

University College of the North

Strategic Research Plan: Building Capacity

2022/23 – 2024/25

Introduction

The variety and significance of the research work at UCN is impressive, and UCN's research potential is equally as impressive. This Strategic Research Plan seeks to establish a three-year approach to achieving that potential. The value of a Strategic Research Plan for UCN is three-fold:

1. Foster the development of activity in a broad range of research fields, setting the stage for increases in research output and research funding at UCN;
2. Emphasize the importance of connecting to Indigenous and northern priorities; and,
3. Meet the requirements of external granting agencies.

Establishing a Strategic Research Plan allows UCN to collectively and collegially envision how it will engage in research, and help to set an agenda for supporting research activity within the institution. This Strategic Research plan considers targets, areas, support, and oversight for research at UCN. These topics are addressed in the following pages. An attachment at the end of this paper presents an action plan to help to realize UCN's Strategic Research Plan.

Research at UCN

Researchers at UCN expressed caution about articulating research priorities for UCN. Researchers did not want to inhibit activity where research may occur in areas outside articulated priorities, nor do they want to stifle the evolution of research at UCN. To be clear, **UCN supports all research**, not just those projects that fall within any identified areas. Accordingly, perhaps the best way to think of research areas is in light of connections to and value for Northern Manitoba, its peoples, communities, and economy. See attachment 2 for examples of research conducted by UCN researchers.

At this time, UCN is not contemplating articulating formal research priorities, research centres, etc. Instead, UCN continues to support research activity in a broad range of areas.

Research Objectives for UCN

While institutions that have very advanced and well-established research facilities and programs may be able to set specific targets, UCN is smaller and its research activity is still developing, meaning that, at UCN, targets should be broad. In time UCN will reach a point where the development of detailed metrics is more viable, however setting such metrics at this point in UCN's development might have a chilling effect on the developing research climate within the institution. Instead, UCN's Strategic Research Plan establishes two broad targets, discussed in turn, below.

Objective 1: Achieve the Research Funding Threshold for the Canada Research Chair (CRC) program by January, 2026

In order to qualify for the CRC program, a research institution must receive more than \$100,000 funding from the Tri-Agencies¹ over each year of a 5-year review cycle. Of note is the fact that the 2021/22 funding year is the start of a new five-year review cycle, meaning that in order to qualify UCN must achieve this goal by 2025/26.

This in turn suggests that a key measure of UCN's Measure research funding to assess progress towards achieving this goal. Table 1, below, provides a historical perspective on UCN's research funding.

¹ The Tri Agencies include: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CHIR); Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Table 1: UCN Federal Research Funding 2015/16 – 2019/20

Grant Program	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
CIHR	\$951.50	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
NSERC	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
SSHRC	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$24,938.00	\$0.00
Research Support Fund	\$80,994.00	\$68,130.00	\$52,365.00	\$45,905.00	\$43,189.00
Manitoba Research Alliance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$84,128.00
TOTAL	\$81,945.50	\$68,130.00	\$52,365.00	\$70,843.00	\$127,317.00

Objective 2: Increase, generally, the amount of research activity undertaken by UCN Researchers

Without considering or categorizing the research areas or outputs, there is value in supporting increases in the amount of research activity at UCN. Annually, a Research and Scholarly Report is compiled by the Office of Research. While this document does not report solely on research activity, it does attempt to capture the breadth of research carried out at UCN. A modest adaptation of the Research and Scholarly Report will allow it to be used as a tool to help track changes in general research activity at UCN.

Objective 3: Increase the Role Students Play in UCN's Research Activity

Increasing involvement of students in research helps to provide students with experience and perspectives on research. It also teaches students valuable lessons on research in their respective areas of study. Researchers and Faculty Councils will be asked how it might be possible to expand student participation in research activity.

Objective 4: Increase community partnerships in UCN's Research Activity

Community partnerships are increasingly important to demonstrate to granting agencies that research is accepted and relevant to cultural, social, and economic priorities. Researchers and Faculty Councils will be asked how it might be possible to further engage with communities on research activity.

Achieving Our Research Objectives

How we achieve our objectives will in part be determined by the remainder of the plan. Responsibility for achieving these objectives is institutional, and not something for which individual researchers can be held accountable. Achieving these objectives are a measure of the success of this institutional strategy.

Supporting Research at UCN

Currently the Office of Research at UCN is staffed by two employees, the Manager of Research and the Researcher. Supports provided are one-on-one and are specific to a particular request or project. Below are **options for consideration** to increase research supports at UCN.

Professional Development

- Office of Research and the Centre for Learning, Education, and Research (CLEaR) to facilitate proposal writing support sessions for UCN researchers;

- Rather than presentations, CLEaR and the Office of Research facilitate additional collegial discussion sessions pertaining to research with faculty members;
- Training for faculty members and students on OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession);
- Support UCN researchers with the process of completing the Tri-Agency Certificate of Completion (TCPS: CORE);

Networking and Collaboration

- The Office of Research, supported by other elements of RRAI, will develop and maintain a searchable directory of research funding sources that are available each with a brief outline of the applicable types of research supported;
- CLEaR and the Office of Research will develop sessions where UCN researchers present research work in process (this could be a requirement for UCN SEED grants for example);
- The Office of Research, supported by RRAI and faculty deans, will foster greater collaboration through developing a searchable directory of researchers at UCN which lists their research specializations and other areas of research interest;
- Look for opportunities to engage in applied research with partners in the Northern Manitoba economy, including contract research;
- Leverage the current opportunities where UCN engages our communities by adding in a research partnership component. The Linkages event held each year by UCN would be a potential event, for example, as is the UCN-IUS research conference;

Resources to Support Research Activity

- Designate responsibilities in both the Finance and Human Resources areas at UCN to assist researchers at UCN. This is particularly important in helping to ensure effective management of research funding as well as ensuring compliance with granting agency requirements;
- UCN support the travel of faculty researchers to meet with researchers, research institutes, etc. at other institutions;
- Provide additional travel supports for active researchers. The current Travel and Professional Development Allowance (TPDA) provides \$1,500 annually, with three years allowable accrual. Given travel costs in Northern Manitoba, this is limiting. For example, a research travel fund could be created and coordinated through Office of Research to support research-related travel;
- Determine how to better support College Instructors in giving them time to do research;

Strategic Activity

- Build understanding among UCN's senior management, the Governing Council and the Council of Elders of the importance of research;
- Consider changes to the Collective Agreement that support more time-releases and similar supports for researchers; and,
- Establish an annual faculty award for research (e.g., the President's award for outstanding research contributions at UCN).

Oversight of Research at UCN

At present, the Office of Research consists of two staff years, overseen by the Associate Vice-President of Reconciliation, Research, and Academic Innovation (RRAI). The Associate Vice President (AVP) of RRAI oversees the Office of Research, providing executive direction. The AVP reports to the VP Academic and Research. Almost all research at UCN is carried out by faculty members who work with the deans in four

academic faculties who are responsible to ensure that those in professorial ranks meet the obligations in the Collective Agreement.

The Research Ethics Board (REB) and the Animal Care Committee (ACC) are composed of faculty members who provide critical guidance to researchers. The REB and ACC are supported by the Manager of Research and helps to ensure compliance in those areas. Both the REB and ACC are overseen by the VP Academic and Research as required by the Tri-Agencies.

Accordingly, research oversight at UCN is dispersed, meaning that oversight is complicated at UCN. Attachment 1 shows a graphic representation of research oversight at UCN. Results of the consultations for this Strategic Research Plan emphasized that the inherent flexibility of this dispersed model of research management is preferred by researchers at UCN.

Complying with External Research Requirements

UCN, like other institutions that engage in research, has to comply with the requirements of the federal government Tri-Agencies. This has included, among other things, a requirement for institutions to operate a Research Ethics Board and an Animal Care Committee, both of which UCN operates.

Some bodies, such as the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), require that institutions share a Strategic Research Plan with them as a condition of eligibility. This Strategic Research Plan represents UCN's compliance with that requirement.

A new Tri-Agency initiative announced in late 2021 is the **Research Data Management (RDM) Policy**, and colleges and universities eligible to receive funding from the Tri-Agencies must comply with this policy, with milestones established as indicated below:

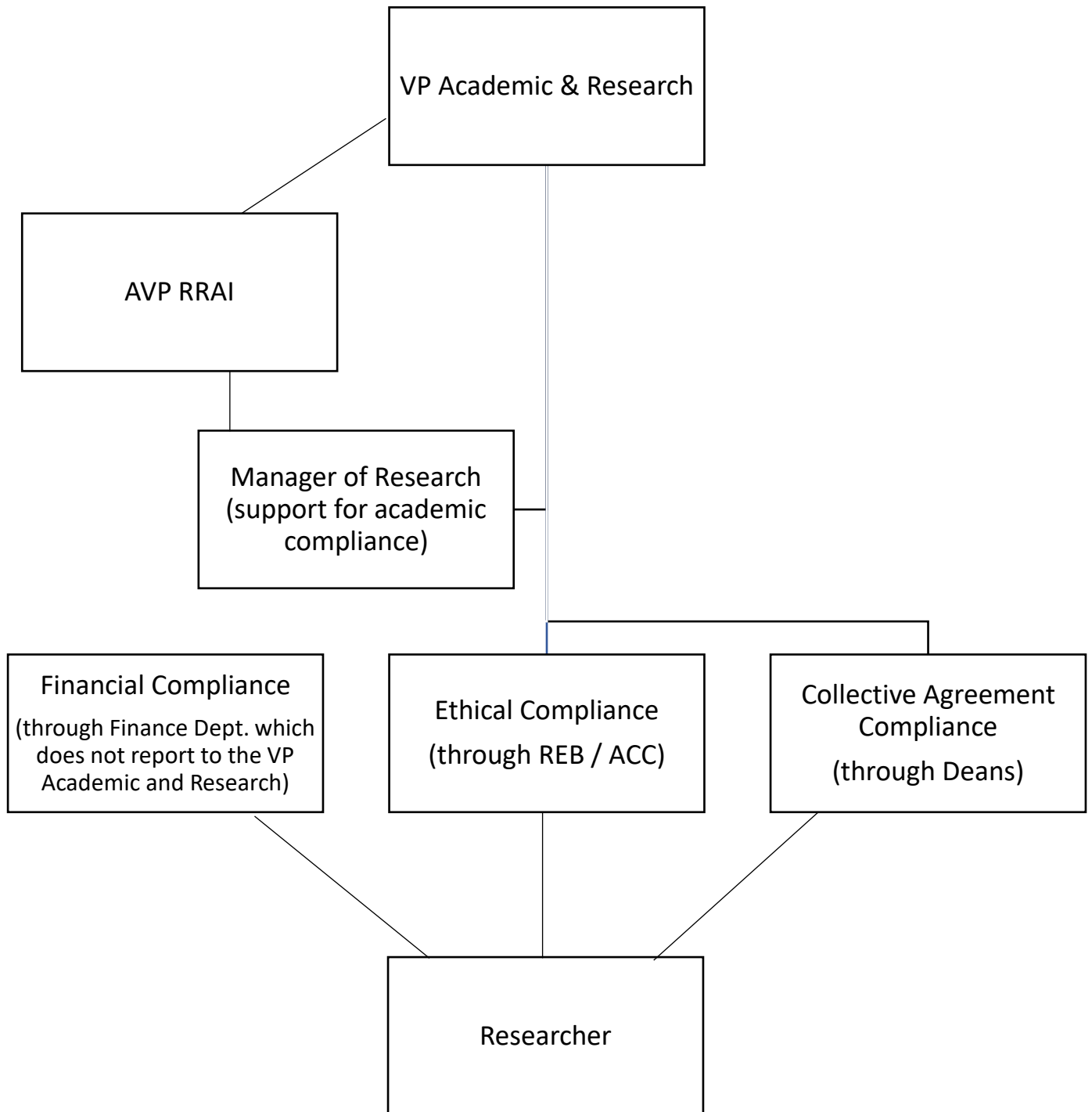
- **Data management plans (DMP):** By spring 2022, the agencies will identify the initial set of funding opportunities subject to the DMP requirement. The agencies will pilot the DMP requirement in targeted funding opportunities before this date.
- **Institutional strategies:** By March 1, 2023, research institutions subject to this requirement must post their RDM strategies and notify the agencies when they have been completed.
- **Data deposit:** After reviewing the institutional strategies and in line with the readiness of the Canadian research community, the agencies will phase in the deposit requirement.

The Office of Research at UCN, in partnership with relevant other parts of UCN, will take the lead in ensuring that UCN complies with these requirements. These and any other Tri-Agency requirements must be planned for and acted upon, or UCN may lose its eligibility to receive Tri-Agency grants.

Conclusion

Building capacity is the focus of UCN's research activity in the three-year period from 2022/23 to 2024/25. This Strategic Research Plan helps to ensure that our research infrastructure and processes align with best practices for supporting researchers and growing research activity. Further, our Plan articulates a process to ensure that UCN remains compliant with Tri-Agency requirements.

Attachment 1: Research Oversight Organization at UCN



Attachment 2: Recent Examples of Research at UCN

In 2020/21, UCN researchers reported participating in more than 135 research projects. The following are selected examples of research projects completed or being undertaken by UCN faculty members.

Faculty of Arts, Business, and Science

Atoyebi, J. (2020). Misleading expressions in the rendition of subtitles: A syntactic analysis of subtitles in selected Yoruba movies. In S. Matheson, S.O. Okpadah, & P.R. Raj (Eds.), *Locating transnational spaces: Culture, theatre, and cinema* (pp. 6-22). The Pas, Manitoba: International Association of Theatre Critics and University College of the North. Available:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344371366_Locating_Transnational_Spaces_Culture_Theatre_and_Cinema_Edited_by.

Hyde, K. (2020, September 16). *Rev. Henry Budd, Sr. and his ministry* [Conference presentation]. 200th Anniversary Conference: Indigenous and Christian in the Diocese of Rupert's Land: What Was, What Is. Virtual.

Kamal, A. (2021, May 20-21). *Kitatipithitamak Mithwayawan: Evaluating past, present, and future activities of an Indigenous-led and project on COVID-19. Aboriginal health and food sovereignty in the time of COVID* [Conference presentation]. Kana Wain Dida Conference, Virtual.

Matheson, S. (2019). *The John Ford Encyclopedia*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

McInnis, G. (2020). *Kurt Vonnegut: Myth and science in a post-modern world*. New York: Peter Lang.

Oredgebe, A. (2020). Cost efficiency determinants: Evidence from the Canadian banking industry. *International Journal of Business and Management* 15(1), 86-98. Available: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v15n1p86>.

Kenanow Faculty of Education

Featherston, J. (2020). *The tale of Tiger Lily*. Thompson, MB: Author.

Malik, A. (2021, June 2021). *The effectiveness of playing video games on grade 9 students in Pakistan and Canada: A comparative study* [Conference presentation]. 49th Annual Canadian Society of Studies in Education (CSSE) Conference. Virtual.

Williamson, D. (2020, July 8-13). *Through disassembled houses of perfect stones* [Conference presentation]. Association for Literature, Environment and Culture in Canada (ALECC) Conference. University of Saskatchewan.

For more information and a complete listing of research projects at UCN in 2020/21, see:

UCN. (2021). *2020/2021 survey of research, scholarly activity, capacity building and service*. Available: <https://www.ucn.ca/sites/RI/Research/Documents/2020-21%20UCN%20Research%20and%20Scholarly%20Activity%20Report.pdf>.

Attachment 3: Action Plan

- ✓ **March 2022:** The Manager of Research will revise the annual Research and Scholarly Report so that data about the amount of research activity can be more easily identified.
- ✓ **June 2022:** The VPAR will engage an external consultant to undertake a review of UCN's research organization to help ensure that organization can support the objectives in the current plan.
- ✓ **August 2022:** Drawing from the **options for consideration**, The AVP RRAI and the VP Academic and Research will develop a resource plan to ensure appropriate support for research at UCN and pursue that plan in the 2023/24 budget process.
- ✓ **October 2022:** The Manager of Research will develop a plan to ensure that UCN complies with the Tri-Agency Research Data Management (RDM) policy. That plan will be presented to the REAL Committee by no later than October, 2022.
- ✓ **Fall 2022:** Working with the Office of Research, CLEaR will schedule:
 - proposal writing support sessions in its annual schedule of professional development for faculty members;
 - Collegial discussion sessions pertaining to research with faculty members; and,
 - sessions where UCN researchers have the opportunity to present research work in process.
- ✓ **Fall 2022:** The REAL committee will lead a process with researchers to explore:
 - How students might become more involved in research activities at UCN; and,
 - How communities might become more engaged in research activities at UCN.
- ✓ **February 2023:** The AVP-RRAI and the VP Academic and Research will create opportunities to build understanding among UCN's senior management, the Governing Council and the Council of Elders of the importance of research at UCN.
- ✓ **March 2023:** The VP Academic and Research will work with the Chief Administrative Officer to designate responsibilities in both the Finance and Human Resources areas at UCN to assist researchers at UCN in managing research funding and ensuring compliance with granting agency financial requirements.
- ✓ **June 2023:** The Office of Research, supported by other elements of RRAI, will develop and maintain a searchable directory of research funding sources that are available each with a brief outline of the applicable types of research supported.
- ✓ **December 2023:** REAL will establish an annual faculty award for research (e.g., the President's award for outstanding research contributions at UCN).
- ✓ **September 2024:** The Office of Research will work with the REAL Committee of Learning Council to prepare a consultation process to revise UCN's Strategic Research Plan for the 2025/26 – 2030/31, returning to a five-year cycle.