU's research landscape, which centrally includes activities related to this SRP priority.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the AI revolution charges on, SFU has started on the path to determine how we can responsibly leverage and utilize the use of AI for the good of education, research, and society. To look at how the university can explore the opportunities and impacts of AI at SFU in four key areas: Learning and Teaching, Research, Operations and External Engagement. For reporting on the Strategic Research Plan the focus is on the Research Pillar while a lot of work is being done simultaneously in the other three pillars.

Under the leadership of Dugan O'Neil, Vice President, Research & Innovation, an AI strategy committee was established in the summer of 2024. to look at how the university can explore the opportunities and impacts of AI at SFU in four key areas: Learning and Teaching, Research, Operations and External Engagement.

The Research Pillar is co-led by Parmit Chilana, Associate Professor, School of Computing Science and Co-director Visual and Interactive Computing Institute (VINCI) and Steve DiPaola, Professor, School of Interactive Arts & Technology.

VPRI portfolio lead: Fabiana Rassier, Director, Special Initiatives, Office of the Vice President Research & Innovation  
Faculty lead: Parmit Chilana, Steve DiPaola

## PROJECT DETAILS

Formation of a working group for the Research pillar.

- A working group has been formed to begin discussions on defining the mandate and scope of work. The working group had their first meeting in November 2024.

Promote networking among SFU researchers.

- Visual & Interactive Computing Institute (VINCI) held its inaugural public event, Shaping the Future with AI: Innovations in Visual & Interactive Computing, on November 26, 2024. Attracting around 250 attendees, including students, faculty, staff, industry professionals, community partners, and alumni, the event showcased VINCI's role in advancing AI research and fostering innovation.

( ): N/A

: Under development





## SUPPORTING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

: To identify and address the concerns and challenges experienced by postdoctoral fellows and provide a central managed point of support for them.: To continue to build on the administrative support available to the postdoctoral fellows, prioritize and address the needs raised by the postdoctoral fellows, and find ways to expand the professional development opportunities for postdoctoral fellows.

: The working group membership was renewed this year and all of the high priority challenges identified previously by the postdoctoral fellows have been addressed. The Coordinator, Postdoctoral Affairs is actively engaged with postdoctoral fellows and other units to provide ongoing administrative support to the postdoctoral community and bring any important issues to the awareness of the working group. A monthly newsletter is now being sent out to postdoctoral fellows that provides information on upcoming events, fellowships, awards, and other important resources and opportunities. Some of the other highlights for this year include establishing a set of guidelines that support the appointment of postdoctoral fellows for teaching positions and establishing a base salary to ensure postdoctoral fellows are not earning below the living wage.

VPRI portfolio lead: Valorie Crooks, Associate Vice-President, Research  
Faculty lead: N/A

Enhance professional development support •  
for postdoctoral fellows at SFU.

In collaboration with UBC, the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation & Graduate Studies hosted a Career Symposium for postdoctoral fellows and graduate students focused on finding and applying for academic positions and thriving in the position.

- A professional development workshop for postdoctoral fellows on “Dealing with Conflict Situations: Respectful Learning Environments and

Continue to work on prioritizing the needs in consultation with postdoctoral fellows at SFU.

- A set of guidelines has been made available to support faculty and department administrators involved in the appointment of postdoctoral fellows for teaching opportunities at SFU.
- With effect from July 1, 2024, all faculties and departments have been asked to adjust the salaries of internal postdoctoral fellows for new appointments and contract renewals to ensure they are earning at or above the living wage determined by Living Wage for Families BC.
- Postdoctoral fellows can now seek conflict resolution coaching support from Conflict Resolution and Investigation Specialist within the Office of the Vice-President, People, Equity and Inclusion.
- We have addressed all six areas for improving the postdoctoral experience that were identified by the SFU Postdoctoral Association.

Raise the profile and awareness of postdoctoral fellows at SFU.

- The home website for postdoctoral fellows has been re-designed and is updated regularly to include additional resources for postdoctoral fellows.
- Beginning May 2024, a monthly newsletter is being sent to postdoctoral fellows that provides information on upcoming events, fellowships, awards, and other important information and opportunities for postdoctoral fellows at SFU.
- A Fall, 2024 Appreciation and Welcome Day was hosted by the Postdoctoral Association and the Office of the Vice President Research & Innovation to orient new and returning postdoctoral fellows to SFU and provide opportunities for professional development and networking.
- To celebrate and recognize the pivotal contributions of postdoctoral fellows to research and discovery, we highlighted their stories on the SFU Dashboard during the National Postdoc Appreciation Week.

Build on the current level of administrative support available to postdoctoral fellows at SFU.

- The Coordinator, Postdoctoral Affairs has been actively working with postdoctoral fellows and administrators to provide continuous support for the postdoc community.
- Institutional postdoctoral fellowship application processes were officially transferred to the VPRI office (e.g., Banting Fellowships). The Coordinator, Postdoctoral Affairs will promote tri-agency and other opportunities (e.g.- MITACs) while supporting institutional processes for these competitions.

Explore ways to improve funding support for postdoctoral fellows at SFU.

- The VPRI office has established a point of contact and is working with Advancement & Alumni Engagement to develop cases for support to identify private funding opportunities for postdoctoral fellows.
- In Nov 2024, the new Vice President Research & Innovation (VPRI) Postdoctoral Supplementary Travel Award was piloted. To be launched in January 2025, this annual allocation of \$30,000 is designed to advance the professional development of SFU's postdoctoral fellows by providing supplemental financial support for travel to present or disseminate scholarly work at events (e.g., conferences, symposia, workshops).

(f): We have limited communications resources available to build a strong plan to help raise the profile and visibility of postdoctoral fellows and their research.

: [Supporting postdoctoral fellows](#)

## VALUING AND MEASURING SCHOLARLY IMPACT

**Objective:** 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 and develop materials to support departmental processes (e.g., TPCs) and make them available to the community.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Background:** Considering the types of scholarly impact at SFU, gather a deeper understanding of the current university landscape (practices & processes) within tenure and promotion committees, faculty hiring and renewal committees and administrative levers & analyze the data gathered.

**Findings:** To get a deeper understanding of how we value and measure scholarly impact across SFU's departments and faculties we interviewed 84% of the current TPC Chairs. The preliminary analysis of the data has been done to identify emergent themes, and a detailed analysis is in progress.

VPRI portfolio lead: Elicia Maine, Associate Vice-President, Knowledge Mobilization and Innovation

Faculty lead: Carman Neustaedter, Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

### PROJECT DETAILS

Continue the momentum of the work done by the first working group that was established to kick start the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The membership of the working group was renewed for another year (June 2024 - May 2025) and some new members were added to maintain representation across different faculties.</li></ul>
Understand and analyze the current Tenure Promotion Committee (TPC) practices across SFU departments and faculties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The TPC sub-committee completed semi structured interviews with 36 TPC chairs across the university (84% of all the TPC Chairs) to better understand different practices of research and scholarly assessment at SFU and examine whether they align with the way SFU values research impact.</li><li>The sub-committee has completed a preliminary analysis using the data gathered from the interviews, departmental guidelines for TPC submissions and Institutional Research Planning by department.</li><li>The complete synthesis &amp; analysis is expected to be completed by Spring 2025 using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis tools to find emergent themes, as well as commonalities and diversity across different departments and faculties. This analysis will inform the development of outputs to support the TPC's assessment of scholarly impact.</li></ul>
Review SFU internal awards and procedures and explore opportunities to include assessment criteria alternatives to traditional academic metrics, and guidance on how to use these.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The administrative sub-committee reviewed an environmental scan of external research awards offered at other universities and some internal faculty awards. Based on that, the sub-committee provided input, promising practices for the new suite of SFU Excellence in Research Awards.</li><li>The subcommittee has representation on the awards committee in the form of a non-voting member to provide ongoing guidance on evaluation criteria and matrix etc.</li><li>This sub-committee also shared their input in response to the community consultation email to review proposed changes to the Distinguished SFU Professor Award policy.</li></ul>

Build resources for faculty to improve the development of strong, competitive, impact narratives for funding (internal and external) opportunities

- Work is in progress by the administrative sub-committee to identify resources and guides to create a guide for writing impact narratives.

Understand and analyze the resources that SFU provides to guide faculty search and renewal practices across SFU departments and faculties.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• : Develop a structure for Human Participants Research review at SFU that has increased capacity to work with First Nations (FN) and review FN-related protocols

• : A restructuring of the Research Ethics Office resulted in a slowdown in progress, as the focus of the office had to move away from specialized areas and towards ensuring continuity for all researchers. Despite this, work on the review of the form has begun, and options are currently being discussed for Indigenous membership or review support for the REB.

VPRI portfolio lead: Trevor Davis, ED Research Operations

Faculty lead: Vicki Kelly, Faculty of Education

## PROJECT DETAILS

• Increase Research Ethics Board and Office of Research Ethics' (ORE) capacity to manage Indigenous ethics, integrate principles into way of working in ORE.

## **BUILDING WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH SPACE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**



- Raise awareness around events highlighting the SFU research experience for undergraduates at the institution.



To build on the current level of administrative support and resources (including online information) available to new and continuing faculty members in carrying out their research.

- The Faculty Relations website has been updated to provide more detailed information for new faculty about different units within SFU, and other materials as an introduction to the administrative and service departments at the university.
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