

Wilfrid Laurier University - Strategic Research Plan 2020-2025

Introduction

Wilfrid Laurier University is renowned as an exceptional learning community. From our roots in Kitchener-Waterloo as a small Lutheran seminary that opened its doors in 1911, we have evolved into a comprehensive, multicampus, multi-community university with an expanding research profile. Since the turn of this century, our institution has experienced historic growth, while maintaining the small-campus feel and student-focused approach to postsecondary education that form the essence of Laurier.

Wilfrid Laurier University takes as its mission statement:

Laurier will excel at creating a thriving community where all members of our comprehensive university can reach their potential. From this foundation, we will develop future-ready people who will transform where they live, work, and continue to learn.

Research Strategy

Laurier's research strategy comprises four elements:

1. We will **value and promote** all forms of scholarship and creative practice, and its researchers will disseminate that new knowledge to our scholarly communities, research partners, policy makers, and the general public, with the aims of advancing knowledge and benefiting society.
2. We will strive for **research excellence** in all that we do, across the full spectrum of scholarship, by supporting our undergraduate researchers, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research staff, faculty members, community partners, and research collaborators who are engaged with us in the fulfillment of our research mission.
3. We are animated by our **thriving community** of enriching partnerships. We will facilitate mutually supportive relationships with alumni, other educational institutions, governments, Indigenous communities, industries, and the not-for-profit sector.
4. We will contribute to **future readiness** by connecting research, scholarship and creative activity with communities and across disciplines to address the most pressing local and global challenges.

Strategic Research Themes

Laurier will develop and maintain excellence in six research themes:

Environments and Sustainability

Working in a variety of environments, from the natural and near-pristine to environments heavily impacted by humans, Laurier researchers focus on evaluating and mitigating human impacts on these environments and on ways to live more sustainably. This research theme spans the natural and social sciences, the humanities and business.

Current research strengths: Cultures of sustainability; Decision-making for sustainability; Environmental sustainability; and Sustainable food systems.

Emerging research strengths: Environmental humanities; Sustainable chemistry; and Sustainability justice.

Psychological and Social Determinants of Health and Well-being

Laurier researchers in arts, social work and science are investigating issues related to health and well-being. By exploring this foundational topic through musical, scientific, cultural and psychological lenses, researchers encourage positive physical, mental and emotional health.

Current research strengths: Health and well-being across the lifespan; Music therapy; and Well-being and resilience.

Emerging research strengths: Community impact through innovative physical activity; Human performance in complex socio-technical environments; and Innovative partnerships for social work, education, and society.

Governance and Policy

As societies grapple with increasingly complex challenges, they rely on strong, transparent governance and public policy to function and succeed. Laurier researchers seek to understand these political, economic, social and security issues in order to increase our capacity to deal with them.

Current research strengths: Conflict and security; Economic and social policy; Global migration policy and governance; Governance, ethics and control; Organizational effectiveness; and Policy studies, voting behaviour and public opinion.

Emerging research strengths: Developing educational leaders in global contexts; and Governance, ethics, and social responsibility.

Indigeneity, Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Laurier researchers identify and address systemic barriers experienced by members of underrepresented or disadvantaged groups including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities or racialized groups and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community. All individuals have multiple identities and their intersections are considered whenever possible.

Current research strengths: Diversity of cultures and communities; Gender and its intersections; Indigenous scholarship and decolonizing relationships, knowledge and practices; and Intersection of health and marginalization/dis-inclusion; and Social justice and human rights.

Emerging research strengths: Computational and technological bias; and Educational supports for learners and leaders.

Business, Technology and Innovation

Researchers at Laurier seek innovative ways to solve issues in a rapidly changing global business environment using technology and applying statistical, mathematical and econometric methods to theoretical, lab and field studies. Advancements in digital technology are both the subject of study by Laurier researchers as well as the means by which these researchers are gaining new insights in the fields of business and economics.

Current research strengths: Financial markets, products and analysis; Information for decision making; Mathematical modelling and data analysis; Services marketing; and Supply chain, and operations management.

Emerging research strengths: Artificial intelligence and machine learning; Business analytics; Entrepreneurship; High-growth enterprises; and Innovation and technology.

Society, Culture and Community

Culture reflects, informs and celebrates our human experience, shifting with time and evolving within social and territorial groups. As societies grapple with expanding norms and ideological division, Laurier research contributes to the formation, adaptation and preservation of communities.

Current research strengths: Cultural analysis; Critical game design and development; Global dynamics and human rights; Languages and communications; Leadership studies; and Musical composition and performance.

Emerging research strengths: Community music; Digital humanities; Experiential learning and educational leadership; Heritage studies; Intercultural and engaged pedagogies; Muslim studies; North American studies; Socio-cultural change and resilience; and Storytelling.

Canada Research Chair Management

Laurier's CRCs are allocated and managed as outlined in [Laurier's CRC Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Action Plan](#). The Research Services Council (RSC) and the CRC Review Committee oversees the CRC allocation and renewal processes. The RSC comprises the Deans (or designates) from each unit. The CRC Review Committee comprises the Vice-President, Research and Vice-President, Academic. The primary responsibility of the RSC is to assess the unit proposals for new CRC allocation and renewal nominations. The RSC solicits proposals from Faculties for new or vacant Chairs, within 18 months of the targeted date for submission of the application. Unit proposals and renewal proposals are adjudicated and ranked using criteria outlined in Laurier's CRC EDI Action Plan. The RSC makes recommendations to the CRC Review Committee. The primary responsibility of the CRC Review Committee is the effective management of Laurier's quota of CRCs; this includes the overall deployment of CRCs, and

assessment of performance of incumbents as the basis for decisions on university support for further term renewals.

Through the RSC and the CRC Review Committee, our CRC EDI Action Plan and participation in the Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada program we will address the representation of equity deserving groups in CRC nominations and monitor progress. The number of Chairs offered to current faculty; to researchers in Canada; and to researchers outside of Canada are managed through the processes outlined above. Provision of CFI allocation is made to 100% of CRCs who have infrastructure needs.

Laurier has a current allocation of 13 Chairs (three NSERC Tier 1 Chairs; two NSERC Tier 2 Chairs; and eight SSHRC Tier 2 Chairs). Flexibility was applied to convert two SSHRC Chairs to NSERC Chairs (one Tier 1 Chair and one Tier 2 Chair); and a split of a SSHRC Tier 1 Chair to two SSHRC Tier 2 Chairs. The RSC is responsible to review if the corridor of flexibility should be applied to new or vacant chairs as they become available and makes recommendations to the CRC Review Committee for approval.

Table 1: Current and future allocation of CRCs by Laurier’s Strategic Research Themes.

Strategic Research Theme	Current Allocation	Future Allocation
<i>Environments and Sustainability</i>	2	2
<i>Psychological and Social Determinants of Health and Well-being</i>	1	1
<i>Governance and Policy</i>	1	
<i>Indigeneity, Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion</i>	1	1
<i>Business, Technology and Innovation</i>	2	1
<i>Society, Culture and Community</i>	1	

Assessment of Measures

The Office of Research Services went through an extensive consultation process to develop Laurier’s Strategic Research Plan. To assess the progress in meeting the objectives set out in the Strategic Research Plan the Office of Research Services will conduct a Research Culture Survey, tri-annually, directed to the Laurier research community. Laurier’s first Research Culture Survey was administered in late 2020 and an Action Plan to address the results is currently under development.

Laurier has taken considerable effort to ensure that all CRCs (and CFI investments) reinforce our research priorities, with all CRCs advancing at least one strategic research theme. This enhances Laurier’s capacity, to advance our research strategy within the research themes, to secure external research funding; train students and postdoctoral fellows in innovative environments; build world-class infrastructure; and collaborate and form partnerships/networks externally, both in Canada and internationally. The CRC Program has allowed and will continue to allow Laurier to advance our strategic research priorities as a whole.