Strategic Research and Creative Activities Plan (Updated 2026)

Mount Allison University is known for excellence in teaching and for providing a high-quality, well-rounded liberal arts and sciences education. At the same time, our researchers are recognized for their significant contributions to research and creative activity across the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences, and in the fine arts, music, and drama.

Mount Allison University recognizes that continued excellence in teaching, research, and creative activity is best achieved through proactive and sustained efforts to identify and eliminate barriers that would otherwise limit full participation of members of our community. A safe, supportive, diverse, inclusive, and accessible environment enables learning, discovery, creativity, and innovation, and strengthens the University's contributions to society through research and creative activity.

This plan serves two complementary purposes. First, it establishes the University's strategic objectives and priorities for strengthening research and creative activity at Mount Allison. Second, it identifies areas of research intensity and emphasis that inform strategic decisions related to research chairs, major infrastructure investments, and other institutional research initiatives, including the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) programs.

Alignment with the University's Strategic Plan

This Strategic Research and Creative Activities Plan supports the University's Strategic Plan by advancing:

- A transformative student experience through research and creative activity opportunities;
- Future-focused liberal arts and sciences education grounded in discovery, creativity, and scholarship;
- Reconciliation, accessibility, diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in research environments and practices;
- Community engagement and societal impact through knowledge mobilization and partnerships;
- Organisational excellence through responsible stewardship of research resources and infrastructure; and
- Lifelong connections fostered through research, creative activity, and community partnerships.

Mission

The creation of new knowledge—ideas, theories, practices, solutions, works of inspiration—distinguishes universities from other forms of education. **Mount Allison University is committed to excellence in research and creative activity, to supporting our researchers and students in the pursuit and dissemination of new knowledge and creative works, and to developing the next generation of researchers, creative practitioners, and leaders.**

This mission is supported through:

- A safe, supportive, accessible, and inclusive environment that encourages the full participation of faculty, librarians, staff, students, and research partners.
- Internal funding that supports research and creative activity by faculty, librarians, and students.
- Professional development opportunities and dedicated time that enable researchers and creative practitioners to advance their scholarly and creative work.
- Research support services, including research administration, library expertise, and research development support.
- Strategic investment in research infrastructure and facilities through institutional and external funding opportunities.
- Opportunities for students to participate in research and creative activity throughout their educational experience.

Vision

Mount Allison's long history and tradition of liberal arts and science education support a diversity of research, creative, and professional activities within its faculties. **Creative practice, theoretical and applied research, community-based research, and research relating to arts and culture, public and social policy, social structures, and scientific discovery provide many opportunities for researchers and students to engage with contemporary issues across all disciplines, through both established and innovative approaches to the creation and dissemination of knowledge.** As Canada's leading undergraduate university, Mount Allison offers a special relationship between research and teaching, and a unique context for research and creative activity collaboration and partnerships across disciplines.

Building on these strengths, Mount Allison envisions research and creative activity that will:

- Attract and support outstanding faculty, librarians, students, and research partners.
- Engage researchers and students in the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and creative works.
- Make meaningful contributions to society while recognizing that excellence in research and creative activity takes many forms and creates diverse impacts.
- Strengthen collaborations and partnerships regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Enhance the University's reputation for excellence in research and creative activity, including success in attracting competitive external research funding.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles provide the foundation for identifying and acting on strategic priorities set out in this Plan. They reflect the University's shared commitments and guide the ways in which research and creative activity are pursued, supported, and valued at Mount Allison.

Research and creative activity at Mount Allison:

- **Foster an inclusive and supportive research environment.**

Research and creative activity are strengthened by an environment that values accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, academic freedom, and respectful collaboration. Mount Allison is committed to supporting researchers and students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, recognizing that inclusive research environments nurture curiosity, broaden perspectives, strengthen inquiry, encourage creativity, foster collaboration, and enable excellence in research and creative activity. The University recognizes that excellence in research and creative activity is demonstrated in diverse ways and supports responsible approaches to research assessment that value a broad range of scholarly and creative contributions.

- **Advance respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities.**

Research and creative activity advance respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities and, where appropriate, support the interweaving of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in research and creative activity.

- **Recognize the important contributions of undergraduate students to research and creative activity.**

Researchers engage undergraduate students in the pursuit of new knowledge and the creation of new artistic outputs, providing them with training and development opportunities that are a hallmark of the Mount Allison undergraduate experience. These opportunities provide enriched learning experiences that prepare students for graduate studies, professional careers, and lifelong learning while contributing to the development of the whole person. Where applicable, faculty also provide mentorship and research training for graduate students, further strengthening Mount Allison's research environment. Undergraduate participation in research and creative activity remains a defining strength of the Mount Allison experience and contributes to the University's ability to attract outstanding students.

- **Enrich teaching and pedagogy.**

Research and creative activity strengthen teaching by bringing new knowledge, creative practice, and scholarly inquiry into the classroom. Students benefit from engaging with faculty and librarians whose teaching is informed by their expertise, enriched by their active engagement in research and creative activity, and fueled by their passion.

- **Make meaningful contributions to society.**

Research and creative activity contribute to knowledge, culture, communities, public policy, and scientific discovery. Research findings and creative works are shared with a wide range of audiences through scholarly publications, creative performances and exhibitions, community engagement, knowledge mobilization, and other forms of dissemination that generate benefits within disciplines and across society.

- **Support research and creative activity through strategic investment.**

The University makes strategic investments in people, research infrastructure, services, and resources to support researchers and students in achieving their research and creative activity objectives. These investments strengthen institutional research capacity, foster a competitive and supportive research environment, and provide meaningful opportunities for student engagement in research and creative activity.

- **Advance research and creative activity through collaboration.**

Owing to its size and undergraduate focus, Mount Allison offers opportunities for interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and collaborative research and creative activity, both on campus and with external partners. Collaboration brings together diverse perspectives and expertise, leading to new insights, creative interpretations, and innovative approaches to complex problems. In many cases, research and creative activity are enriched through collaboration with colleagues at Mount Allison and with those at other institutions, organizations, governments, and communities.

Strategic Objectives and Priorities

Over the life of this Strategic Research and Creative Activities Plan, Mount Allison University will advance strategic priorities that strengthen institutional research and creative activity capacity and support the University's Vision for research and creative activity.

Research and creative activity at Mount Allison encompasses diverse approaches, disciplines, methods, and forms of scholarly and creative expression. Researchers and creative practitioners pursue their work individually and collaboratively, drawing on a wide range of facilities, infrastructure, collections, digital resources, and partnerships. Opportunities for student involvement in research and creative activity vary across disciplines, with graduate students contributing to some research programs and undergraduate students playing a significant role across the University. Regardless of discipline, methodology, or resource requirements, all research and creative activity are valued and contribute to the University's mission of advancing knowledge, creativity, learning, and meaningful engagement with communities.

The strategic priorities in this Plan are organized into four complementary areas that support research and creative activity at Mount Allison: Institutional Environment, Researcher Capacity, Infrastructure and Funding, and the Undergraduate Experience. Together, these priorities provide the framework for achieving the University's Vision for research and creative activity.

Institutional Environment

1. **Objective:** Sustain Mount Allison University's reputation as one of Canada's leading undergraduate universities for excellence in research and creative activity across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences.
    a. **Action:** We will use both traditional and social media platforms to communicate and celebrate stories of research and creative activity opportunities, experiences, outputs, and outcomes.
    b. **Action:** Create a "research" link on the University's website to promote research and creative activity as a distinguishing feature of the Mount Allison student experience.

2. **Objective:** Encourage and support, where appropriate, multi-, cross-, and inter-disciplinary collaboration within Mount Allison and with regional, national, and international partners.
    a. **Action:** Support opportunities for networking, collaboration, and partnership development.
    b. **Action:** Identify and promote funding opportunities that facilitate new research and creative activity partnerships.

3. **Objective:** Support faculty, librarians, and students in sharing research and creative activity with academic and non-academic audiences.
    a. **Action:** Libraries and Archives will maintain repositories that meet national policy standards for open access publishing and for open data.
    b. **Action:** Libraries and Archives, and the Office of Research Services will provide information sessions and support for researchers in complying with open access and open data policy requirements.
    c. **Action:** Marketing and Communications, with the Office of Research Services, will explore training opportunities for researchers and students for media engagement, developing relationships with knowledge mobilization intermediaries, social and public policy engagement, and more general knowledge mobilization activities.
    d. **Action:** Expand the range of social media streams used to promote research and creative activity outcomes of researchers and students.

Researcher Capacity

1. **Objective:** Strengthen Mount Allison's capacity to attract and support outstanding postdoctoral fellows and emerging researchers.

Postdoctoral fellows have the potential to play an important role within research programs headed by our researchers, regardless of the discipline. This is especially the case in the arts, humanities, and social sciences where no graduate programs exist. The opportunity to make a difference in teaching activities and research programs at a small university can be extremely attractive.

    a. **Action:** Support postdoctoral fellows who obtain external funding through appropriate institutional resources and supports.
    b. **Action:** Seek opportunities to expand funding for postdoctoral fellowships through external programs and philanthropic support.

2. **Objective:** Support the success of early career scholars and creative practitioners.

Mount Allison recognizes that targeted support during the early stages of an academic career strengthens long-term research and creative activity success. Strategic investments in early-career researchers and creative practitioners help establish sustainable research programs, enhance competitiveness for external funding, and support the development of future research leaders.

    a. **Action:** Continue to provide strategic institutional support that strengthens the research and creative activity capacity of early-career researchers and creative practitioners.

3. **Objective:** Continue to review the appropriateness of the current tuition and funding model so as to reduce the financial burden on faculty members supporting graduate student research.

Graduate students play an important role in the success of many research programs. The University will continue to seek sustainable approaches to supporting graduate student participation in research and creative activity.

    a. **Action:** Continue to review, and when appropriate strengthen, institutional supports and funding opportunities for graduate students engaged in research and creative activity.

4. **Objective:** Encourage and support faculty and librarians to seek adjunct appointments and establish partnerships with other institutions to expand access to specialized expertise, collections, facilities, research resources, and opportunities for collaboration, supervision, and training.

5. **Objective:** Maintain capacity in arts, humanities, and social sciences through strategic use of the SSHRC Institutional Grant program, aligned with the University's Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis.
    a. **Action:** Continue to use the SSHRC Institutional Grant program strategically to support faculty and student research, capacity building and training activities, and knowledge mobilization activities in the University's Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis.

Infrastructure and Funding

1. **Objective:** Recruit and retain researchers with an interest in innovative and creative approaches to critical inquiry and who value the integration of research, creative activity, and teaching in an undergraduate university setting.
    a. **Action:** Pursue appropriate external start-up funding to support new tenure-track appointments.
    b. **Action:** Support new tenure-track appointees who require equipment and infrastructure in accessing appropriate institutional and external funding, including the CFI John Evans Leaders Fund.

2. **Objective:** Sustain financial resources for the renewal of existing research and creative activities infrastructure and investment in new infrastructure.
    a. **Action:** Make strategic use of the CFI Infrastructure Operating Fund to respond to needs for repairs and upgrades to CFI-funded equipment.
    b. **Action:** Seek internal and external funding opportunities to support the renewal, replacement, and expansion of research infrastructure, software, and specialized equipment

3. **Objective:** Ensure that research and creative activity infrastructure needs are reflected in campus planning and future capital investment priorities.

Research and creative activity depend on facilities and infrastructure that support the University's evolving research priorities while providing safe and accessible environments for researchers and students.

The Undergraduate Experience

1. **Objective:** Sustain the Independent Student Research Grant (ISRG) program as a signature undergraduate research opportunity and a distinguishing feature of the Mount Allison student experience, and ensure the program has adequate financial resources to be sustainable.

The ISRG program provides a unique opportunity for senior undergraduate students to receive funding to pursue independent research or creative activity projects. These opportunities complement the many other ways students engage in research and creative activity, including, but not limited to, paid research assistantship and collaborative projects with faculty.

    a. **Action:** The Research and Creative Activities Committee will periodically review the ISRG program to ensure it continues to provide meaningful research and creative activity experiences for students and their mentors.
    b. **Action:** Promote the ISRG program as a distinguishing feature of the Mount Allison undergraduate experience.

2. **Objective:** Ensure that students are aware of, and can readily access, research and creative activity opportunities, information, and support.
    a. **Action:** Promote research and creative activity opportunities and supports available to undergraduate students.
    b. **Action:** Work collaboratively with campus partners to increase student awareness of research and creative activity opportunities.
    c. **Action:** Provide students with information and learning opportunities related to research funding, research ethics, responsible conduct of research, and related research skills.

Expected Outcomes

It is recognized that not all strategic objectives and priorities will apply equally across every discipline, researcher, or area of research and creative activity. This does not preclude researchers from pursuing their own scholarly and creative goals or from accessing institutional research and creative activity supports. Collectively, implementation of the Plan is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Researchers will achieve greater success in advancing their individual and collective research and creative activity programs.
- Researchers will achieve greater success in accessing funding they may seek for their research and creative activity programs.
- New knowledge and creative outputs will have been produced and will have made a difference.
- The national and international reputation of the University and its researchers, creative practitioners, and artists will be enhanced through excellence in research and creative activity.
- Research and creative activity infrastructure will be enhanced.
- Students will have meaningful opportunities to develop research and creative activity skills through experiential learning.
- Students will be prepared for future graduate studies and for careers in the private, public, and non-governmental sectors.

Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis

Mount Allison University's Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis reflect thematic areas where the University has a critical mass of researchers and demonstrated strengths, or where there are emerging opportunities on which researchers can build. These areas also help inform future Canada Research Chair nominations and strategic investments in research infrastructure, including through the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

Our Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis are framed by two broad conceptual areas: **Quality of Life** and **Human Endeavour**. Together, these themes reflect the breadth of research and creative activity at Mount Allison and recognize that scholarship across disciplines contributes to society in diverse and meaningful ways.

Quality of Life examines how we understand the world around us and identifies the underlying factors that lead to a better quality of life for all. **Human Endeavour** drives culture and humanity forward, pushing the boundaries of scientific exploration and creative pursuits. We seek an understanding of our

world and human experience from a variety of approaches, including creative practice and critical analysis, and testing the limits of our current understanding.

The areas of research intensity and emphasis are listed below in alphabetic order.

Aquatic Sciences
Aquatic environments cover over 70% of the Earth's surface, supporting diverse ecosystems, driving and responding to global climate processes, and sustaining human civilizations. Spanning both oceanographic, coastal, and limnological settings, aquatic science research examines questions of water movement and connectivity, chemistry, organismal biology, species distributions and ecosystem integrity, and the human dimensions of these social, ecological, and physical systems.

At Mount Allison, research in aquatic sciences is supported in part by two dedicated aquatic facilities, a wide range of outdoor field-based programs, on-campus GIS laboratories, and collaborations with regional, national, and international academic and non-academic partners. Together, this critical work contributes significantly to our understanding of how changes in our aquatic environment have consequential impacts on species, ecosystems, livelihoods, and communities.

Citizenship, Culture, and Civil Society
Researchers at Mount Allsion investigate how individuals, communities, organizations, and institutions shape and are shaped by the social, cultural, economic, and political forces that influence human experience. Their work – at local, regional, national, and global scales - explores citizenship, identity, governance, leadership, public policy, economic systems, social movements, community development, and the evolving relationships between people and the societies in which they live.

Scholars examine issues such as social justice, gender, culture, Indigeneity, social inclusion, sustainability, and the distribution of power and resources. Through historical and contemporary inquiry, community-engaged research, and interdisciplinary collaboration, researchers generate knowledge that strengthens communities, informs policy and practice, and advances a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable society.

Climate Change
The reach of climate change is truly global – affecting biogeochemical processes, biodiversity, food systems, and where and how people live – but the impacts are felt locally, in changing coastal zones, severity of extreme weather events, shifting ecosystem dynamics, and inequitable social structures in which vulnerable and under-supported populations bear disproportionate costs.

At Mount Allison, our researchers tackle questions of climate change through both scientific and social lenses, in both our local communities and as part of national and international collaborations. Our expertise spans, for example, responses of phytoplankton – the base of aquatic food webs – impacts of terrestrial land use changes, atmospheric chemistry, moral injury of climate change, and disaster risk reduction and response.

Creative Practice and Performance
Our fine arts, drama, and music programs draw exceptionally talented students who are inspired by the creative works of our award-winning researchers and creative artists. The fine arts and drama programs

are supported by the Purdy Crawford Centre for the Arts, which provides outstanding teaching, studio, and performance spaces. The fine arts program benefits from the presence of the Owens Art Gallery, Canada's oldest university art gallery. The drama program creates high-quality productions that explore and challenge social, cultural, political, and environmental issues. Music teaching, performance, production, and practice are centred in the Marjorie Young Bell Conservatory of Music. Our music faculty present performances in multiple genres, create high-quality audio and video recordings, and contribute to contemporary Canadian musical discourse through a wide range of activities.

Health and Wellbeing
Researchers at Mount Allison examine health and wellness across the full spectrum of human experience, from the biological processes that shape cellular function and disease to the social, environmental, cultural, and institutional factors that influence the well-being of individuals and communities. Researchers investigate the biological foundations of health, the determinants of physical and mental well-being, healthy aging, disability and accessibility, health equity, and the social and policy structures that support or hinder flourishing individuals and communities. By integrating perspectives from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and health-related fields, researchers seek to understand and address complex health challenges, enhance quality of life, and promote equitable and inclusive communities.

This research work is supported in part by strategic infrastructure and programming investments, including aquatic and small mammal animal facilities, a containment level 2 biosafety lab, a diverse suite of chemical and physical analytical instrumentation, and a new Interdisciplinary Health degree program.

Materials and Emerging Technologies
Researchers at Mount Allison are advancing sustainable solutions to global environmental, energy, health, and security challenges through the discovery, design, analysis, and optimization of innovative materials, processes, and technologies. Spanning chemistry, physics, and computer science, this research explores the development of greener synthetic methods, sustainable materials, advanced functional devices, computational modelling, and intelligent systems that improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact. Researchers investigate sustainable routes to chemical production, novel materials for energy and technological applications, interactions between materials and natural or biological environments, and digital approaches that accelerate innovation through simulation, machine learning, data analytics, and computational design. By integrating experimental and computational approaches, they seek to address complex challenges in areas such as clean energy, environmental sustainability, health-related technologies, and advanced manufacturing.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Researchers across many disciplines integrate their research and creative activity with their teaching, providing undergraduate students with distinctive and research-informed learning experiences. Many also engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning by undertaking purposeful and reflective inquiry into their own teaching practices to enhance student learning and the overall student experience. As a small, primarily undergraduate institution committed to excellence in teaching and research Mount Allison is well positioned to continue as a leader in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Visual and Material Culture

Mount Allison researchers and creative practitioners explore how people create, experience, preserve, and interpret the visual and material worlds and its role in shaping human societies. Their work examines objects, images, artifacts, archives, and creative works across diverse historical periods, geographic regions, and cultural contexts to examine the relationships between people, places, memory, identity, representation, and material expression.

The University's exceptional collections, including the Owens Art Gallery and Mount Allison Archives, provide rich opportunities for research, creative practice, curation, and community engagement. Through the study of visual culture, material heritage, artistic production, and cultural narratives, researchers and artists contribute new perspectives on the past and present while fostering critical understanding of the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape our world.

Strategic Use of Canada Research Chair Allocations

Mount Allison University's Canada Research Chair allocations are used strategically to strengthen a diverse and excellent research environment across the University. Chair nominations build on the University's Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis, as outlined in this Plan, while fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and increasing institutional research capacity.

The University will continue to use a hybrid approach for identifying and nominating Chair appointees through:

- Selective internal appointments that align with the University's strategic research priorities and academic planning.
- Selective recruitment and nomination of outstanding external researchers, where opportunities and institutional priorities align.

The focus of future Chair nominations will be determined through collegial consultation and in alignment with the University's strategic priorities, Areas of Research Intensity and Emphasis, academic planning processes, and research needs. Nominations may involve internal candidates, external recruitment, or a combination of both.

Canada Research Chair recruitment and nomination processes will align with the University's tenure-track hiring practices and commitments to accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. As a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), the University is committed to responsible approaches to research assessment that recognize a broad range of scholarly and creative contributions. The University will continue to meet or exceed the equity, diversity and inclusion requirements of the Canada Research Chairs program, while drawing on evolving best practices in these areas.

At the time of this update, the University's Canada Research Chair allocation is as follows:

- SSHRC Tier 2, Intercultural Encounter (expires April 30 2027)
- SSHRC Tier 2, Music, Contact, and Conflict (expires June 30, 2028)
- SSHRC Tier 2, Racial Justice and African Diaspora Migration (expires July 31, 2028)
- NSERC Tier 2, Cell Signaling and Pharmacology (expires March 31, 2029)
- NSERC Tier 2, Integrative Wildlife Ecology (expires April 30, 2030)
- NSERC Tier 2, Aerosol Chemistry (expires April 30, 2030)

Strategic Use of Canada Foundation for Innovation Allocations

Mount Allison University will use its Canada Foundation for Innovation allocations strategically to strengthen research infrastructure and institutional research capacity. Priority will be given to supporting the infrastructure needs of Canada Research Chair holders and researchers working in collaboration with them, while also providing support for new tenure-track faculty members whose research programs require specialized equipment or infrastructure.

These investments will enhance the University's research environment, support the development of competitive research programs, foster collaboration, and provide students with opportunities to develop research skills using modern research infrastructure and specialized equipment.

Plan Approval, Review and Update

This Strategic Research and Creative Activities Plan was first developed by the Senate Research and Creative Activities Committee and adopted by Senate in November 2016. It was updated in 2021 and again in 2026 to reflect changes in institutional priorities and external requirements.

The Plan is intended to serve as a living document and will be monitored and reviewed periodically by the Senate Research and Creative Activities Committee. It is anticipated that a comprehensive review and revision will occur in 2028, informed by progress in implementing the University's Strategic Plan and by broad consultation with the University community.