



## Research Board Minutes

Date: Sept 17, 2020  
Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm  
Place: Google Meets  
Attendees: K. Atkinson, B. Chang, C. Davidson, G. Edwards, S. Forrester, J. Freeman, L. Jacobs (Chair), M. Lemonde, L. Roy, R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, V. Sharpe (Secretary), A. Slane  
Guest(s): B. Dinwoodie  
Regrets: S. Rahnamayan

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### 1. Approval of the agenda

Approved by M. Lemonde. Seconded by L. Roy. Approved by consensus.

### 2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Approved by consensus.

### 3. Report of the Vice President Research & Innovation

L. Jacobs thanked everyone for agreeing to serve on the Research Board this year. He shared his vision of the Research Board as playing an important role in the research enterprise at the university and noted the importance of being incorporated into the broader Academic Council activities. L. Jacobs noted that B. Dinwoodie will be joining the Research Board meetings as she attends the other Academic Council committees. L. Jacobs noted faculty representatives are a conduit for what their faculty members are thinking on issues that come before the Research Board and are asking to report back on Research Board activities to their faculty via Faculty Council meetings.

L. Jacobs noted that this committee can help to build relationships between faculties if seen as a community and a place to not just make decisions but to share thoughts and generate collaborations. He shared his opinion that Ontario Tech is too small to be siloed when it comes to research. There is a need to make sure there is interdisciplinary and cross-faculty fertilization for us to push the research enterprise forward. C. Davidson noted that libraries will be a key partner with research in terms of assisting research with tri-agency funding.

L. Jacobs reflected back on the Research Board last year and noted that the biggest priority was to successfully develop a new Strategic Research Plan (SRP). The intent was for it to be a collaborative plan and it was and he noted his happiness with the final product as it is visionary and is a map for where we're hoping to go. He shared that it is a plan that is realistically aspirational with achievable goals and that it was a big thing for the RB to achieve. He thanked everyone who contributed to the SRP.

Looking ahead to this year L. Jacobs invited suggestions as to what our priorities should be and noted that a discussion will follow later on in the meeting.

L. Jacobs noted that some of the Research Board membership also served on the Return to On-Campus Research Task Force. It was quite a time consuming process to get research returning to campus. He noted that through a very collaborative process the Task Force developed a good detailed plan and tools for researchers to return to campus. He shared that there have been virtually no issues with the implementation of the return to on-campus research protocol. This week across Ontario the new issue is the compliance issue for all universities. How do we know whether labs are complying with their COVID SOPs etc.? This is especially important as we may come in to the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave soon. L. Jacobs noted that he is on the OCUR compliance committee with the VPRs from UWaterloo and U of T. This committee recently met with health & safety officers from across the province.

To mitigate an issue with compliance we'll be adding two addendum to our process which are 1) adding better COVID-specific inspection checklists and 2) determining who will be following through on those checklists.

L. Jacobs noted that whenever we've needed to tweak the process we have and the faculty have adapted and the goal was met to have all pieces of the application process in place by mid-August and it was. L. Jacobs invited discussion on this topic later in the agenda during the faculty roundtable.

L. Jacobs noted that last year he introduced a Vice-Chair position and thanked H. Kishawy for serving in this capacity. He thanked A. Slane for agreeing to serve this year.

#### **4. Report of the Executive Director, Office of Research Services**

J. Freeman provided a presentation that included information on:

- The operational impacts of COVID-19 on ORS including staffing
  - Layoffs (with one still to happen)
  - the early termination of the Contracts Officer
  - the plan to hire a new short-term contract Contracts Officer as well as an articling student
- Expanding on-campus research
- Looking ahead to plan various scenarios depending on what happens locally, provincially, federally. She noted that the staff of ORS is working remotely and this isn't likely to change soon and provided an overview of service expectations and turn around times.
- The Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund (CRCEF)
- Funding statistics, an updated factbook, funding competition results and information on the Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA), the Undergraduate Student Research Fellowships (USRF) and the Mitacs Research Training Award (RTA)
- The Ethics and Compliance Committees
- Partnerships

J. Freeman noted that for the Tri-agency trainee top ups the university will receive the funds and distribute them and that ORS is working with Research and Trust Accounting (RTA).

It was noted that based on our year over year funding we are on a trajectory to surpass 2020 numbers in 2021. L. Jacobs noted that one of our goals is to increase our competitiveness on the large partnership grants. We're almost always competing against U15 universities and the funding almost always comes in through a different conduit. He stated that ORS has done a terrific job supporting our researchers to continue to submit grants and we really support researchers to submit grants in all capacities. L. Jacobs suggested that at a future Research Board meeting we could do an in-depth review of funding opportunities.

J. Freeman noted that the presentation can be shared. L. Jacobs encouraged sharing it at Faculty Council meetings.

L. Jacobs noted that Ontario Tech has moved from an Associate membership with Mitacs to a full membership, noting it is pay to play and that we have had a dramatic increase in funding from Mitacs. From 2019 to 2020 we have increased our Mitacs funding from \$17,000 to \$2 million. The full membership presents new funding opportunities that Mitacs has. He strongly encouraged everyone to explore Mitacs opportunities. He noted that from the university's point of view we've invested money in the full membership and we want to see full return on the fee. This is a terrific opportunity for our students and this year Mitacs allowed us to extend it to undergraduate students as well.

L. Jacobs shared that one of the items that came out of the SRP discussions is that there is a significant number of faculty members who see one of the virtues of being at a small university is that we offer research opportunities to our undergraduate students; noting this is a challenge at bigger universities. The fellowship program creates a way for those students to showcase it in a formal way to provide evidence that they are getting opportunities.

#### **5. Priority Setting for the Research Board 2020-2021**

L. Jacobs imagined that we will set 5 or 6 priorities along with our everyday activities such as:

1 – Would like the Research Board to be involved in the review of our policy toward the Canada Research Chair program. There are a series of issues that may arise – funding formulas, recruitment, EDI plan, and transition of Tier 2 CRCs whose terms are ending soon.

2 – Implementing a measure or set of measures around research achievements. He noted that G. Edwards is very well versed in the financial metrics and that there are other measures designed to showcase what we do. He suggested that perhaps the Research Board could identify 5 metrics that we can put on the Research Dashboard.  
3 – data management. He noted that his topic needs to be revisited and that tri-council has also paused it.

L. Jacobs invited suggestions for additional priorities.

L. Roy stated that in discussions with Faculty Deans there was a common issue of finding funding for grad students. He noted that most graduate students get TA positions and that we've had to cut back on TA positions. He shared that M. Bliemel suggested having a competitive process instead of a TAsip or perhaps competitive RAsips linked with Brilliant Catalyst or Brilliant Solutions. L. Jacobs asked for input on how the Research Board can structure funding for graduate students but perhaps not specifically tied to researchers. Something that is currently being worked on is a Brilliant Developer Studio proposal which would see the Developer Studio provide the funding which would not be tied to a particular PI but rather tied to a structure/centre. He gave an example of what currently happens when a student works on project but then when the student graduates the project stops. The Developer Studio would enable project continuity. He noted that he is looking to have the Brilliant Catalyst staff provide that continuity. M. Lemonde supported L. Roy's comments noting that Ontario Tech needs to make sure that we are at the same level as the competition and that we keep our focus on the students. Money is tight everywhere but we need TAsips and RAsips. L. Jacobs noted that another priority could be to focus on having undergraduate and graduate students involved in the university research enterprise.

L. Jacobs suggested another priority would be increasing reputation and engagement and noted that the Research Board as a community can encourage this. A suggestion would be to increase our institutional research entities. He noted that we now have 2 Research Institutes (the Digital Life Institute (DLI) and the Institute for Cyber Security and Resilient Systems (ICSRS)), 2 Research Centres (the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism (CHBE) and the Centre for Small Modular Reactors (CSMR)) as well as Joint Research Centres (Joint Research Centre in AI for Health and Wellness and the Centre for Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation). L. Jacobs noted that often funding partners look for entities to join with and fund. He noted that he's seen the breakdown of silos by having cross-faculty research entities. Further noting that the CHBE is a nice example of a centre that received no university funding but was very successful at leveraging new funding and that tons of ideas for funding are being investigated by the ICSRS.

L. Roy noted that the CHBE is a shining example of a successful centre. L. Jacobs noted that the entities began in the faculties and found a great sounding board in the Research Board. L. Jacobs asked if creating additional entities should be a priority this year. L. Roy agreed and noted that there are already research groups in many faculties that could be asked to develop further. He noted that through his own research he is connected with the Autonomous Vehicle Innovation Network (AVIN) and that it could have a greater impact. L. Jacobs agreed and noted that Ontario Tech is in a unique leading position with AVIN. He shared that there is a new development called Team Arrow (think Avro Arrow) with a goal to have a cutting-edge autonomous vehicle made in Canada. In July they made a decision to name 3 universities to be the central university research partners - Ontario Tech, McMaster and Waterloo. A couple of weeks ago they chose us to be the lead university. An announcement is coming soon.

L. Jacobs noted another priority might be about developing a policy for core research facilities. CFI has a position that they would like to see their funding contributing in particular to what they are calling Core Research Facilities – not tied to one researcher or one lab; something that is pan-university and maybe even available to other university researchers. He shared that a good example is the Press Facilities of Ottawa U, U of T, UBC, etc. and noted that the facilities are not just narrowly about the sciences. At Ontario Tech the most ready example of a core research facility is ACE, perhaps others.

C. Davidson noted that she has been talking about a Digital Scholarship Centre within, or administered by, the library since her arrival 3 years ago. She noted that she's also been thinking about a press and noted that the library has been working with Press Books to develop open content and open education resources that can include a lot of different kinds of scholarship.

L. Jacobs shared that a general discussion going on at all universities across the country is about whether the federal government is going to fund buildings as there seems to be a lot of signals that the government will. He noted that Ontario Tech has a shovel-ready building plan in place with some external (federal) money committed and that a "Research Tower" would have the space for a Digital Scholarship Centre.

**ACTION:** Members are invited to send feedback on priorities to L. Jacobs and V. Sharpe.

**6. Business Arising**

None.

**7. New Business**

**A. Annual Report of the Centre for Hate, Bias and Extremism**

L. Jacobs presented the report for information and noted the requirement for Research Institutes, Centres and Units to prepare a report annually for the Research Board. There was unanimous praise for the Centre. G. Edwards asked if the information was shared widely and if so, how. L. Jacobs noted that it will be shared in the Weekly Report, on the Research or Centre's website and that he will report on it at Academic Council. V. Sharpe noted that the Digital Life Institute annual report will come to the Research Board in November or December of this year.

C. Davidson noted that at the proposal stage of the Digital Life Institute it was mentioned that a journal could come out of it and it is well under way.

**8. Other Business/Faculty Exchange**

**A. Roundtable on issues that impact research in Faculties**

Health Science – M. Lemonde noted the importance of having funding that supports students, especially PhDs, so that they can participate in on-campus research and that she has been looking for ways to find industry partner funding to pay for students.

Science – S. Forrester noted that the biggest issue in Science is about going forward with lab-based research during COVID and he asked if there plans to allow lab-based research to continue if classes get cancelled again and if there is a plan to make research more essential than it was in the early stages.

FESNS – K. Atkinson noted that aside from people being upset at the speed at which they are able to get into their labs, and requests for more faculty, most people have been able to keep their research going during the summer but are upset that we don't have enough facilities to do research and without that it keeps us from bidding on bigger projects and being competitive.

Education – R. Ruttenberg-Rozen noted that Education has a new Dean in place (Dr. Robin Kay) who has a strong plan to build research capacity and has been very successful so far. She thanked the library staff and J. Freeman for ORS' support for the Education Faculty with all of their applications.

FBIT – B. Chang shared that FBIT is busy preparing graduate business programs.

SGPS – L. Roy noted that all faculty concerns are also his concerns and stated that there is a need for graduate funding. L. Roy shared that Ontario Tech has its first Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship. The fellow is in the Forensic Psychology program – only 21 fellowships were awarded across all Canadian universities in the social sciences.

FSSH – A. Slane noted that FSSH has been heavily impacted by the cessation of in-person research. She commended the REB for doing a great job and stated that FSSH shares the issues around graduate student funding (not enough TAs for all graduate students). She suggested that there needs to be a way to train researchers.

**9. Next meeting – October 15, 2020, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Google Meets.**

**ACTION:** Send suggestions on agenda items to V. Sharpe

**10. Adjournment – 12:00 pm.**