

# **Trent University - Strategic Research Plan (SRP)**

## **Planning Horizon 2018 - 2022**

Trent University aims to be Canada's outstanding primarily liberal arts and sciences research-intensive university. Our goal is not only ambition; it is validated by surveys and outcomes measures performed by independent, external assessments. Trent is the fourth smallest university in Ontario, but has consistently received high scores on several "per faculty" research productivity and research impact key performance indicators. In the summer of 2013, the Higher Education Strategy Associates' (HESA's) national survey ranked Trent's research 12th among 55 Canadian universities in impact for Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, noting that we have "by far the best publication record of any small-ish school in the country across all disciplines." In this index Trent ranked higher than 8 members of the U-15 research universities in Canada. Other ranking systems confirm the same strong impact. In 2017, the Maclean's ratings of 19 Primarily Undergraduate Universities, Trent ranked #1 undergraduate university in Ontario, #3 undergraduate university in Canada. Likewise, Research InfoSource ranked 47 Universities of all sizes across Canada and Trent placed 3rd in Publication impact, 1st in Publication Intensity and 4<sup>th</sup> undergraduate research university in Canada. If an investor's perspective was applied to the knowledge mobilization of research investments, the Return On Investment for our governments investment in Trent-based research is outstanding.

In alignment with our integrated plan, our academic plan and our strategic mandate agreement, Trent does not aspire to be a comprehensive university. Instead, our goal is to be a primarily liberal arts and sciences undergraduate institution which strategically selects a small number of research areas (supported by graduate programs) where we can build on our strengths, and reach national and international levels of recognized excellence.

Trent has built decade's long competencies in interdisciplinary and multi-organizational approaches to key research issues and needs. Trent was the first university in Canada (in 1971) to establish an Environmental Studies program, laying the foundation for the establishment of one of the leading national Environmental research programs (including a graduate program with over 150 students). In the past five years 56 Trent Faculty researchers have attracted over \$50 million in investments for environmental research projects. Three of our environment research areas – water quality analysis, biomaterials and wildlife biology/genetics/conservation are at world-class levels of excellence in research capabilities, publications, HQP training and infrastructure. Our past innovations as the first in Canada for academic programming in Indigenous Studies and in Canadian Studies, is also responsible for Trent building strong research programs in these specialty areas.

All research at Trent has value, and, especially that research which has value for the general public. Trent will be vigilant in promoting the benefits of integrating research and teaching. In the recent words of Trent founding President, Thomas H.B. Symons, "Trent needs to be sure that as it grows and its research strengthens and broadens, it doesn't lose sight of the fundamental mission of first-class teaching. Research isn't consummated until the results are taught."

## *Strategic Goals*

The strength of a strategic research plan is that it provides direction for the institution; the challenge of a strategic research plan is that it requires that choices concerning strategic directions focus areas and future investment of resources and energy need to be made. A list of seven strategic goals was developed during the strategic planning renewal process:

- Prioritise multiple-discipline collaborations in research
- Identify and the build on our strengths and uniqueness
- Encourage and enable new research group formation in areas that address critical unmet needs
- Support the development of external partnerships by our research groups and centres
- Strive for international excellence in our strategic research areas
- Collaborate with our academic partners to help our students widen their experiences and build their credentials
- Attract external investments to our research priority areas

At the core of our SRP, we have identified three integrated areas where Trent researchers have special expertise, often at a world-class level. The three interdisciplinary research themes, or “banner areas”, highlight Trent strengths and the strategic directions of our university’s research. The three themes are broad, and are supported by clusters of interdisciplinary research areas, research centres and research groups. As the thematic areas gain critical mass in interdisciplinary research activities and outcomes, the goal will be to formalize the theme areas into institutes that would be combination “think tanks” and umbrella organizations for specific research programs.

	<b>2018 Interdisciplinary Research Themes</b>	<b>Proposed 2030 Trent Research Institutes</b>
1	Humanities and Culture	Institute for Humanities and Culture
2	Healthy and Sustainable Communities	Institute for Healthy and Sustainable Communities
3	The Environment	Institute for the Environment

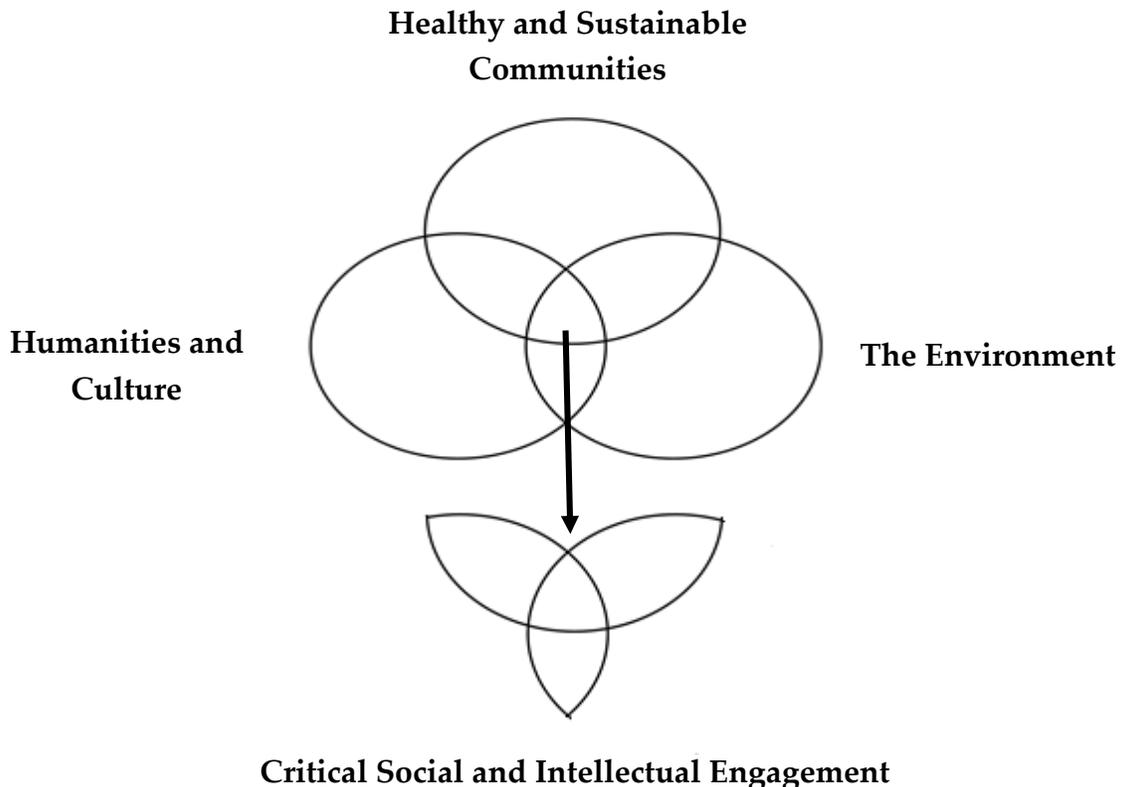
In research it is important to anticipate the problem-solving and opportunity development needs of society and our economy. Our strategic research plan is integrated with our strategic mandate agreement and identifies five priorities:

1. **Build the credentials and competencies of our students.** Beyond our excellent offerings in education, we will continue to expand student experiential learning opportunities including high-level opportunities in research, laboratory instrumentation skills development, and internships with businesses. Trent is also interfacing with regional economic development groups to provide opportunities for students to learn about entrepreneurship and the start-up of their own businesses.

2. **Continue to expand our world-class areas of excellence.** Special research and outreach opportunities abound in the interface between the resource sector and the environment, and the broadened interface between resource development, ecosystems and local communities. This opportunity is heightened in northern areas through partnerships with First Nations communities. Trent also has multiple opportunities in the development of new environmentally beneficial technologies.
3. **Leverage our existing strengths to expedite development of new opportunities which address unmet needs in our society and our economy.** As examples, Trent has identified two areas of existing Faculty research expertise, to launch new research initiatives in Sustainable Agriculture and Aging in Society.
4. **Prioritize multiple discipline collaborations in research.** Most of the issues being addressed in our world complex and beyond the realm of single discipline approaches. Trent will be prioritizing support to enable research centres which integrate sciences, humanities and social sciences.
5. **Attract new research investment from non-government investors.** Knowledge mobilization and outreach programs will be emphasized, as will the continued expansion of partnerships with businesses, industry associations and international organizations.

### Strategic Research Clusters

*The model illustrates that Trent's eighteen research strength areas can be grouped into three broad research themes or clusters. At the intersecting nexus of the three clusters, Critical Social and Intellectual Engagement emerges.*



## *Research Clusters and Strategy*

### Critical Social and Intellectual Engagement

Critical Social and Intellectual Engagement lies at the heart of the three Research Clusters. It reflects Trent researchers' involvement in interdisciplinary dialogue and knowledge dissemination in the campus and the community. Engagement with the community allows for an emphasis on meaningful reciprocal partnerships that co-create knowledge, learning and action plans. Researchers involved in research partnerships engage in analysis of context, situations, trends and community issues and aim to deepen dialogue, identify potential change strategies and establish pathways forward. The product of these collaborations is an engaged interdisciplinary academia working with communities, students, government, non-profit groups and businesses for local, national, and international social change.

### Humanities and Culture

This theme is characterized by an interdisciplinary overview of the human condition. Trent has distinctive strengths in the following strategic research areas affiliated with this research theme:

- Archaeology
- The study of Canada – Canadian history, Canadian geography, Canadian literature and Canadian studies
- The Study of Culture – including visual, digital and performing arts
- The Study of History
- Ethics, citizenships, social and ecological justice
- Feminist and gender studies
- Indigenous performance and Indigenous languages preservation
- Digital Humanities

### Strategy

- Facilitate the development or reorganization of research centres to support research strength areas.
- Facilitate the interdisciplinary engagement of Faculty in this theme area with the other two theme areas. As an example, researchers in this theme are bring special competencies to their science and social science colleagues in the critical analysis of large data and information sets helping research groups to distil factors that determine research relevancy, requisites for societal change and the development of innovative mechanisms to communicate research outcomes to communities within and outside the university

## Healthy and Sustainable Communities

A research theme that has global impact, which includes collaborative and community-based research in Psychology, Nursing, Education and Business. Also, and specific to Trent, a critical mass of research and community building knowledge is found in faculty's research within Indigenous Studies and critically informed aging studies

- Aging and Society
- Community Health
- Human Behaviour and Learning
- Indigenous Environmental Studies and Indigenous Community Development
- Sustainability Studies
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems

### Strategies

- Facilitate the development or reorganization of research centres to support research strength areas
- Further develop our multidisciplinary research capabilities in the “social determinants of health” area and invest in our outreach capacity
- Engage regional community stakeholders and develop strategic partnerships in all six research strength areas

## The Environment

Trent has decades of research expertise in this theme area. Trent has achieved international levels of excellence in this theme area. Strategic research areas include:

- Aquatic sciences and water quality
- Biomaterials
- Environmental modelling
- Genetics and molecular biology
- Biodiversity and conservation

### Strategies

- Facilitate the development or reorganization of research centres to support research strength areas.
- Support research centre membership transition to a multidisciplinary research focus using the Trent Centre for Biomaterials Research (TCBR) model. The TCBR has ten Faculty researchers from six different departments across Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities.
- Working with research centres, develop action plans to increase revenues from specialized laboratory analytical services, and commercialization (licenses, patents).

### ***SRP Implementation***

There is a recognition that there will be opportunities to develop and nurture new areas of research strength during the time horizon of this plan. The Office of Research and Innovation will undertake the responsibility of working with Faculty champions on assessing potentials for new research strength area development, and implementing development plans for accepted new initiatives.