



St. Thomas
UNIVERSITY

Strategic Research Plan
2019-2024

April 18, 2019

“St. Thomas University recognizes the importance of scholarly research to achieving its goal of excellence in undergraduate liberal arts education and in making a distinctive contribution to society. ...Through our research and creative activities, St. Thomas University is committed to being a positive and transforming presence in society. ...We foster scholarship and research because we recognize their role in the advancement of knowledge and in sustaining the quality of teaching and the intellectual life of the University.” - *St. Thomas University Strategic Plan, 2013-2018*, pp. 7,10.

RESEARCH AT ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

St. Thomas University has a flourishing undergraduate liberal arts program and two professional programs, one in education, the other in social work. Within its B.A. degree, there is a strong representation of both the social sciences and the humanities. Majors are offered in Anthropology, Catholic Studies, Communications and Public Policy, Criminology & Criminal Justice, Economics, English Language and Literature, Environment and Society, Fine Arts, French, Gerontology, Great Books, History, Human Rights, Interdisciplinary Studies, International Relations, Irish Studies, Journalism, Law, Politics, and Society, Mathematics, Native Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Romance Languages, Science and Technology Studies, Sociology, Spanish and Latin American Studies, and Women’s Studies and Gender Studies. (A current listing of academic departments, programs, majors, and minors is available here: [https://www.stu.ca/bachelorofarts.](https://www.stu.ca/bachelorofarts))

In recent years, St. Thomas University has continued to build on its expertise in liberal arts to significantly expand its research and scholarship. For example, the University’s success rates in SSHRC competitions have improved dramatically in the past five years. Recent University initiatives, including the establishment of a “Certificate in Experiential Learning and Community Engagement,” also bode well for STU researchers given their commitment to incorporating undergraduate students into their scholarly and creative endeavours.

Faculty have produced first-rate research during the period covered by the University’s third *Strategic Research Plan (2014-2019)*, as is evidenced by international and national awards, the success of two e-journals (*Narrative Works* and the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies/Revue d’études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick*) housed at our institution, as well as numerous books and peer-reviewed articles. In addition, faculty have produced theatre, poetry, art, and musical compositions. To date, faculty research has been funded by a variety of external sources including: SSHRC; NSERC; CIHR; the CRC Secretariat; CIDA; DIAND; Health Canada; Justice Canada; Human Resources Development Canada; Canadian Heritage; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; Mitacs; Status of Women Canada; The Province of New Brunswick; the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation; the New Brunswick Council on the Arts; the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation; the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation; the Ontario AIDS Network; the Shastri Indo-Canadian

Institute; the National Institute for Education (US); the Donner Foundation; the McConnell Foundation; Literacy Canada; MindCare New Brunswick; and St. Thomas University's own Frank McKenna Centre for Communications and Public Policy. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) has also contributed financial support for the provision of research infrastructure. In addition, faculty research has been funded by focused internal grants financed in part by the University.

While the University recognizes the importance of, and provides support for, all areas of research and creative work undertaken by its faculty, we have identified eight areas where the University i) boasts a critical mass of expertise and/or ii) has identified key opportunities for developing its capacity. They are:

1. Narrative Studies
2. Global and International Studies
3. Indigenous Studies & Indigenous Knowledge
4. Health, Wellness, and Aging
5. Social Justice, Human Rights, and Identities
6. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
7. Arts and Culture
8. New Brunswick Studies

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

We have identified two goals for our Strategic Research Plan and established a number of objectives to realize these goals.

GOAL ONE: To have faculty conduct high quality, ethically-sound, research in fields that include, but are not limited to, those listed as key areas in the Strategic Research Plan.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: To provide consistent and high-quality internal and external funding support for faculty.

STRATEGIES: The Senate Research Committee oversees a wide variety of internal funding support opportunities including Conference Travel Grants, Conference Organizer Awards, General Research Grants, Research Assistant Grants, and SSHRC Explore Awards. These initiatives serve a dual purpose – to facilitate scholarly and creative endeavours through the awarding of funds and to assist faculty in developing grant-writing skills that can be employed to secure external awards. The Office of Research Services, in turn, is responsible for maintaining up-to-date knowledge of the external funding landscape and for providing one-on-one mentoring for external applicants.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: To publicize, support, and enforce regulations regarding the ethical conduct of research.

STRATEGIES: St. Thomas University remains committed to maintaining the highest levels of research integrity and data management. Our revised Integrity in Research Policy (anticipated launch, 2019) provides detailed instructions and processes for both encouraging the ethical conduct of research and investigating potential breaches. Both the Senate Research Committee and the STU Research Ethics Board are committed to publicizing institutional and Tri-Council requirements for the ethical conduct of research. The Office of Research Services will work closely with the University's Information Technology Services office to facilitate faculty research data collection, preservation, and disposal.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: To strengthen and extend interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, and community research partnerships.

STRATEGIES: The University works closely with York Manor, the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN), the New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network (SPRN), and a wide range of other community-focused organizations. STU's membership in the Springboard Atlantic network and its ongoing relationship with the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation provide opportunities for faculty to pursue social innovation enterprises that agree in principle with the values and ethics of a liberal arts education. The University's small size and vitality combine to promote a wide range of interdisciplinary collaborations between, for example, Sociology and Gerontology, Social Work and Drama, and Human Rights and Communications and Public Policy. We will continue to enthusiastically support such endeavours by encouraging awareness of faculty achievements and interests, and by continuing to support on-campus research centres such as the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative.

OBJECTIVE 1.4: To enhance the reputation of the University as a national and international leader in narrative studies.

STRATEGIES: The University currently hosts a Canada Research Chair in Narrative Studies with the collaboration of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Narrative (CIRN). CFI funding played a key role in the development of this narrative studies laboratory. Dr. Clive Baldwin (Social Work), the CRC in Narrative Studies, has taken a lead role as Director of CIRN. The University will leverage and supplement the activities of the Research Centre in order to actively support the work of individual faculty members and teams whose research focuses on narrative studies.

OBJECTIVE 1.5: To increase the University's capacity and productivity in the field of global and international studies.

STRATEGIES: In 2011, STU's Global and International Studies Initiative was funded by an Aid to Small Universities grant. Under this initiative, the GISI elevated the discussion and

interest in global research from all disciplines. In 2016, the University appointed Dr. Matthew Hayes (Sociology) as a CRC in Global and International Studies. Dr. Hayes has played an important role in promoting a regular GISI seminar series on campus and in incorporating undergraduate students into his research endeavours – including a field school in Ecuador in 2019. The University will support continued growth in the areas of Global and International research, and assist its faculty in securing a wide audience for their work.

OBJECTIVE 1.6: To expand our support for Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Knowledge

STRATEGIES: In 1984, St. Thomas University became the first university in the country to establish a Chair in Native Studies. In 2008, the New Brunswick government appointed St. Thomas University as the lead institution for a province-wide initiative to encourage post-secondary participation among Indigenous youth. Our institution has embraced this responsibility and, in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, has enhanced its commitment to reconciliation with Canada's first peoples. Building upon previous initiatives, including a highly successful SSHRC-funded program to help revitalize the use of the Maliseet language, and offering courses in the Elsipogtog First Nation, St. Thomas University will enhance its focus on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Knowledge. In doing so, it will provide opportunities for Indigenous youth to participate directly in these research endeavours -- Indigenous students represent roughly ten per cent of St. Thomas University's student population (a figure that exceeds both provincial and national averages).

OBJECTIVE 1.7: To increase research capacity in health, wellness, and aging.

STRATEGIES: The University will encourage research on health and wellness from a social sciences and humanities perspective. In doing so, it will build upon its growing reputation as a centre for excellence in aging studies. These efforts will include leveraging the newly appointed New Brunswick Health Research Foundation-funded Chair in Community Health and Aging (Dr. Albert Banerjee) to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration on health and aging research across campus. In addition, the University will continue to encourage and support health and wellness research with marginalized populations of all definitions.

OBJECTIVE 1.8: To increase our emphasis on social justice, human rights, and identities, including emerging models of social engagement.

STRATEGIES: By building upon its growing strengths in social justice, human rights, and identities scholarship, the University will continue to support faculty in a wide variety of related areas including Human Rights, Indigenous knowledge, Women's and Gender Studies, marginalized communities, law, and LGBTQ studies. With emerging modes of social engagement in mind, the University will assist faculty who are keen to pursue their research interests in social justice, human rights, and identities both locally and globally.

OBJECTIVE 1.9: To increase existing capacity in the field of environmental sustainability and climate change.

STRATEGIES: The University boasts a long tradition of engaging in environmental sustainability research. While many institutions are addressing climate change through science and engineering initiatives, social science and humanities research has an important role to play in understanding and promoting sustainable models of human activity. Climate change and environmentally unsustainable behaviour are fundamentally human-caused problems. St. Thomas University's focus on the social sciences and humanities allows for the examination of environmental challenges from the standpoints of human behaviour and society.

OBJECTIVE 1.10: To encourage, and enhance support for, scholarship and creative works in arts and culture.

STRATEGIES: There is a significant amount of research currently conducted at St. Thomas University that can broadly be described as focusing on literature, culture, and fine arts. The University will continue to support faculty working in these areas. In doing so, it recognizes the growing importance of “research creation” opportunities that combine “creative and academic research practices” in which the “creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms).”¹ In addition, the Senate Research Committee will continue to ensure that internal funding opportunities derived from Collective Agreement “Professional Development” provisions are open to artists and practitioners who focus more on *producing and creating* rather than studying or examining literature and art.

OBJECTIVE 1.11: To facilitate faculty members' contributions to the development of evidence-based public policy in New Brunswick and beyond.

STRATEGIES: Our 2007-2017 CRC in New Brunswick Studies helped to reinforce and consolidate St. Thomas University's tradition of seeking to contribute to its surrounding communities. The *Journal of New Brunswick Studies/ Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick*, the *New Brunswick Literary Encyclopedia*, and the *New Brunswick Literature Curriculum in English* are a few tangible legacies of this impact. The University's ongoing involvement with a revamped New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network (which will soon pilot funding opportunities for policy-related social innovation research) also plays an important role in pursuing this objective, as does the University's Frank McKenna Centre for Communications and Public Policy.

¹ SSHRC, “Research Creation.” <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22>

GOAL TWO: To increase external and internal support for research and dissemination at St. Thomas University.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: To increase faculty success in securing external resources for research and scholarship.

STRATEGIES: While the University recognizes that not all research projects require external funding, it expects faculty engaged in cost-intensive research to develop externally funded research initiatives to support such endeavors, including training students as future researchers. The Office of Research Services offers competitions to provide internal seed grants, modeled on SSHRC criteria and scoring grids, that fund small projects to enable researchers to develop projects in order to apply for more substantial external research funding. During the next five years, the University will continue its efforts to assist faculty in developing successful funding applications (Tri-Council and other funding agencies).

OBJECTIVE 2.2: To increase internal resources for research and scholarship.

STRATEGIES: The University will build upon its investment in research to ensure that it is fully utilized. It will continue to conduct an annual review of its mechanisms for providing internal support for research so that available funds are targeted in areas that are most effective and can be leveraged to assist St. Thomas faculty in obtaining external funding. To this end, the Senate Research Committee will use the recently increased SSHRC Institutional Grant to provide larger internal research grants in its annual November competition – in the form of SSHRC Explore Awards. The Office of Research Services is also working closely with the Office of Advancement to create a new Student Research Internship Fund.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: To provide researchers with information, mentoring and support.

STRATEGIES: The University will continue to support all researchers by offering orientation sessions, grant writing sessions, and mentoring. The research website will be updated regularly, and e-newsletters will continue to inform researchers about research conferences and calls for papers/proposals as well as new workshops. The funding Bulletin provides new and existing funding opportunities, and competitions for Tri-Council and other grants. The Faculty Achievement Communiqué publicizes faculty achievements and, in doing so, serves as an important tool for fostering potential collaborations.

OBJECTIVE 2.4: To increase the contribution to research by student researchers.

STRATEGIES: Students at St. Thomas are already active participants in research studies and in the University's annual Student Research & Ideas Fair. To increase this activity, the University will assist researchers in applying for, and using external grants, to support

students at national and international conferences. The University student employment program and external

research grants provide research assistantships for many undergraduate students at our university. The Senate Research Committee now provides Research Assistantships as a category of internal grants that permit faculty to hire students for short-term projects. In addition, the SRC also awards the annual Rosemary Clews Student Internship. Moreover, as noted above, the Office of Research Services is working closely with the Office of Advancement to create a new student research internship fund.

OBJECTIVE 2.5: To bring greater attention to the value of research and extra-university research partnerships.

STRATEGIES: The University will renew and enhance its institutional commitment to celebrating, promoting, and indeed foregrounding research and knowledge creation as one of our principal missions as a university. The Office of Research Services will work closely with the Offices of Communications and Advancement to highlight research and knowledge-creation achievements. The Office of Research Services will continue to provide concrete support (e.g. media training) for faculty members who are keen to communicate their findings beyond academic audiences.