

Strategic Research Plan

Royal Roads University Institutional Objectives

Royal Roads University is designed to meet the needs of learners and the requirements of the global marketplace. It is the first university in Canada to extensively use a learning model that blends short residencies and collaborative Internet learning and it is the only public university in Canada to exclusively offer applied and professional programs. Royal Roads focuses on current needs and trends in business and society through innovative Master degree and undergraduate completion degree programs. Two doctorate programs are also being planned. RRU also offers a broad selection of graduate certificate, graduate diploma and executive learning programs. Applied, real-world relevance and experience is the focus of all programs. This often entails research partnerships with communities, business, industry and the public sector.

Royal Roads University has developed a balance in research-to-teaching program activity appropriate to our organizational size, age, and mandate. We have steadily built our research capacity, particularly over the past six years, and have received research grants and contracts from over seventy funders including: SSHRC, NSERC, CFI, BCKDF, IDRC, Canada Corps/CIDA, Western Economic Diversification, World Bank, a number of First Nation Bands, BC Ministry of Forests, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Natural Resources Canada, Pacific Forestry Centre, the Canadian Bar Association, and Health Canada. Two CFI/BCKDF/industry projects have been funded under the New Opportunities program, one on innovative waste management and one on atmospheric monitoring and evaluation. Our first organized research centre has been established; the Centre for Non-Timber Resources, with \$2.2 million in research grants and contracts to date. Our first Canada Research Chair, the CRC in Sustainable Community Development, was established last year through the one time only competition for small universities.

Research Model and Principles

Research was identified in the Royal Roads University Act (1995) as a key component in one of its three stated purposes, i.e., “to maintain teaching excellence and research activities that support the university’s programs in response to labour market needs of British Columbia.” The Board of Governors approved a research policy in 1998 positioning the importance of research to the mandate of the University. The policy was revised in 2002, emphasizing the integral role research should play in Royal Roads University’s strategic direction, the importance of research to the teaching and learning functions at RRU, the contribution research can make to the economic and social development of the province and beyond, and the positive impact to the University in making research a high priority.

The Royal Roads University research model centres the production of useful knowledge and tools under the unifying theme of sustainability to reflect the four core pillars of the University - environmental sustainability, empowering leadership, entrepreneurial management and conflict analysis and management. Within a knowledge-based economy, our research model is action-oriented and problem-solving in nature, reflecting the evolving learner community that RRU has fostered.

The Board approved the following research principles to guide research activity:

- The majority of research at RRU focuses on real world problem-solving.

- Action research and action learning guides a large portion of research projects, as these methodologies are complementary to real world problem solving.
- Interdisciplinarity in research complements RRU's flexible, interdisciplinary approach to education.
- Funds to support research are sought from private industry, foundations, and international sources as well from provincial government sources and federal major granting councils.
- Research innovation is encouraged, and where feasible, commercialization of research is encouraged.
- Recognizing the tremendous value in the "intellectual capital" of our learners' workplace research projects, links between learners' host organizations and employers and the university, are fostered.
- Industry, inter-institutional, and community based research that is dependent on effective alliances and collaborative networks within industry, the business community, corporations, government, communities, and the public are encouraged.

Royal Roads University's research development plan

The university has developed a three year integrated university-wide planning process which incorporates research specifically. Fourteen research strategies have been identified:

- Create research and leadership chairs.
- Seek large-scale research projects, centre and networking funding.
- Attract and retain high quality faculty, other researchers, and trainees.
- Promote collaborative, multi-sector and multi-disciplinary research.
- Develop research infrastructure.
- Respond to research service demand (for example ethics requests).
- Expand communication and marketing initiatives (for example, research annual report, e-flyers, media database of research and impact; books and journal articles dissemination, etc.).
- Innovate and exploit research knowledge for social and economic benefit (for example, partnership with the Innovation and Commercialization Centre, University of Victoria).
- Develop indicators and evaluation and monitoring mechanisms for tracking the outcomes of research and the alignment with university goals.
- Promote consulting and create a consulting/applied research joint venture.
- Maximize the integration of research in the classroom for the benefit of learners.
- Advance learner research.
- Position RRU as a leader in e-research and e-learning.
- Advance partnership development including international partnerships.

Strategic Research Themes

Two strategic research themes have been developed: 1) learning and innovation and 2) sustainable societies and communities. The themes and sub-themes are revisited regularly both through open university forums and by our Program and Research Council, a entity mandated by the RRU Act to advise the Board of Governors. The research themes emerge directly from the interdisciplinary nature of the University's applied and professional degree programs and reflect the synergies of existing strengths and evolving priority areas for the University as a whole. Strategic research theme development in a university created solely to address the knowledge needs of the global workforce was a natural outgrowth of both its interdisciplinary teaching programs and blended learning model. The two university strategic research themes often function symbiotically, and serve a mutually rewarding purpose. For example, the research of our Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Communities explores

the dynamic interconnections among sustainable community development, e–dialogues, e–research, and social capital. The university is actively engaged in building online research collaboration and in using Internet technologies, both to increase public literacy around key societal issues and to explore how to influence the policy development process. Learners at all levels actively participate in a range of e–dialogue and e–research, manifesting the essential relationship between research and the learning provided students.

Learning and innovation research is a natural focus for a university with program delivery comprised primarily of short intensive residencies combined with team-based internet distance learning, and with a curriculum developed specifically to meet the needs of the global workplace. In effect, the university is a living laboratory for applied learning innovation. As a strategic research theme, learning and innovation capitalizes on a decade of successful experience at Royal Roads University in developing and experimenting with new ways of learning, including the comprehensive use of advanced technologies. It expands on the empirical results of institution–wide experimentation, and begins to distil the practical applications and limitations of learning innovations as these impact both formal and informal learning organizations.

Sustainable societies and communities research includes, but is not limited to, the following areas. 1) Governance. (Economic, social, health, environmental and organizational issues are central to the development of sustainable communities, and affect a wide variety of stakeholders. Governance determines how communities will accommodate rapidly changing circumstances and diminishing resources.) 2) Environmental Solutions. (The application of environmental sciences to identify, characterize, and address community-related problems offer a specialty niche for RRU.) 3) Community Learning and Development. (Communities tend to be isolated from mainstream technology and management system development, and often have limited resources available to them to deal with issues that are complex and controversial. As a leader in distributed learning, RRU is well positioned to lead research in sustainability literacy at the community level.) 4) Culture and Conflict. (The theme recognizes the growing importance of cultural analysis prior to intervention in ethno-political and other identity-based conflicts.)

Attraction and Retention of Excellent Researchers

RRU faculty excel as educators, researchers and practitioners. Given RRU's emphasis on applied and professional programming, and a research model that is action-oriented and problem-solving in nature, its faculty are unique in spanning all three areas of competence. RRU thus aims to provide a research environment that provides the necessary infrastructure, resources and opportunities to advance innovative, applied and problem-solving oriented research and training that will attract and retain excellent researchers.

Areas of Focus for CFI

There is currently an initiative underway for which CFI support is being requested, *Digital Innovation for Mobile Engagement (DIME) Lab*, a program of research aimed at ameliorating the digital divide. The research is interdisciplinary in nature, supports both of the strategic research themes, supports existing and emerging University programs, has the potential to advance local, national and international partnership development, and promises significant social and economic benefit.