

**RESEARCH REPORT: SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING  
RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP**

**THE FACULTY OF ARTS**

**The Committee on Research and Graduate Studies**

**May 2018**

## **THE FACULTY OF ARTS: STRENGTHENING OUR COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP**

### **Introduction**

The Faculty of Arts at the University of Regina is a community of scholars and students active in research, scholarship, and teaching in more than 20 departments and programmes in the Social Sciences and Humanities. We regard the creation of new knowledge through research, scholarship and creative endeavours as one of the fundamental missions of our Faculty. We understand, too, that as members of the Faculty, we are first, engaged in discovery, through research, creative activities, and scholarship of new knowledge and theories and, second, in the sharing of new knowledge and insight within a broader academic community in order that they will be freely available to other scholars and to the general community and so that a scholar's research and creative work may be tested and evaluated by peers.

Research, scholarship, and creative activities and their dissemination have been central missions of the Social Sciences and Humanities for much of universities' history and their world growth. At the University of Regina, the Faculty of Arts is committed to faculty members' development of agendas for research, their adoption of plans for conducting research, the execution of those plans and the dissemination of research outcomes to the critical community and to the interested public. Our goal is to generate insights into important questions confronting humanity and to generate and refine new knowledge and new ideas that may inform and enlighten our students, the scholarly communities and society more generally.

The Faculty of Arts is committed to each faculty member having an active research and/or creative agenda that builds a successful research culture at the University of Regina. Faculty members have a sense of their research and creative agendas- the scholarly work they are doing in their fields- but it is important to consider periodically how the Faculty and the University of Regina, more generally, can help faculty members to sustain active, productive, and engaging research over a period of time, and the ways in which the Faculty and the University can facilitate and foster our research.

There is considerable talent within the Faculty of Arts as gauged by the productive outcome of scholarly and creative works. In the past six years, members of the Faculty of Arts have collectively published more than fifty books and generated more than \$5.7 million in research funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), \$6 million from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and over \$855,000 from the Engineering and Sciences Research Council of Canada (NSERC). Members of the Faculty have also received funding from provincial organizations such as the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation and other governmental (both federal and provincial) and non-governmental agencies. We publish regularly in academic journals and with scholarly presses and have contributed to public and scholarly engagement through conference presentations, op-eds, public lectures, and a variety of reports.

Despite the success in research, scholarship and creative works, there remain major concerns especially when the University of Regina is considered in a comparative context. One such concern arises from the low rate of applications for funding from the Social Sciences and

Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the comparatively low rate of success in SSHRC grants. Although it is only one indicator- and despite some criticism of its methodology-, the annual ranking for the University of Regina in *Maclean's* magazine might be considered an indicator of the Faculty of Arts' low success in the area of SSHRC funding compared to other similar universities. In the *Maclean's* 2018 ranking of comprehensive universities, the University of Regina, ranked 15th of all similar universities in Canada in funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, placing it at the bottom of rankings in that category. Of course, only a portion of eligible faculty in the area of SSHRC-funded research are in the Faculty of Arts, but it is home to 37 faculty members in the Humanities and 80 in the Social Sciences. The 2018 ranking placed the University of Regina 10th among Canada's 15 comprehensive universities, and some members of the Faculty of Arts received funding in this category. According to the *MacLean's* annual rankings in the area of SSHRC funding, the University of Regina has been in the bottom tier for several years.

The low number of applicants in the Faculty of Arts for the annual competition for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Grants explains the low ranking in *Maclean's*. The number of applications from the Faculty of Arts was already low at 8 in 2012 (of which two were successful) dropped to 3 in 2015 (of which none were successful) before climbing marginally to 5 in 2016 (of which 2 were successful). Of course, members of the Faculty of Arts have applied successfully to other Tri-Council Agencies, especially to CIHR which have granted, as noted above, more than \$6 million to researchers in health-related fields.

It is important to note that this Report recognizes: first, not all quality research and scholarship require external funding; and second, some areas or types of research depend on external funding. While the Report's relevant recommendations explicitly acknowledge the first point, they are also designed to encourage faculty members who would benefit from external research funding to apply for external research grants and especially Tri-Council grants. External research grants in general and Tri-Council grants in particular are an important source of funding for graduate students; they also contribute to the University's revenues, which are in turn used to support faculty members' research and scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

The overall purpose of this Report is two-fold: first, identify major challenges to research and scholarship in the Faculty of Arts; and second, develop recommendations to overcome these challenges and to support and facilitate faculty members' research, scholarship, and creative work.

## **Methodology**

This report draws on a variety of sources. In February-March 2018, the Committee on Research and Graduate Studies (RAGS) conducted a survey of faculty members in the Faculty of Arts (including the federated colleges) to obtain their input. The survey was done and analyzed using the software Qualtrics. In addition, survey comments were coded and analyzed through the software NVivo.

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<sup>1</sup> The University's quota of Tri-Council graduate scholarships is a function of the amount of Tri-Council funding received by faculty. The formula used by the provincial government for allocating its annual budget grant between the two Universities in the province also factors in the amount of Tri-Council funding obtained by each University.

**Survey demographics and participation**

Number of self-identified Humanities faculty taking the survey: 20

Number of self-identified Social Science faculty taking the survey: 44

Total responses: 64

Total survey participation: 67 (recorded responses)

Total faculty in Humanities: 37

Total faculty in Social Sciences: 80

**Survey participation rate**

Humanities: 54%

Social Science: 55%

**Of total survey respondents:**

Humanities: 29.85%

Social Sciences: 65.67%

Unidentified: 4.48%

For the Report, RAGS also surveyed a variety of relevant Faculty and University documents and data, such as data on major publications by faculty members; applications for, and results of, internal and external grants; Arts Vision and Priorities Report (2016); U of R Strategic Plan 2015-2020; U of R Strategic Research Plan 2016-2021; webpages of the Faculty of Arts departments and of faculty members; and comparable universities' websites. The Committee frequently met to discuss its findings and to develop recommendations based on its findings and survey results. The rest of the Report summarizes and discusses the results of the survey and offers recommendations aimed at overcoming the main challenges in the area of research and scholarship as identified by faculty members as well as supporting and promoting faculty's research and scholarship. Each section that follows focuses on a major theme RAGS identified as important to explore in the Report. The sections are concerned with the main challenges faced by faculty members in the area of research and scholarship; research funding; and research impact.

**CHALLENGES IN THE AREA OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS**

With declining government support of higher education in Canada and increasing competition for limited federal funding for academic research, faculty members at universities across the country, including the University of Regina, have been facing increased pressures to boost their level of efficiency and research productivity. While the research environment at our university is such that there are now higher demands for faculty members to produce high quality research to address today's global challenges and build competitive advantage in research nationwide, the situation has been exacerbated as the University of Regina leaders have been attempting to manage reductions in government funding while trying to increase student enrollment and minimize tuition increases. These strategies have created a number of challenges and struggles we are experiencing.

As the survey of faculty members in the Faculty of Arts revealed, 74% of the respondents believed that a number of institutional factors have created obstacles that diminish their ability to conduct research. Faculty members in the Faculty of Arts were asked to identify specific barriers to research productivity. The results are depicted in Figure 1.

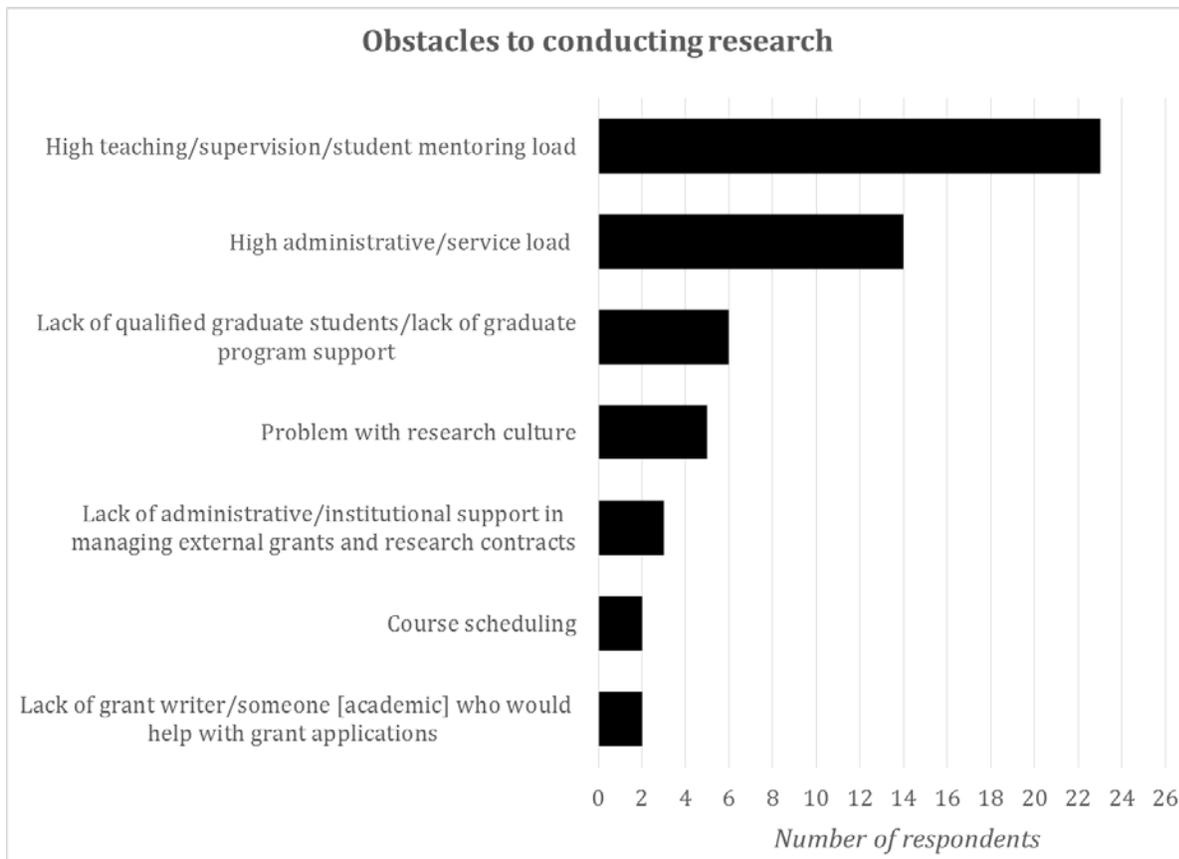


Figure 1. Obstacles to conducting research

As illustrated by the figure above, Arts faculty consider their teaching loads to be a significant obstacle to greater research productivity. To better assess this result, RAGS surveyed the websites of some comparable Canadian universities to find information on teaching loads. Our survey did not yield reliable information because that information is usually not publicly available and also because teaching loads are determined at different levels (departmental, faculty, or university level) at different institutions. Furthermore, some universities allow differential teaching loads depending on individual faculty members’ research/scholarship productivity. It is also important to note that regular teaching load often differs from actual teaching load as a result of course buy-outs or teaching releases for a variety of reasons; and universities have different teaching-teaching release policies or practices.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> An important source on teaching loads is a Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario report “Teaching Loads and Research Outputs of Ontario University Faculty Members” 2014.

A few survey respondents commented that the Faculty does not provide teaching releases to even multimillion-grant holders; thus such major grant holders are often pressed for time trying to complete their funded research projects while teaching a full load.

In the survey, in addition to teaching load, the scheduling of classes was raised as a problem, with some respondents indicating that in some semesters they teach every day of the week. It would be preferable to have teaching organized in such a way that 1-2 days of the week could be reserved for research.

The second related theme is the perception that administrative loads are heavy, and are becoming more so as the overall faculty complement shrinks. The combination of heavy teaching and administrative loads has resulted in some faculty members being unable to carry out much, or any, research during teaching semesters. It is worth noting in this regard that some faculty members expressed concerns that administrative load is not uniformly distributed across faculty members. A close look at the 2017/2018 Committee membership at the Faculty of Arts reveals that currently 36 faculty members serve on various Faculty of Arts committees (excluding ex officio members) and 12 faculty are representatives to other faculties. About one third of the faculty members involved in Arts committees serve on more than one committee, which suggests that committee work is not being distributed fairly.

75% of Arts faculty indicated that graduate students were somewhat important or “very” important to their research. Lack of qualified graduate students/programs was the third largest category in the survey responses of obstacles to research. Here the problem of insufficient funding and other support for graduate students was highlighted. While the majority of faculty members mentioned that having access to high quality graduate students as Research Assistants would be essential to speed up their research work, a few also mentioned that lack of a strong graduate program in itself is a hindrance to obtaining a Tri-council funding that requires student training/supervision. As a result, even if the research work can be done by a faculty member alone without graduate research assistants, the chances of being successful in tri-council grant application are significantly reduced without a strong graduate program. For departments where graduate programs exist, current undergraduate teaching loads were listed as barriers to graduate supervision. A few respondents also mentioned that heavy graduate student supervision and participation in MA and/or PhD thesis committees, which does not receive any teaching credits, also take time away from research and scholarship

Some respondents indicated that more generous travel support, to allow them to present papers at academic conferences and interact with their research partners, would strongly benefit their research programs. This is especially important in the current times when grant application process has become very competitive and successful applications are often multidisciplinary in nature, involving collaborations of academics from multiple institutions.

Problems with research culture were the fourth most important barrier to research. This category for the most part encompasses the perception that University leaders do not adequately value research. As indicated by some faculty members, leaders at the University of Regina have been emphasizing teaching and service, while research has become just a filler in between teaching and service responsibilities. Also, some members believe that there has been a lack of

recognition of novel research that falls outside current disciplinary boundaries. One faculty member reported a case when his/her internal grant application was declined simply on the grounds that the proposed topic was not a priority and was outside the identified research clusters. It is important to recognize that the diversity of our research themes is in fact our strength and is therefore a key for us to achieve the research objectives in the University Strategic Plan. While some faculty members indicated that the lack of recognition of time and effort spent on writing and submitting applications for external research grants was a disincentive to submit such applications, there was no consensus as to whether or not the criteria document of the faculty needs to be revised to provide additional incentives to apply for external research grants. Some respondents also mentioned that the lack of a professional grant writer - someone with an academic background- in the Faculty of Arts or at the University is a weakness of the research support environment.

Overall, when Arts faculty members were asked about institutional support for the research they conduct and disseminate, 9.5% of respondents said “a lot”, and another 17.5% said “close to a lot” (selected 5 on the given 6 item-Likert scale from 0=not at all to 5=a lot), and the highest number of respondents (38 out of 63 in total) selected item 3 on the scale.

Thus those who selected 3 to 5 on the 6-item Likert scale are 65% of respondents; and those who answered 0-2 constitute 35%. Thus, a significant minority of survey respondents think that they do not have adequate institutional support for their research (see Figure 2).

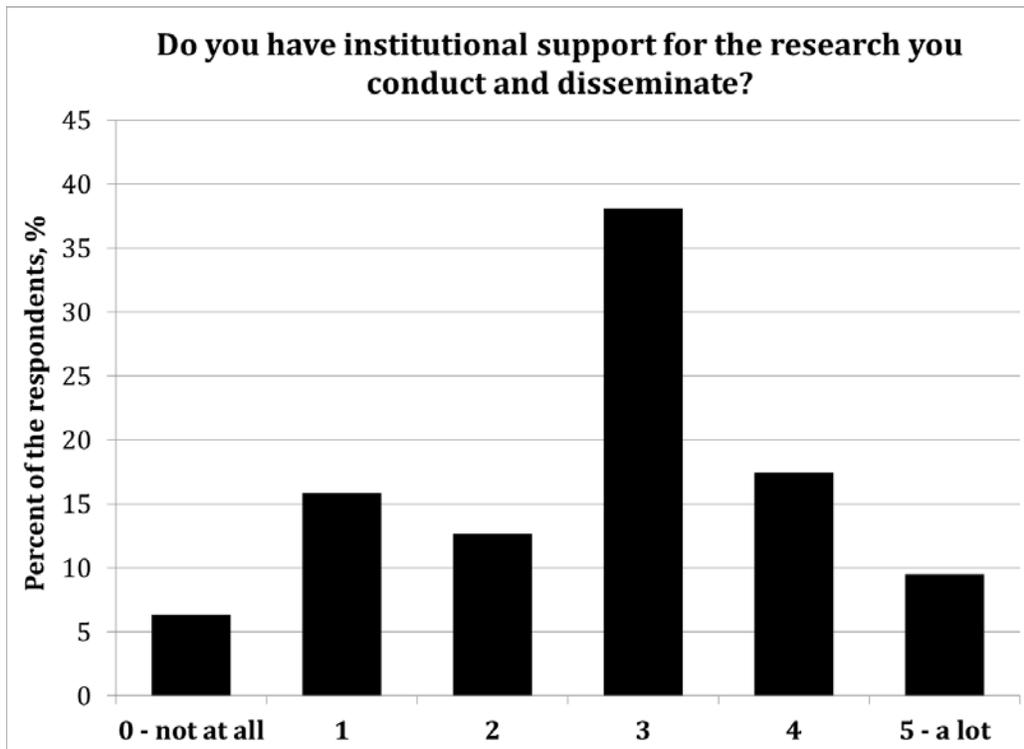


Figure 2. Institutional support for the research

Faculty members were also asked to propose solutions concerning how to overcome the identified barriers to conducting research and how to enhance institutional support for academic

research and scholarship. RAGS makes the following recommendations based on the survey responses.

### **Recommendation 1 Teaching Load**

As much as possible, the Faculty of Arts should work toward reducing teaching loads for tenured and tenure-stream faculty. Possible suggestions to reduce teaching load in order to create more time for research include:

- a) Allow departments to reduce the regular teaching loads to three courses per year.
- b) Allow faculty members to designate either research intensive, teaching intensive, or balanced Performance Review periods. The balance between teaching and research responsibilities and performance-review evaluations would be adjusted accordingly.
- c) Faculty members should receive one-course teaching credits for the supervision of three graduate theses or projects upon the successful completion of the theses / projects. Two honours theses should be equivalent to one graduate thesis / project. Members can claim one-course release using this method every five years.
- d) Provide teaching releases for principal investigators holding major research grants (Tri-Council or comparable provincial and national grants, normally over \$75,000). Faculty members can request only one course release per year and up to three courses in total during the duration of the grant.
- e) Allow externally funded teaching releases (funded through grants or other approved sources) to facilitate research.
- f) A faculty member who has authored a peer-reviewed book should get a course release once the book has been accepted for publication by a reputable publisher, to allow time to seed the next project.
- g) Encourage the University to create a University Professorship position. This would allow the member to focus on their research for the duration of one year. A term position would be hired to cover the position using money received through Tri-Council grants to fund the initiative.
- h) Department heads should try to accommodate faculty members' request for a teaching-free semester if they teach extra courses in previous two or three semesters.
- i) To allow a faculty member to carry out off-campus field research during a teaching semester, on-line teaching should be considered an option if that option can be accommodated without undermining the relevant program's academic integrity and without causing undue hardship.

### **Recommendation 2 Teaching Schedules**

The Dean should work with the Registrar's Office to cluster the teaching schedules of tenured and tenure-track faculty in such a way that they can reserve at least two days a week for research. (Please note that the current system of entering approved restrictions on the timetabling system for individual faculty members is onerous and often inefficient).

### **Recommendation 3 Service**

- a) Reduce the size and number of standing committees.

- b) Distribute the committee work fairly across the Faculty. The Faculty Policy Handbook may need to be revised to indicate that each tenured faculty member must serve on at least two faculty-wide and/or University-wide committees over a period of 6 years (two Performance Review periods).

If a faculty member is required to serve on one or more faculty/ university-wide committees by the virtue of their administrative positions, their service on such committees should count toward fulfilling the requirement of committee service. (E.g., department heads are members of the Dean's Executive Committee; and the Community Research Unit's (CRU) Director is an ex-officio member of the CRU Board.)

#### **Recommendation 4 Travel Funding**

More funding should be made available to help faculty members present papers at academic conferences and travel to collaborate with researchers from other institutions.

### **RESEARCH FUNDING**

Although most Arts members who responded to the survey have applied for external funding in the past five years, many have not, citing no need for funding, a lack of time, and the absence of previous record of funding as barriers to obtaining funding.

- Humanities and Social Sciences researchers differ with respect to their reasons for not applying for Tri-council funding
- 6/9 Social Science researchers who did not apply for tri-council funding cited no need for funds as their main reason for not applying
- 4/10 Humanities researchers agreed with this, and also cited a lack of time (2/10) and no previous tri-council funding (specifically, SSHRC; 4/10) as additional reasons for not applying

#### **Recommendation 1 Encouraging and promoting external research funding applications**

- a) Those who have been successful in securing Tri-Council funding in the past should be incentivized to lead research teams that include members with complementary, possibly interdisciplinary expertise to apply for Tri-Council funding
- b) Faculty members with a productive research program who would benefit from Tri-Council funding, but are daunted by the opportunity cost of doing so (because of the low success rate for such applications), should be given the opportunity to submit a proposal to the Dean. If approved, the plan would allow them to dedicate one three-year review period to obtaining a standard Tri-Council research grant as principal investigator on the understanding that expectations for research outputs during this period would be reduced.
- c) Except for areas of scholarship that do not require external funding, the hiring process should prioritize hiring faculty with the best prospects for research success in securing external funding, and in particular, Tri-council funding.

There was little appetite for making changes to the criteria document to encourage members to apply for external funding, but newer members, Social Science researchers, and researchers who have applied for grants in the past five years are the group who is most supportive of this approach. Indeed, many of the changes that were suggested are in fact already detailed in the

current criteria document. For example, under *Scholarship*, the document specifies recognition be given for “successful external grants; submission or invited reviews of provincial, national, or international grant applications” and that “...the evaluation process should take into account the time required to secure funding from external sources.”

- The majority of respondents (33/59) preferred not to make changes to the criteria document
- Social science researchers are somewhat more inclined (18 vs. 9) to favour changes to the criteria document than not
- However, Humanities researchers generally were not in favour (11 vs. 7) of changing the criteria document
- 5/7 members who joined the Faculty within the past five years expressed support for making changes to the criteria document; this fell to 10/23 members with 6-5 years of employment in Arts and fell further to 10/27 members with more than 15 of years of employment in Arts
- Members who have applied for grants were more likely to agree with making changes to the criteria document (19 for vs. 6 against) than those who have not (7 for vs. 12 against)
- When changes were advised, the most frequently-cited recommendation was to provide clear guidelines about how different achievements should be weighted against one another (9/37 respondents)

### **Recommendation 2 Performance review and research funding**

a) The performance review criteria document already provides for recognition of applying for external funding as contributing to members’ scholarship ([Section 2.4](#), second paragraph). The document should be revised to explicitly recognize that: i) some faculty members have no need for external funding to carry out their research and they will not be penalized for not applying for external research funding; and ii) some faculty members must have funding in order to do any research at all.

b) Acknowledging that a significant number of members wanted more guidance about how to weigh different scholarly outputs, the Faculty should endeavour to delineate categories of outputs that differ with respect to how much consideration they should be given in performance review.

As a whole, the faculty has no preference between allocating more of Arts’ resources to increasing success in competitions for external funding versus asserting the value of our scholarship to senior administration and government. Members who have applied for external funding in the past five years somewhat preferred the former strategy, whereas members who have not done so strongly preferred the latter. Support for the latter also tended to be stronger in Humanities researchers, and tended to increase with years of service to the Faculty.

- There was an even split between those who think we should focus on pressing the case to administration and government of the value of Arts scholarship (31/57) and investing Arts resources into becoming successful in competitions for external funding (26/57)
- Those who have applied for grants in the past 5 years were somewhat more supportive of focusing on improving success in securing external funding over pressing the case (20 vs. 15, respectively), whereas those who have not clearly preferred to press the case of the value of our work over improving success in securing external funding (17 vs. 6, respectively)

- Those in the Humanities preferred to press the case (12 vs. 6), whereas there was no preferred strategy among those in the Social Sciences (20 vs. 19)
- Support for pressing the case increased with years of service to the Faculty. Among those with less than 5 years of service, 3/7 preferred to press the case; this increased to 12/23 among those with 6-15 years of service, and to 16/27 among those with more than 15 years of service.

### **Recommendation 3 Grant facilitator**

Arts (or, preferably, the Research Office) should endeavour to hire a SSHRC support person with an academic background, preferably with post-doctoral experience, who has experience in writing and obtaining external funding through SSHRC to assist Arts members who wish to apply for SSHRC funding.

## **RESEARCH IMPACT**

One of the three themes or questions that RAGS set out to investigate for the Arts Research Report was “research impact”. This question, as was initially formulated, was concerned with approaches to assessing research impact and the use and limitations of metrics-based assessments of research impact in social sciences and humanities. The survey of Arts faculty members included three questions on research impact; two closed-ended questions and an open-ended question inviting comments. The following section first summarizes and analyzes responses to the two closed-ended survey questions using the survey software Qualtrics and survey respondents’ comments using the software NVivo. The survey analysis is followed by a concise examination of the major issues surrounding the question of research impact, leading to the Report’s recommendations regarding research impact.

### **Survey Results and Analysis**

#### **Q.20 Are you familiar with metrics-based indicators for research impact (such as bibliometric indices, for example, h-index, InCites, and impact factor)?**

1) Not at all	5	8.77%
2) Somewhat	33	57.89%
3) A lot	19	33.33%
Total response	57	

According to the survey results, nearly 58% of survey respondents (33 faculty members) are somewhat familiar with metrics-based indicators for research impact. 33% (19 faculty members) reported that they are familiar a lot. Thus, 91% of survey respondents (57 faculty members) are familiar with metrics-based indicators for research impact somewhat to a lot. The distribution of responses does not differ significantly with respect to survey respondents’ description of their research area as humanities or social sciences. The proportion of Social Science faculty members who answered “a lot” is somewhat higher compared to the proportion of Humanities faculty members. At the same time, however, four of the five faculty members who answered “not at all” are from social sciences. It is important to note that responses to Q.20 about familiarity with metrics-based indicators for research impact do not vary significantly with respect to survey respondents’ total years of employment in the Faculty of Arts except that none of the 22 survey

respondents who have been employed for 6 to 15 years selected “not at all” in response to Q.20, while 4 of 26 respondents who have been employed for over 15 years said “not at all”.

**Q.21 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. In the humanities and social sciences, metrics-based indicators are useful for demonstrating research impact.**

1) Strongly disagree	7	12.50%
2) Disagree	17	30.36%
3) Somewhat disagree	7	12.5%
4) Neither agree nor disagree	5	8.93%
5) Somewhat agree	9	16.07%
6) Agree	7	12.50%
7) Strongly agree	4	7.14%
Total response	56	

Strongly disagree-somewhat disagree **N= 31 55.35%**  
 Neutral N=5 8.93%  
 Strongly agree / somewhat agree **N=20 35.70%**

A total of 56 survey takers answered Question 21. The proportion of those who strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree with the statement that “in the humanities and social sciences, metrics-based indicators are useful for demonstrating research impact” (55.35%) is significantly higher than the proportion of those who somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree (35.70%). The distribution of responses to the question differs significantly with respect to humanities and social sciences. Among 15 humanities faculty members who answered the question, 12 (80%) strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree with the statement, whereas only 1 “somewhat agree”, and 2 neither agree nor disagree. In comparison, 18 (45%) of 40 social science faculty who answered the question strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree, while 19 (47.5%) out of 40 somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree; and 3 (7.5%) neither agree nor disagree. Thus, social-science faculty members are divided nearly equally with regard to the usefulness of metrics-based indicators for research impact in social sciences and humanities. In contrast, most humanities faculty members who took the survey reject metrics as a useful indicator of research impact.

The distribution of responses to Q.21 also shows some variation in terms of the length of respondents’ employment in the Faculty of Arts. Among the respondents who have been employed for 6 to 15 years (22 in total), 10 or 45.46% strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree with the statement that “in the humanities and social sciences, metrics-based indicators are useful for demonstrating research impact”, while 12 or 54.54% somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree. In comparison, among the respondents who have been employed for over 15 years in the Faculty of Arts (25 in total), 17 or 68% strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree; 5 or 20% somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree; and 3 respondents (12%) neither agree nor disagree. Thus, the great majority of more senior faculty members think that metrics are not useful indicators for research impact in the humanities and social sciences, while the faculty members who are in their mid-careers are nearly evenly divided on this matter. To sum

up, over half of survey respondents think that metrics-based indicators are not useful for demonstrating research impact in social sciences and humanities, but there are significant variations with respect to two types of variables: 1) the length of employment and 2) identification with humanities or social sciences.

The survey also included an open-ended comment question on research-impact indicators.

**Q.22 In your view, what are the most important indicators for research impact in the humanities and social sciences? Please describe them.**

A total of 47 survey respondents commented on the above question. As expected, a significant number of faculty members emphasized the significance of and the need for using a variety of indicators because there are varieties of research and scholarship in the humanities and social sciences and and/or because different disciplines have different research cultures. According to the content analysis of survey comments using the NVivo software, 12 survey respondents put the emphasis on the variety of research-impact indicators; they listed and described various indicators. These indicators include bibliometrics, citation counts, impact on the community, media uptake, citations in course syllabi at other institutions, reputation or quality of the publisher or publishing venue in the relevant area of scholarship, policy impact, peer reviews of one's publications, research grants awarded, and invited consultations and advising for public officials and community organizations. 6 respondents expressed the view that metrics or quantitative indicators are important but inadequate; another 6 respondents focused on the problems associated with using metrics-based indicators but without proposing alternative indicators.

Some respondents put the emphasis on a particular type of research impact or a particular indicator for research impact. 10 faculty members exclusively focused on the research impact on other researchers or the academic community, stressing the quality or reputation of publisher / publishing venue, citation counts, peer-review publications, peer reviews of one's research outputs, and/or peer recognition of one's research / scholarship. Another 3 respondents commented on the importance of quality of research as opposed to quantity.

The theme of research impact on the community or the public frequently appears in the comments on the question of indicators for research impact. 7 respondents stressed the research impact on the community or society; another 3 faculty members described research impact with respect to both the academia/research community and the broader public.

**Major Issues surrounding Research Impact**

It is important that the Faculty of Arts participate in the ongoing university-wide, nation-wide, and international conversations on research impact. Those conversations currently focus on what research impact is; whether / how research impact is distinct from research output and outcome; what types of impact can be identified; whether / in what ways humanities and social sciences differ from STEM with respect to the main types of research impact and assessment of impact; and what are the pathways to research impact. There is a burgeoning field of studies in research impact; scholarship of research impact is an increasingly recognized area as evidenced by the recent proliferation of journals, books, academic websites, and blogs dedicated to the topic. The notion of research impact is quite recent; it is commonly traced back to the UK policy discussions on the economic and social benefits of academic research in the early 1990s. Over the past two decades or so, a number of governments and/or public research funding agencies

have created research assessment mechanisms, such as the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF); Australia's Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA); and the Netherlands' Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). Underlying the current discourse of research agenda are the notions of accountability of publicly-funded academic and research institutions and individual researchers; expectations of demonstrable social, economic, cultural, and environmental benefits of publicly-funded research (thus the importance of impact beyond the academia); the policy principle of prioritizing public research spending and aligning funding with national or institutional research priorities; and the value of research output compared to costs. Quite often, assessments of organizations' and individual researchers' research impact rely primarily on more easily obtainable quantifiable data (such as various metrics). While some national and institutional assessment programs (including the REF and the SEP) now include narrative-based evaluation mechanisms, their focus remains on measurable or quantifiable academic indicators.

The University of Regina's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 adopted research impact as one of the three priorities, the other two being "student success" and "commitment to our communities." The Plan describes the priority of research impact as:

**Research Impact:** An intellectually active and innovative research community with the supports and infrastructure to expand the boundaries of knowledge and to have a meaningful impact at home and beyond (p 8).

The Plan emphasizes "strategic research clusters" as "critical" to the University's success in the area of research impact (p. 13). While research clusters are viewed as key to achieving greater institutional research impact, research impact is identified as one of the three criteria used for determining current and future research clusters; the other two criteria are critical mass of highly qualified personnel and distinctiveness (p. 13). The Strategic Research Plan 2016-2021 adopted this framework but added one more consideration to the above-mentioned criteria; this additional consideration is described as "commitment to partners in the community and the Province of Saskatchewan for high impact research."<sup>3</sup> It thus more explicitly recognized the expectation that research should produce benefits for the community.<sup>4</sup>

The Strategic Research Plan (SRP) adopts the perspective that there is no one-best approach to assessing research impact because there are a variety of research activities and research impact takes different forms across disciplines. Based on this perspective, it identifies several areas of research impact and a range of indicators that can be used for assessing impact, drawing on the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences' report "The Impacts of Humanities and Social Science Research Working Paper 2014." These areas are: scholarship; capacity; economy; society and culture; and practice and policy (pp. 9-10).<sup>5</sup> The indicators listed for each area of research impact are mostly quantifiable variables but also include more qualitative (e.g., narrative-based) types of evidence. The SRP advises the Vice President Research to include a variety of major research accomplishments and both quantitative and narrative-based indicators of research performance and impact in his regular report presented to the Board of Governors at

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<sup>3</sup> It is not clear what is meant by "partners" in this context.

<sup>4</sup> The Strategic Plan uses the word "performance" interchangeably with "impact" when describing how the research clusters are identified. This mistake is corrected in the Strategic Research Plan.

<sup>5</sup> The Strategic Research Plan does not adequately distinguish between research pathways to research impact and impact, repeating the same problem in the Federation's report.

each meeting of the Board. According to the SRP (p. 10-11), the indicators the Board of Governors adopted in May 2015 to assess the University's research performance and impact are exclusively quantitative or metrics-based, however. These indicators are external research grants and contracts; Normalised Citation Index, and the index of International Collaboration.

The ongoing debate on what research impact is and how to assess it is not only academic; it has major implications with regard to research funding policies; allocation of funds and grants among academic institutions, areas of research, and individual researchers; and valuing and prioritizing certain types of research more than others. Thus, it is important that the Faculty of Arts actively participate in conversations on research impact that are taking place at different levels, from the University level to the national and the international as well as on different platforms, including university administrations, scholarly associations, research funding agencies, and governments.

### **Recommendation 1 Workshops and seminars on research impact**

The Faculty should organize a series of workshops and/or seminars to create an opportunity for faculty members: 1) to better inform themselves of the issues concerning research impact; 2) to participate in discussions over how to assess and demonstrate research impact in social sciences and humanities; 3) to provide training for faculty members who would like such training in the area of how to demonstrate the impact of their research / scholarship using both traditional (e.g., bibliometrics) and non-traditional assessments, while recognizing that research that may not yield demonstrable benefits beyond the academe or meet some current social, economic, or environmental needs is valuable.

### **Recommendation 2 Systematic recording of faculty members' research output and impact**

To demonstrate and promote the Faculty of Arts' research accomplishments and the impact of these accomplishments (whenever/wherever possible),<sup>6</sup> the Faculty should develop a systematic mechanism for an up-to-date reporting of faculty members' research / scholarship output, dissemination, and impact (to the extent possible). That mechanism could be a password-protected online database.

### **Recommendation 3 Showcasing faculty members' research and scholarship**

To better promote Arts faculty members' scholarship and research activities and to facilitate potential research collaborations with other institutions as well as prospective graduate students' search for possible supervisors, the Faculty of Arts will work with academic units and individual faculty members to strengthen and regularly update the description of their research in the faculty profile that appears on their department's website.

### **Selected Sources on Research Impact**

Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences "Approaches to Assessing Impacts in the Humanities and Social Sciences" 2017

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada "Capturing the Impacts" of Research: Discussion Paper" 2012

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to recognize that there is usually a time-lag between research output and its impact, and that in some cases, impact happens over a long period of time. Moreover, in the humanities and social sciences, research impact takes the form of affecting ideas and/or attitudes in society, which is not easy to demonstrate.

King's College London, "The Creative Role of Research: Understanding research impact in the creative and cultural sector" 2017

London School of Economics blog dedicated to research impact in social sciences

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/>

Brian Belcher and Markus Palenberg, "Outcomes and Impacts of Development Interventions: Toward Conceptual Clarity", *American Journal of Evaluation* 20 (10), 2018

Michele Ferguson, "The research impact agenda: Defining, demonstrating and defending the value of the social sciences", <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2014/08/ferguson.html>

Simon Bastow, Patrick Dunleavy and Jane Tinkler, *The Impact of the Social Sciences: How Academics and Their Research Make a Difference* (London: Sage), 2014

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