

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN 2009-2014

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 Mission Statement, 2005-2010 Strategic Plan).

St. Thomas is a flourishing undergraduate liberal arts university. At St. Thomas, newer focal areas such as human rights, gerontology, criminology, and journalism, in addition to our more established professional programmes of education and social work, complement our thriving liberal arts research, scholarship, and teaching activities. In recent years St. Thomas University has continued to build on its expertise in liberal arts to significantly expand its research and scholarship. Recent initiatives by the province of New Brunswick include the establishment of a provincial graduate studies programme, which will enhance the research efforts at the University substantially. The increased research opportunities for faculty and students presented by the possibility of a graduate programme have already had an impact on future research planning at the University.

During the six years covered by the University's previous Strategic Research Plan (2003-2009), St. Thomas faculty have produced first-rate research in a wide range of social science and humanities disciplines. To date faculty research has been funded by a variety of external sources including SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR, CRC Secretariat, CIDA, DIAND, Health Canada, Justice Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Canadian Heritage, The Province of New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation, business sources and charitable foundations. Much research has also been funded by focused internal grants financed in part by SSHRC Institutional Grants. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation has also contributed financial support for the provision of research infrastructure.

This current strategic research plan (2009-2014), based on wide consultation with the University community, identifies and describes six focal areas for our research efforts:

1. Qualitative analysis
2. Human Rights and Social Justice
3. New Brunswick Studies, Atlantic Region
4. Narrative Studies
5. Global and International Studies
6. Scholarship on Learning and Teaching

A. GOALS and OBJECTIVES

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

GOAL ONE: *To have faculty conduct high quality research, particularly in the focal areas in which we have existing expertise.*

Objective 1.1: *To strengthen and extend interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and community research partnerships.*

Strategies:

Through its “Research Circle” initiative, a project that makes funds available for small groups of faculty to meet over a meal to discuss common research themes, the Research Office will facilitate communication between and collaboration among researchers in all Departments at St. Thomas University. The University will seek information about possibilities for inter-institutional and community partnerships, and will apprise faculty of them through a newly revised research web site, electronic messages, memoranda, meetings, and information sessions. The University will support new research initiatives through internal funding and developing our knowledge base about external support. Researchers will be encouraged to expand existing community collaborations. External funding for individual and team research studies at St. Thomas University as well as inter-institutional and inter-sectoral collaborations will be pursued by the Research Office. Canada Research Chairs will continue to play a key role in forging partnerships with colleagues elsewhere and with community partners. Further, St. Thomas is playing an important role in the Graduate Studies and Research Council of New Brunswick by actively pursuing the research opportunities provided by its involvement in the forthcoming province-wide graduate programme.

Objective 1.2: *To enhance the reputation of the university as a national and international leader in qualitative analysis.*

Strategies:

The University will build on our existing strength in qualitative research and enhance its reputation nationally and internationally by supporting the work of a) its first Canada Research Chair (Dr. D. van den Hoonaard; appointed January 2006); b) the University’s Atlantic Centre for Qualitative Research and Analysis ACQRA (established 2006) and c) the many individual faculty members at St. Thomas who do qualitative research. Dr. van den Hoonaard has attracted a post-doctoral fellow in research ethics, from Brazil, to St. Thomas over the past year, and she continues to provide regional workshops in qualitative research for university communities in New Brunswick. Her research program includes an extension of her earlier work on marginalized populations to include older adults with chronic illness; an ethnography of the Red Hat Society; a new book, *The Changing Face of Aging*, which brings together her work on widows, widowers, retirement communities, “Zoomers,” and the Red Hat Society. She continues to develop the work of her centre (AQCR). Dr. van den Hoonaard has recently helped found the Chronic Illness Research Institute, a multi-disciplinary collaboration between STU and UNB.

Objective 1.3: *To increase the University’s capacity and productivity in the field of human rights and social justice.*

Strategies:

Human rights and social justice are themes reflected in the Strategic Plan of St. Thomas University. The establishment in 1989 of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre provides a focus for developments in research relating to human rights. Much research and teaching at St. Thomas University is concerned with the fairness and equity of society's social, economic, political and cultural institutions. We expect expansion of national and international research partnerships over the next five years.

Our second Canada Research Chair (Dr. S. Machum) was appointed (September 2006) in the area of Rural Social Justice, with a special focus on rural women and women's work in the traditional rural economy. The Chair in Rural Social Justice has established a Rural Social Justice Centre for Research with inaugural events commencing in October 2009. The University will continue to support this research centre and will leverage it to actively support the work of individual faculty members interested in the rural areas of Atlantic Canada and issues of social justice.

Objective 1.4: *To increase research that enhances knowledge and understanding about life in the Province of New Brunswick, and New Brunswick in the greater Atlantic region.*

Strategies:

In 2005, St. Thomas University was awarded an Aid-to-Small Universities grant from SSHRC to develop research relating to the province and region. It established the *New Brunswick and Atlantic Studies Research and Development Centre* to develop research in this area. The University's third CRC (Dr. T. Tremblay; appointed September 2007) played a central role in the creation and development of the NBASRDC and is currently launching a new peer-reviewed and multidisciplinary journal, *The Journal of New Brunswick Studies/Revue d'etudes sur le Nouveau-Brunswick*. The University will actively support the work of individual faculty members whose research focuses on New Brunswick and/or the Atlantic region.

Objective 1.5: *To increase the University's capacity and productivity in the field of narrative studies.*

Strategies:

In 2008, an interdisciplinary group of St. Thomas University faculty (representing Gerontology, English, Psychology, and Social Work) secured an Aid-to-Small Universities (ASU) grant from SSHRC to develop the University's capacity to conduct narrative research. This ASU grant has facilitated the creation of the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative (CIRN). The CIRN will host an international Narrative Matters conference in 2010 and is in the process of launching an online journal. The University will leverage and supplement the activities of the Research Centre in order actively support the work of individual faculty members whose research focuses on narrative studies.

Objective 1.6: *To increase the University's capacity and productivity in the field of global and international studies.*

Strategies:

Over the course of the past decade St. Thomas University has benefitted from the arrival on campus of a flourishing group of scholars from a wide range of disciplines (including Political Science, Anthropology, History, Romance Languages, and Religious Studies) whose published work fits broadly within the field of global and international studies. Several of these scholars have proven particularly successful in securing SSHRC funding for their research projects. The University recognizes this growing international dimension of scholarship on campus and is committed to supporting this research through revisions to its internal research grant procedures and guidelines as well as through a Forum on Facilitating International and Global Research to be held in 2010.

Objective 1.7: *To increase the University's capacity and productivity in the field of scholarship on teaching and learning.*

Strategies:

Given that undergraduate teaching is the highest institutional priority for St. Thomas University, it is entirely fitting that scholarship on learning and teaching should be incorporated into the University's Strategic Research Plan. Indeed, doing so codifies existing emphases and practices of a wide variety of faculty actively involved in this field of study. Faculty involved include members of the Psychology, Education, Science and Technology Studies, and Sociology departments. St. Thomas is always well represented at the annual Atlantic Teaching Showcase, Effective Teaching Workshops (held alternatively at St. Thomas or UNB) and the national Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). We intend to further the scholarship of learning and teaching in a variety of ways, possibly through a graduate studies focus, as well as mentoring more faculty to compete for 3M National Teaching Fellowships.

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

Objective 2.1: *To increase 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 endeavours. The Research Office offers competitions to provide internal grants which fund small projects and act as seed grants enabling researchers to develop projects in order to apply for more substantial external research funding. During the next five years the University will redouble its efforts to assist faculty in developing strong and hopefully successful funding applications (Tri-Council and other funding agencies). It will do so in a number of ways: 1) increasing faculty members' knowledge of external funding sources and possibilities; 2) developing a special pool of seed funding for peer-reviewed external applications which have garnered a 4A status; and 3) deploying funding from the University's General Research Fund for projects requiring "seed funding" in anticipation of an external grant application

Objective 2.2: *To increase internal resources for research and scholarship.*

Strategies:

The University will build upon its investment in research over the last six years 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 funds are targeted in areas that are most effective and can be leveraged assist St. Thomas faculty in obtaining external funding.

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

Strategies:

The University will continue to support junior researchers by offering orientation sessions, grant writing sessions and mentoring as research careers are developed. New faculty are welcomed each year by the Research Office. The research web-site will be updated regularly and newsletters will inform researchers about new and existing resources available. The Canada Research Chairs will act as mentors for junior faculty who are conducting work in their areas of expertise. The Research Office intends to staff a newly-negotiated humanities and arts Grants Writing Officer position as a joint appointment with the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton) in the coming months. This will aid faculty applying for external grants and foundation monies.

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 planning committees for research conferences. To increase this activity, the University will encourage researchers to apply for and use external grants to support students at national and international conferences. The thriving University student employment programme and external research grants provide research assistantships for many undergraduate students at our university and graduate students at our neighbouring institution, the University of New Brunswick. The University also hosts an annual Student Research Fair as a venue for the presentation of student research. Through this fair, student scholars share their work with faculty researchers and other student researchers. Opportunities for student researchers will definitely increase, especially as the New Brunswick Graduate School becomes a reality.

B. MAJOR FOCAL AREAS OF RESEARCH AND PLANS FOR CHAIR ALLOCATION

We have identified six major focal areas for research at St. Thomas University. Each of these focal areas is rooted in areas of existing faculty activity and expertise. We plan to enhance internal support and participate fully in opportunities provided by granting councils for future research developments in each of these areas. Our long-term goal is to ensure that a CRC or alternative source of external funding is in place to stimulate research developments in each of these focal areas. We will develop strategies to support researchers in all disciplines at our university, whether in the humanities, social sciences or in applied and professional areas of research and scholarship.

With CRCs appointed in three of our six focal areas (Qualitative Analysis, Human Rights and Social Justice, New Brunswick Studies), our next CRC nomination (due April 2010) will focus on a field within one of the three focal areas without a CRC: Narrative Studies, Global and International Studies or Scholarship on Learning and Teaching. In Fall 2009 an open call will be issued within the University asking for proposals for a specific area of study for the next CRC. An interdisciplinary committee, chaired by the Assistant Vice-President (Research) will review the applications and the most promising proposal will form the basis of a CRC position advertisement that will be circulated nationally and internationally by December 2009. A search committee will review the resulting applications and oversee the interview process that will be completed by February 2010 so that the University's Research Office can work closely with the nominee as the April 2010 deadline for formal nominations to the CRC Programme approaches.

1. Current Canada Research Chairs at St. Thomas University

Qualitative Analysis

Many faculty are keen to develop existing research skills using qualitative methodology. St. Thomas University hosted the Canadian Qualitative Analysis Conferences in 1999, 2000 and 2007. There has consistently been a strong representation of St. Thomas researchers at this annual conference. A total of 80 faculty and student researchers participate in the Qualitative Analysis Network that is hosted jointly by St. Thomas University and the University of New Brunswick. Dr. D. van den Hoonaard plays a central role in fostering qualitative analysis at this institution. Her research program builds on and extends her studies of marginalized populations: i.e., widows, widowers, old women, and non-European immigrants to Atlantic Canada the process of using qualitative analysis to study groups on the social margins. The renewal application of this CRC is imminent.

Social Justice

Our second Canada Research Chair (Dr. S. Machum) was chosen in the social justice component of our research priority on Human Rights and Social Justice (2006). Concern for social justice pervades the research effort of our faculty across the disciplines. The choice of a specialist in *rural* social justice focuses on a relatively neglected dimension of

social concerns, and one particularly important to the University's situation in New Brunswick, with its highly rural demographic and dependence on rural, resource-based industries.

The Chair's research is focused in four areas: food security, women in family-owned forest enterprises, the ecology-society relationship and a critical analysis of the New Brunswick self-sufficiency agenda. Her ongoing research projects focus on the exploration of what are the necessary social changes for the combined crisis of environmental degradation and growing social inequality. The Chair's work on food combines her interest in women's role in agriculture with the broader questions of equity, environmental sustainability and food security at home and abroad. Her research project comparing the role of women and work in small family-owned and operated forest enterprises directly addresses the issues of economic justice that industries which rely on farm-produced raw materials, create. Her analysis of the provincial self-sufficiency agenda questions whether the needs of sustainability and the world food crisis can be met through a reliance on a fossil-fuel and nuclear energy-export economy.

With the Chair's launching of the Rural Social Justice Centre for Research in Fall 2009 the University expects a greater connection, co-ordination and facilitation of other faculty's work on rural issues, rural communities and equity concerns within the University, and a strengthening of this research profile both in the wider community, locally, regionally and nationally. Dr. Machum's CRC is eligible for renewal in 2011.

New Brunswick Studies

During the next five years we plan to develop and (when relevant) coordinate the research that pertains to the province of New Brunswick, and the Atlantic Region, that is conducted in different disciplines. Our third Canada Research Chair (Dr. T. Tremblay) conducts research in this area. Several St. Thomas University researchers from disciplines of sociology, social work, gerontology, English, history, journalism, criminology, science and technology studies, romance languages, political science and anthropology have ongoing work that is rooted in the province and region. By taking a leading role in the New Brunswick and Atlantic Studies Research and Development Centre, our Canada Research Chair has strengthened the work of researchers and forged interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research partnerships for studies about New Brunswick and the Atlantic region. Such partnerships have already been forged with researchers from Acadia, UNB, Ottawa U., Dalhousie U., Universite de Moncton, and Louisiana State University. In addition, Dr. Tremblay is working with another research cluster to develop a comprehensive encyclopedia of New Brunswick literature, and has fostered close relations with faculty and community researchers to create digital resources for the dissemination of knowledge about New Brunswick. These will prove to be important resources for the province. Currently, a post-doctoral fellowship has been applied for by this CRC. Dr. Tremblay's CRC is eligible for renewal in 2012.

2. Focal Areas currently without a Canada Research Chair

Narrative Studies

Our objective is to enhance our international reputation in narrative scholarship by expanding our interdisciplinary research in this focal area. Research and scholarship in Narrative Studies straddles the humanities and the social sciences at St. Thomas University. Researchers in Gerontology, Social Work, English, Education, Psychology and Sociology at St. Thomas University together with colleagues or graduate students in sociology, nursing and psychology at the University of New Brunswick and medicine at Dalhousie University, are actively collaborating in externally and internally funded as well as non-funded research studies. In particular, two faculty in the Gerontology Department have international reputations in narrative studies and have made been invited to make presentations about their work in many parts of Canada, the United States and other countries. St. Thomas University was the Principal Organizer for the very successful Narrative Matters Conferences held in Fredericton in 2002 and 2004 which attracted delegates from 12 disciplines and 15 countries and an international conference is planned by CIRN, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies on Narrative in 2010. Our plans to increase scholarship, research and publications in this focal area will be assisted by the growing faculty interest and the development of new partnerships. These partnerships should lead to more research proposals for external funding and more scholarship that builds on research findings.

Global and International Studies

Among the most active research fields at St. Thomas are those related to global and international studies. Both the Political Science Department and the History Department have launched new international and global teaching initiatives (an International Relations Programme and a world history curriculum respectively). Faculty in many departments and programmes, including Romance Languages, Anthropology, Political Science, History, Religious Studies, Science and Technology Studies, Education, Psychology, Fine Arts, and Economics are engaged in international, transnational, and comparative and postcolonial studies that, together, focus on almost every region of the globe. A number of these research projects have secured SSHRC funding in the Standard Research Grant and Research Development Initiatives competitions. The University's first Research Circle (formed in May 2009) focuses on the theme of globalization. Given that many of the leading faculty members researching global and international topics have arrived at St. Thomas University in the past 10 years, we are well positioned to develop a strong reputation in these areas.

Scholarship on Learning and Teaching

Teaching as an institutional priority has long been a mainstay here at St. Thomas University. Applied pedagogical techniques and updated technological advances in teaching are routinely workshopped here at St. Thomas through our Learning, Teaching, and Development (LTD) Committee. This Committee has now come under the auspices of the Dean of Faculty's office, to ensure that its important work not be minimized. Routinely, St. Thomas has a presence at local, regional and national conferences on teaching in higher education. Faculty from each of our six focal areas publish in the scholarly teaching and learning area. It is thus only fitting that we enhance this area with encouragement to publish in teaching journals, mentorship for future teachers and a focus on scholarly pedagogical practices, generally. To do so, we will continue our mentorship

of new faculty and/or those wishing to improve teaching areas with our LTD Committee, but we are also committed to advancing 3M fellowship nominees, as well as introducing a graduate focus in the area. It is our hope that St. Thomas will become a 'destination' for those interested in the *scholarship*, of advanced learning and teaching.

ACHIEVING GENDER REPRESENTATION IN CHAIR NOMINEES

St. Thomas University is monitoring and exceeding its target announced to the CRC secretariat of at least 33% of its nominees being female. Two of the University's three CRCs are female.

INTERNAL SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

Currently the University provides financial support for research in the form of a professional development allowance for all full time faculty at a level of 3% of the floor for assistant professors. Faculty can apply for a six month sabbatical leave after three years of service or a one year sabbatical leave after six years. There are internal competitions for seed funding for small research studies to strengthen researchers' applications for external awards. Supplemental conference travel funding is also available. Course "buyouts" are available to researchers and scholars at times of intense activity. The office of the Assistant Vice President (Research) provides assistance to faculty to develop research agendas and prepare external grant applications. The Learning and Teaching Development Committee offers grants to facilitate research about teaching, and it provides financial support for faculty to share their research and scholarship at conferences about teaching. The University shares a library with the University of New Brunswick so the library resources of a much larger institution are available to St. Thomas University researchers from St. Thomas University.

During the last ten years the University has enhanced support for research endeavours in the following ways:

- 1999** Strengthening a University Senate-Appointed Research Committee to oversee research and coordinate support for research activities.
- 1999** Introducing a competition for a half or full-credit course releases to increase time for researchers to prepare grant applications or publish research and scholarship.
- 1999** Instituting a programme of automatic release from a half-credit course for faculty who receive a research grant from an adjudicated granting council of \$15,000.
- 2000** Establishing a Director of University Research and providing release from 1/3 teaching duties for the incumbent.
- 2001** Hiring a half-time officer to provide technical advice and support for faculty research activities.
- 2001** Establishing a Research Ethics Board to comply with Tri-Council requirements
- 2002** Appointing an Assistant Vice President (Research and Faculty Development) to facilitate and oversee research developments when the term of the Director of University Research ended.

- 2002** Developing a CFI-funded Campus Research Network to facilitate collection, dissemination and analysis of faculty research data.
- 2003** Appointing a half-time assistant for the Assistant Vice President (Research and Faculty Development).
- 2003** Increasing the hours of the assistant for the Assistant Vice President (Research and Faculty Development) to full time.
- 2004** Removing the faculty development responsibilities from the Assistant Vice President
- 2005** Increasing course releases available for faculty research and scholarship from 4 to 40.
- 2005** Increasing the fund available for competitions to supplement individual professional development allowances from \$10,000 to \$20,000.
- 2005** Reducing from \$15,000 to \$10,000 the minimum annual grant from the federal funding council that qualifies researchers at St. Thomas University for an automatic 3 credit hour course release.
- 2008** Reducing the regular teaching load for full-time tenure-track faculty from 18 credit hours to 15 credit hours.
- 2008** Creating a \$6000/year research and conference travel grant fund for part-time faculty.
- 2008** Increasing the fund available for competitions to supplement full-time faculty professional development allowances from \$20,000 to \$30,000/year.
- 2009** Expanding the membership of the Senate Research Committee from 4 to 6 members; changing the distribution process of travel/conference funding and introducing a 4a category of funding; developing a communication's tool (webpage) to update funding information for faculty; increasing the number and variety of faculty educational workshops and the number of external grant applications; increasing the liaisons of St. Thomas University with new funding opportunities.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Success will be measured at the end of the five year period by:

- An increase in internal mechanisms to support research;
- A growth of interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research partnerships;
- A 30% increase in applications for external research funding;
- A 30% increase in externally funded projects;
- More scholarly productivity in the form of peer-reviewed books, articles, and conference presentations.

PLANNING AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR STRATEGIC PLAN AND CRC NOMINEES

The planning and approval process involved bottom-up and top-down discussions and reviews of drafts of the plan. During the winter of 2009 the Assistant Vice-Presidents (Research), Drs. G. MacDonald and M. Dawson, issued a call for expressions of interest from University departments and administrative units to meet to discuss the content of the new Strategic Research Plan. As a result, meetings were held with the following departments: English, Education, Psychology, Criminology, History, Political Science, Social Work, Anthropology, Romance Languages, and Sociology. The information gleaned from these meetings was reviewed by the Senate Research Committee. A draft of the proposed Strategic Research Plan was circulated among the University community in August 2009. Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback via written submissions or at an open meeting held in September 2009. A final version of the SRP was submitted to Senate in October 2009 for approval.

DEPLOYMENT OF CHAIRS

St. Thomas University split its first Tier One allocation into two, to prevent isolation of a solitary chair and so the chair-holders could provide mutual support and together address two or more of the focal areas in the Strategic Research Plan. A second (Tier 2) allocation was then made giving a total of three Tier 2 chairs. The University deployed its first Chair to enhance its expertise in the focal area of Qualitative Analysis. The second and third Canada Research Chairs in Social Justice and in New Brunswick Studies address two other focal areas and each have a very close fit with the Strategic Research Plan. Both appointments complement other initiatives in the University. The Chair in Social Justice complements the work of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre in addressing the Human Rights/Social Justice niche. The chair in New Brunswick Studies complements the work of the New Brunswick and Atlantic Studies Research and Development Centre. In appointing the next CRC, the University will endeavour to recruit or retain researchers who are leaders in their fields by internal, national and international advertising and by planning an attractive and supportive environment for Chair-holders.

USE OF INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS

The use of infrastructure funding at St. Thomas for research is a relatively new, but important, area for development. As academic society generally moves more and more towards the use of the internet for research dissemination, it appears that infrastructure monies may be more likely used in future to secure software databases, to promote the use of e-journal and e-research and to enhance the ability of individual faculty members in the fluidity with which they use same. In other words, “bricks and mortar” may cease to be the continued use of research infrastructure funds. That said, we can still use the 'building' type of infrastructure funding to expand both existing areas of research as well as those we will be establishing in the next few years. The current use of each of the CRCs' infrastructure funding is explained by the following:

The infrastructure funding for the CRC in New Brunswick Studies will support research that critically interprets the theoretical and creative work of neglected New Brunswick writers and cultural workers and that involves scholarly peers, graduate students, and community researchers in the production of digital, open-access knowledge resources of New Brunswick literature and culture. The CRC in Social Justice will use infrastructure funds to support ethnographic research and electronic resources for rural communities. The CRC in Qualitative Research has established a centre for qualitative studies which currently houses one post-doctoral student and two retired faculty members. Infrastructure funds will support the research, electronic publishing, and digital archiving of these initiatives and the refurbishment of research accommodation to house it.

Approved by St. Thomas University Senate, 15 October 2009.