

Strategic Research Plan Summary – University of Northern British Columbia

Major Objectives of the Strategic Research Plan

The 2022-2024 Strategic Research Plan is an interim plan, providing a platform for the development of a new five-year plan, following consultations and planning led by the new VP Research and Innovation, anticipated to occur in 2023.

The major objectives of the plan are:

1. To strengthen UNBC's research capacity;
2. To enhance UNBC's contribution to training of highly skilled personnel;
3. To manage and enhance research resources;
4. To enhance partnerships;
5. To mobilize knowledge; and
6. To attract and retain outstanding faculty.

Priority Areas for Research and Research Training

UNBC has gained national recognition for research performance, especially in key areas of importance to the wellbeing of northerners. We value and encourage research and scholarly activity that is locally motivated and relevant, yet has global effect and recognition. This refreshed strategic research plan reaffirms UNBC's founding principles through its commitment to four interdisciplinary and interconnected areas of scholarly inquiry:

- First Nations and Indigenous Peoples
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Community Development
- Northern, Rural and Environmental Health

How UNBC proposes to address the issue of gender representation in CRC nominations and to monitor its progress in addressing this issue

All Canada Research Chairholder recruitment and nomination processes at UNBC strictly adhere to the Canada Research Chairs recruitment requirements. Safeguards to ensure these processes are open and transparent are built in to UNBC policies and procedures as well as the Faculty Agreement.

Gender representation in CRC nominations at UNBC will be addressed through the following:

- The allocation of CRCs is managed by an interdisciplinary Research Chairs Committee

- Safeguards, such as a revised Equity in Employment policy, procedures outlined in the Faculty Agreement, and mandatory training for the hiring committee, have been put in place to ensure recruitment practices are open and transparent and that the four designated groups are not disadvantaged, and
- Training and development activities related to unconscious bias, equity, diversity and inclusion for administrators and faculty who are involved in the recruitment and nomination process for chair positions have, and will continue to, take place

UNBC will monitor its progress in addressing this issue through the collection of self-identification data from applicants when they apply for positions. UNBC's

Areas of research in which UNBC intends to deploy Chairs and/or CFI support

Area of Research	Tier 1 CRC	Tier 2 CRC	CFI Support*
NSERC	0	2	Yes
SSHRC	1	1	Yes
CIHR	0	2	Yes

*UNBC currently has an open internal call for applications for both the upcoming CFI JELF and CFI Innovation Fund competitions. Specific areas of CFI support are yet to be determined.

What UNBC has done to develop research and research training in these areas and its plans for any new areas of research it intends to develop

UNBC has invested, with financial support from CFI and BCKDF, among others, in significant physical infrastructure to support research and enrich its research environment.

The following physical resources are in place to support the research programs of UNBC researchers and provide world-class training opportunities for UNBC students that enhance their research experience and technical skills and knowledge, leading to the development of the next generation of research leaders.

Lab Facilities

- Genetics Lab
- GIS and Remote Sensing Lab
- IK Barber Enhanced Forestry Lab
- Northern Analytical Services Lab
- Research Computing Lab
- Wood Innovation Research Lab

Research Forests and Centres

- Aleza Lake Research Forest
- John Prince Research Forest

- Dr. Max Blouw Quesnel River Research Centre

Collections and Data Centres

- UNBC Library
- Northern BC Archives & Special Collections
- Research Data Centre

Institutes and Centres

- Centre of Excellence in Data Privacy, Security and Integrity
- CIHR Institute of Indigenous People's Health
- Community Development Institute
- Health Research Institute
- Institute for Social Research
- National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health
- Natural Resources & Environmental Studies Institute
- Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions
- Women North Network/Northern Feminist Institute for Research and Evaluation (FIRE)

Research training at UNBC is further enhanced through the following:

- Research Ambassador program that has enhanced awareness of, and interest in, research,
- Undergraduate Research Experience Awards that provide funding for undergraduate students to engage and be mentored in a faculty member's research
- Graduate Scholarships, Research Project Awards, and travel funding for graduate students to attend conferences to present their work
- Postdoctoral Fellows are supported through the Office of Research and Innovation, internal funding opportunities, and grant development workshops.

Within each strategic research area (identified above), UNBC has identified key areas of research as well as emerging themes. UNBC is committed to these areas of inquiry as they are of critical importance to the region, as well as to Canada and globally.

Planned inter-institutional and inter-sectoral collaborations

UNBC has formally established several inter-institutional collaborations, these include:

MOU with Northern Health

UNBC and NH signed a facilitating MOU on June 22, 2010. The MOU was subsequently renewed on December 5, 2016, and again on Nov. 1, 2018. The current MOU (signed July 11, 2022) renews and builds upon these earlier commitments in recognition of past achievements and new contexts, opportunities and challenges. All these MOUs reflect a shared commitment to furthering knowledge about, and developing the capacity for, the

advancement of the health of northern British Columbians through the integration of practice, education and research.

Provincial Health Services Authority/Northern Health/UNBC

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), Northern Health (NH) and University of Northern BC (UNBC) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on November 12, 2013 to collaborate in establishing a mutually beneficial research partnership for northern BC. The UNBC Health Research Institute (HRI) serves as the Secretariat to support PHSA, NH and UNBC in their commitment to enhance research collaboration between the three organizations.

MOU with University of Central Asia

The University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Central Asia (UCA) signed a memorandum of understanding (in 2021) to facilitate student and faculty exchanges between the two institutions and increased opportunities to collaborate on joint research projects.

MOU with Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto and UNBC have signed an MOU that will further research programs across the North, while also providing unique experiential learning opportunities for UNBC students.

Michael Smith Health Research BC (MSHRBC) – previously BCAHSN

Michael Smith Health Research BC is British Columbia's health research agency. Launched in 2021, Health Research BC brings together the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) and the BC Academic Health Science Network (BC AHSN). We are working towards a future where BC is recognized worldwide for its vibrant, coherent, inclusive, and globally competitive health research system, which improves the health of British Columbians, the health system, and the economy.

MSHRBC enables research in many ways and UNBC researchers can access a number of supports through MSHRBC agencies, including through:

- BC SUPPORT Unit
- Clinical Trials BC
- Research Ethics BC
- Knowledge Translation

How UNBC will assess its success in meeting its objectives

The Office of Research and Innovation annually evaluates its progress toward meeting these objectives, and the Vice President Research and Innovation reports regularly to UNBC's Senate and Board of Governors on research activities and progress on the plan.

UNBCs planning and approval process. Involvement of affiliated institutions.

This fourth iteration of UNBC's Strategic Research Plan is based on the 2017-2021 Strategic Research Plan, which was developed after extensive community consultation across UNBC's service region. For that plan, a Research Taskforce Committee comprised of faculty from both former colleges, undergraduate and graduate students, and administrative staff, a draft document was created. Input and comment was then solicited from the research community at large, at all UNBC campuses. Once revisions were made, it was brought back for approval, and to the President for endorsement.

This revised Strategic Research Plan (2022-2024) is an interim plan with the same research themes and priorities as found in the 2017-2021 plan. Due to significant restructuring of both the academic and the administrative organizations at UNBC, as well as significant and ongoing change in senior leadership, and responses to the global pandemic, now is not the time for an extensive revision of the Strategic Research Plan. The Strategic Research Plan did need updating and reformatting to provide more clear direction for the Office of Research and Innovation staff over the next 2 years, and for more transparent communication of UNBC's priorities and objectives with respect to its research mission.

This interim plan has been reviewed by UNBC's Research Committee, and approved by the President.

Affiliated Institutions:

- Northern Health
- Michael Smith Health Research BC (previously BCAHSN)