

SFU's 2023 STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN (SRP) PROGRESS REPORT FOR YEAR 2023

Message from the Vice-President, Research and International

When we launched Simon Fraser University's (SFU) new Strategic Research Plan (SRP) in January 2023, it was accompanied by an [implementation plan](#). The implementation plan described 10 projects rooted in community feedback about barriers to research success at SFU. We committed to reporting on and updating this “living plan” each year.

The SRP and its associated implementation plan are not something that the VPRI portfolio/team works on alone—these are documents for SFU as a whole. In fact, many of the big accomplishments of 2023 came from work carried out in other parts of the university. Our local team sometimes led—but often simply supported—the fantastic work of others across the university who made change happen. So, thanks to all who contributed to making research better at SFU in 2023!

I am very proud of the progress we have made in our first year. We set 2023 goals for six of our projects and then “got to work.” The report below includes more detail, but I would like to highlight some of the progress for each of our six active 2023 projects:

- **Supporting SRP Priority Areas** – We started by building supports for one of our research priorities, [Community-Centred Climate Innovation](#) (C3I). We hired Executive Director, [Alison Shaw](#) to lead the C3I effort and to bring the SFU community together around this theme. We also did early work in another research priority, “Supporting health and wellness of individuals, populations and communities,” organizing community events and consultations around research in the proposed SFU Medical School.
- **Supporting Research Graduate Students** – Senate, thanks to the leadership of the Dean of Graduate Studies approved a university minimum income for PhD students. The Board of Governors also approved a new \$5,400 PhD scholarship for PhD students.
- **Supporting Postdoctoral Fellows** – We established the VPRI Office as the new home for services delivered to postdoctoral fellows. The new team systematically worked through several concerns raised by postdoctoral fellows and made important changes to the benefits and services they receive.
- **Valuing and Measuring Scholarly Impact** – A working group has been established which includes representation from all faculties, the VPRI portfolio, SFU Library, and the Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic. That working group has created sub-committees on Tenure and Promotion Committee (TPC) processes, faculty renewal and retention, and administrative practices. Resources have been made available to the community and work is underway in the committees.
- **Decolonizing Indigenous Research Ethics** – The Indigenous Ethics Dialogues, led by Education Professor Vicki Kelly brought key First Nations Knowledge Holders to campus to immerse VPRI staff and Research Ethics Board (REB) members in Indigenous ethics principles, history and culture. 15 Dialogues sessions with local First Nations Knowledge Holders served to build capacity and understanding in SFU faculty and staff, but also indicated to participating First Nations peoples our willingness to engage on their terms.
- **Building World-Class Research Space and Infrastructure** – Working closely with the Faculty of Science and Facilities Services, a plan for renovation of the Shrum Sciences Complex and the South Sciences Building was developed. Work is already underway, and a five-year plan has prioritized more than \$20 million in needed repairs for spaces in those buildings.

Those are just some of the incredible highlights and achievements made over the past—and our first—year of our 2023-2028 SRP. Below you will find a more detailed summary of 2023 implementation plan accomplishments. We look forward to setting new goals for 2024 and hope to see another productive year in SRP implementation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dugan O'Neil". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Dugan O'Neil
Vice-President Research and International

Details of all implementation plan priority projects are published below.

Project Title: Supporting SRP Priority Areas | Community-Centred Climate Innovation (C3I)

Project Objective: As climate change intensifies, its effects are increasingly felt within and across communities. New strategies are needed to adapt, decarbonize, and advance equity and overall community resilience and sustainability. SFU sees this as an opportunity to elevate community partnership and co-creation research to address this urgent challenge. C3I is developing high-impact research-to-practice platforms to support research that focuses on co-creating, implementing and evaluating contextually-driven, evidence-based, low carbon resilience approaches across communities and sectors. Learn more at sfu.ca/climate-innovation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overarching goal for the year: To start activating C3I as a transformative research priority and build the organizational infrastructure/governance structure.

Progress: An executive director (ED) has been hired to lead C3I; three primary projects have been launched; six funding proposals have been written, new and existing partners have been engaged (including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Geological Survey of Canada); three related New Frontiers Research Fund - Transformation teams have been convened; a draft C3I governance structure and framework has been established with different support units about how to coordinate and streamline to implement a C3I delivery platform (over two workshops); over 10 C3I presentations have been delivered; and diverse scholars at SFU and otherwise have been engaged.

PROJECT LEADS

VPRI Portfolio lead	Alison Shaw, Executive Director, Community-Centred Climate	Faculty lead	
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PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Build upon existing strengths & capacities and to foster collaboration across disciplines and sectors within and beyond the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two workshops (September and November) held with the support units to create a collaborative ecosystem to catalyse, support and govern C3I in the coming months Plan to host workshops with the research and partners community in 2024
Identify long-term, pipeline funding partners/opportunities	2023 Flagship C3I projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) SFU’s Hydrogen Hub ii) \$1 million NSERC iii) \$750,000 Philanthropic Funding, Natural Solutions Initiative Three New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF) proposals in the pipeline
Align C3I research community/network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged with over 50 climate-related faculty/students; a number of faculties Showcased four C3I-related projects
Communication and marketing (C&M) strategy	C3I C&M Strategy, including a new website and content/key messaging is being developed

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (IF ANY)

REPORTING WEBPAGE FOR DETAILED UPDATES

Under development: www.sfu.ca/climate-innovation

Project Title: Supporting Research Graduate Students

Project Objective: Study ways (including tuition waivers, scholarships, bursaries, housing) to shift our limited resources to better support existing graduate students and to grow our research graduate student body.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overarching goal for the year: To set a university-wide minimum funding level for PhD students by the end of 2023.

Progress: After discussions and consultations with key stakeholders led by Mary O'Brien, Dean and Vice-Provost, Graduate Studies, minimum funding support of \$28,000/year received Senate approval as a graduate general regulation in December 2023.

PROJECT LEADS

VPRI Portfolio lead	Dugan O'Neil, Vice-President, Research and International	Faculty lead	Mary O'Brien, Dean and Vice-Provost, Graduate Studies
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PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Set a university-wide minimum funding level for PhD students by the end of 2023	<p>A minimum funding policy (annual funding of at least \$28,000 for 12 terms) that applies to all research PhD students was approved by the Senate in December 2023.</p> <p>Programs will develop their own funding policies that align with the university-wide policy. They will be provided with a template that—among other things—requires them to provide their minimum funding level (at least \$28,000) and number of terms of funding (at least 12). These will be approved by Graduate Program Committees and Graduate Studies. Programs are encouraged to fund continuing PhD students (i.e., those who began their programs before September 2024) at these levels.</p>

PROJECT DETAILS	
SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Examine all support mechanisms (e.g., scholarships, bursaries, tuition, housing) for graduate students	<p>In June 2023, the Board of Governors approved a \$5,400 scholarship for eligible PhD students entering programs in fall 2023 and those in the first four years of their program. This is the PhD Research Scholarship.</p> <p>Other sources of funding include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and awards disbursed by Graduate Studies (e.g., base allocation student support (BASS)-funded awards such as Graduate Fellowships (GF) and Minor Research Awards); • Program-specific awards or scholarships (e.g., donor awards); • Scholarship funding provided by a supervisor; • Employment TA assignments; • Employment RA assignments; • Sessional teaching; and • Other external scholarships or awards (e.g., Tri-Agency awards, Mitacs).

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (IF ANY)

REPORTING WEBPAGE FOR DETAILED UPDATES

www.sfu.ca/research/strategic-research-plan/implementation-plan/supporting-research-graduate-students

Project Title: Supporting Postdoctoral Fellows

Project Objective: To identify and address the concerns and challenges experienced by postdoctoral fellows and provide a central managed point of support for them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overarching goal for the year: Provide a central managed point of support for postdoctoral fellows.

Progress: The VPRI Office has become the central area of administrative support for postdoctoral fellows and all the postdoctoral fellow support provided by Graduate Studies has transitioned to the VPRI Office. Coordinator, Postdoctoral Affairs is a new position in the VPRI Office that is the central point-of-contact for postdoctoral fellows, and manages all related enquiries.

PROJECT LEADS

VPRI Portfolio lead	Valorie Crooks, Associate Vice-President, Research, pro tem	Faculty lead	Naomi Krogman, Dean, Faculty of Environment
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PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Build on the current level of administrative support that the postdoctoral fellows are receiving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A working group with representation from the Postdoctoral Association, Graduate Studies, VPRI portfolio, Human Resources, and staff and faculty members has been established to address the project goals • The new position of Coordinator, Postdoctoral Affairs is in the VPRI Office, which is the central point-of-contact for postdoctoral fellows
Raise the profile and awareness of postdoctoral fellows at SFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new standalone website for postdoctoral fellows has been set up • To honour National Postdoctoral Appreciation Week, profiles of postdoctoral fellows and their research were highlighted and included in SFU's What's On newsletter, sent to all faculty and staff • Postdoctoral Fellows Welcome Day was held in October to help postdoctoral fellows learn more about the services and research supports available to them across SFU • A communications and marketing strategy was developed to raise the profile of postdoctoral fellows
Explore ways to improve funding support for postdoctoral fellows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VPRI has committed top-up research funding of \$15,000 to every successful Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship applicant

PROJECT DETAILS	
SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
<p>Prioritize and address the challenges that have been raised</p> <p><u>Highest Priority Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve Postdoctoral Benefits Plan 2. More support for external postdoctoral fellows 3. Housing options 4. Teaching options for postdoctoral fellows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An improved benefits plan offering was implemented in June (incl. PI bridge fund) • External postdoctoral fellows can now access the same benefits plan as internal postdoctoral fellows. It has also been clarified that they have access to library, gym, office, labs, equipment and supplies, etc. • An MOU has been finalized between Residence and Housing and the VPRI Office that will provide postdoctoral fellows with access to two residential units on campus • A temporary solution has been created where an exception request is submitted to SFUFA for a postdoctoral fellow to be appointed as a Limited Term Lecturer. Work continues on finding a longer-term solution.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (IF ANY)

REPORTING WEBPAGE FOR DETAILED UPDATES

www.sfu.ca/research/strategic-research-plan/implementation-plan/supporting-postdoctoral-fellows

Project Title: Valuing and Measuring Scholarly Impact

Project 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

Overarching goal for the year: To form a working group, develop shared definitions of core scholarly impact concepts for the university to support understanding and alignment and conduct a broad assessment of scholarly impact incentive and reward structures.

Progress: A working group has been established which includes representation from all faculties, the VPRI portfolio, SFU Library, and the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic and project goals have been drafted.

Considering the types of scholarly impact at SFU, three subcommittees have been formed to deliver on the project goals with specific areas of focus:

1. Tenure Promotion Committees;
2. Faculty Renewal & Retention; and
3. Administrative.

PROJECT LEADS

VPRI Portfolio lead	Elicia Maine, Associate Vice-President, Knowledge Mobilization and Innovation	Faculty lead	Carman Neustaedter, Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology
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PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Develop shared definitions of core scholarly impact concepts for SFU to support understanding and alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected a library of background literature and tools on research assessment, defining research impact and international initiatives The working group has established a definition of Valuing and Measuring Scholarly Impact (VMSI) for alignment of the working group and sub-committees, as well as for conducting interviewees for TPC Chairs

PROJECT DETAILS	
SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Conduct a broad review of scholarly impact incentive and reward structures at SFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three sub-committees have identified some specific short-term goals (the tenure of these sub-committees ends in April 2024) that are listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an interview questionnaire for TPC Chairs to understand current TPC practices across different departments across the university Explore and gather knowledge about current guidelines and practices within hiring and search committees across different departments at the university Examine SFU internal awards and procedures to assess whether and how they currently value and measure scholarly impact
Develop recommendations for administrators, faculty, tenure and promotion committees, and hiring committees to enhance scholarly impact assessment and administrative recognition approaches such as awards, faculty renewal plans and department or faculty evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The working group will develop these recommendations and materials over a longer-term horizon as more understanding and knowledge is gathered through the above review of the current practices at the university that involve scholarly impact

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (IF ANY)

There are moving targets in the university, i.e., information is being updated/similar work being done by various central units (example: new equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training module and guidelines for TPC’s by Faculty Relations) that this project working group needs to be aware of. This is important so that we do not make our work a replication of what is already being done and that we assess the current 'state of the art' as opposed to historical materials. The output/deliverables for this project will come in the form of suggestions and recommendations, but it is not clear if they will be picked up/implemented.

REPORTING WEBPAGE FOR DETAILED UPDATES

www.sfu.ca/research/strategic-research-plan/implementation-plan/valuing-and-measuring-scholarly-impact

Project Title: Decolonizing Indigenous Research Ethics

Project Objective: 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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overarching goal for the year: Raise awareness and build knowledge of local Indigenous history, culture and viewpoints in SFU ethics staff, members of the Research Ethics Board and administrators.

Progress: The Indigenous Ethics Dialogues, led by Education Professor Vicki Kelly, brought key First Nations Knowledge Holders to campus to immerse VPRI staff and REB members in Indigenous ethics principles, history and culture. The 15 sessions culminated in several ceremonies—one led by Tsleil-Waututh and the other by Squamish nation representatives. Work has begun on seeking guidance from Indigenous faculty and related committees at SFU to determine the appropriate local structure for a Council to guide the work.

PROJECT LEADS

VPRI Portfolio lead	Trevor Davis, Executive Director, Research Operations	Faculty lead	Vicki Kelly, Professor, Faculty of Education (Year
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PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Raise awareness and build capacity to do this work within Research Ethics staff, REB members and VPRI leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 Dialogues sessions with local First Nations Knowledge Holders served to build capacity and understanding in SFU faculty and staff, but also indicated to the participating First Nations peoples our willingness to engage on their terms • Feedback: “No one from our nation has ever been invited to this campus to simply tell our stories in this way, so this is a first for both of us.” • The concluding ceremonies not only marked the occasion, but served as a charge to the participants to put this knowledge into action
Directly consult with local communities and seek guidance from First Nations Knowledge Holders and Elders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squamish Nation: collaborated on the creation of research ‘intake forms’ and discussions continue regarding how the First Nations’ priorities can be brought to researchers • Connections made with Tsleil-Waututh and Tsawwassen First Nations, as well as with Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (a key research partner)
Convene a local structure to guide this work, if deemed appropriate through the consultation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting conducted with Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Reconciliation Committee and with Indigenous Studies to seek feedback

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (IF ANY)

REPORTING WEBPAGE FOR DETAILED UPDATES

www.sfu.ca/research/strategic-research-plan/implementation-plan/decolonizing-indigenous-research-ethics

Project Title: Building world-class research space and infrastructure

Project Objective: Increase the quality and availability of world-class research infrastructure and supporting infrastructure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overarching goal for the year: Develop plans and implement upgrades for previously identified key infrastructure deficiencies and begin implementation.

Progress: South Sciences Building (SSB) upgrade projects are well underway, with planning substantially completed for Physics and Kinesiology building work in future years. Planning and advocacy work for new Life Sciences and Medical School buildings has been continuing at pace. Planning and advocacy for Wi-Fi and cellular coverage upgrades has taken place.

PROJECT LEADS

VPRI Portfolio lead	Trevor Davis, Executive Director, Research Operations	Faculty lead	Angela Brooks-Wilson, Dean of Science
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PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Develop plans for upgrades to previously identified deficiencies with the largest impact on research programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSB upgrades were identified as highest priority due to issues with health and human safety, overheating and potential leaks \$4.8 million was allocated to projects that include wall, roofing, HVAC and emergency power upgrades. Several of the building system projects are underway or close to completion
Implement upgrades for key deficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of multiple projects is underway. Planning has commenced for interior work in Biological Sciences. The three-year plan commits \$13.4 million to address concerns across the Shrum buildings.
Working with Facilities Services, advocate for new research spaces on campuses, including the Life Sciences Building (LSB) and Medical School Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive LSB planning was undertaken and a detailed proposal submitted to government to align with the Medical School planning. Medical School Building planning continues.
Seeking funding to refresh Supercomputer Cedar resources, and begin procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work carried out throughout 2023 with federal and provincial funding partners. Significant progress but no formal funding announcement in 2023

PROJECT DETAILS

SUB GOALS	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Support IT Services in upgrading Wi-Fi and cellular coverage across campuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement work has taken place to identify a new carrier • New cellular antennae locations are being considered. • Planning has taken place to upgrade network cabling and to increase Wi-Fi coverage in poorly served areas. • A funding request has been submitted.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES (IF ANY)

The number of small projects involved in the Shrum upgrade work and the age of the underlying building infrastructure, coupled with the fact that the buildings remain in constant use, require a complex implementation plan.

REPORTING WEBPAGE FOR DETAILED UPDATES

www.sfu.ca/research/strategic-research-plan/implementation-plan/building-world-class-research-space-and-infrastructure