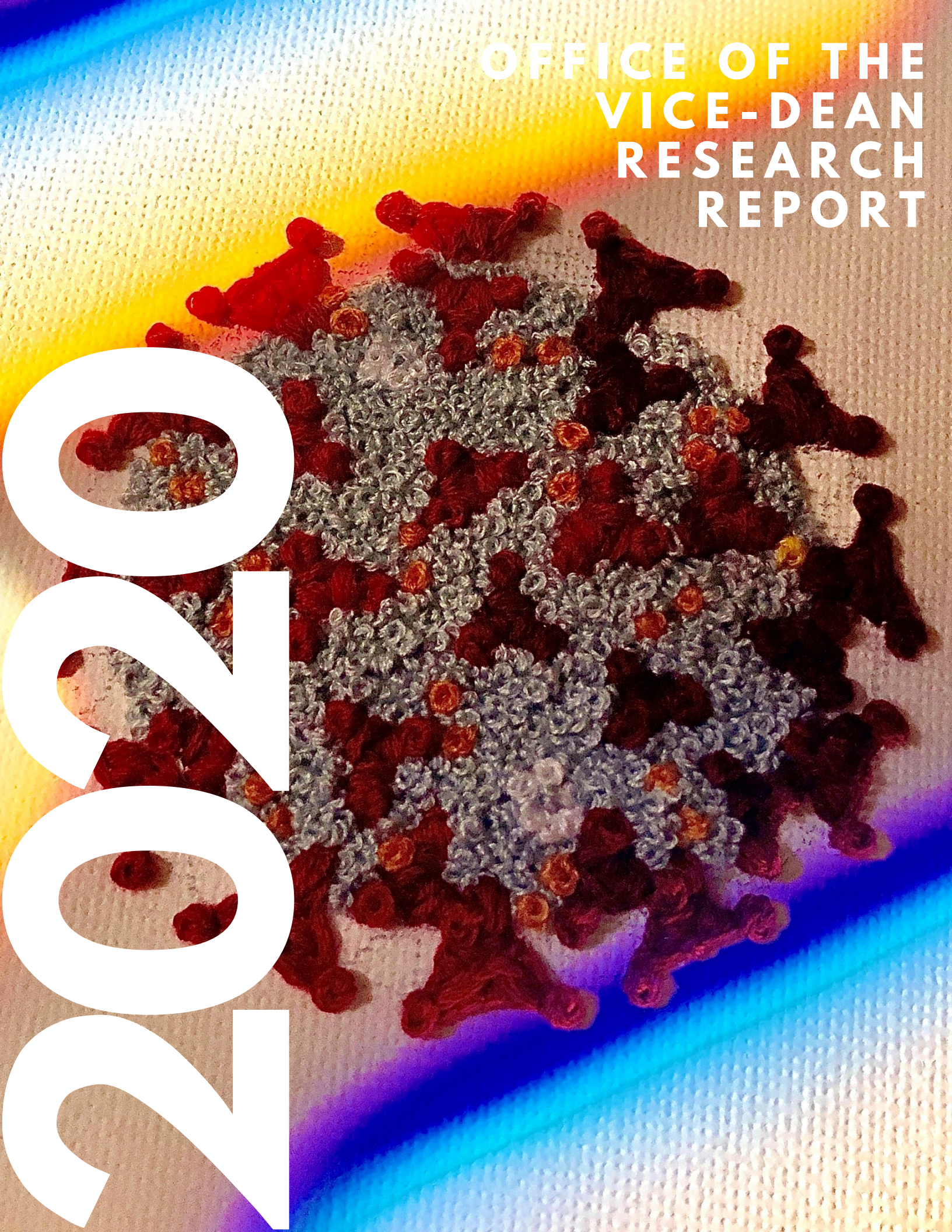


OFFICE OF THE  
VICE-DEAN  
RESEARCH  
REPORT

CONSON





# REPORT CONTENTS

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# OVDR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## VISION

We excel at strengthening the research capacity in the College of Medicine by providing support for the research community with transparency, accountability, and equity.

## MISSION

We are leaders in the development and advancement of essential initiatives that foster an equitable and transparent culture of research excellence in a premier research university in Canada. We enable meaningful health research across the College of Medicine and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, seeking to empower and engage our faculty, staff, and students to challenge the boundaries of knowledge creation.

## VALUES

- Accountability
- Inclusivity
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Ethics
- Respect
- Professionalism
- Equity
- Excellence



# WORDS FROM THE VICE-DEAN

To say the absolute least, 2020 has been eventful. It is hard to write any sort of summary of the year without acknowledging the global coronavirus pandemic and the associated challenges to research productivity.

In March 2020, research at the University of Saskatchewan was suspended for all but essential research. Research activity across campus began a resumption process in late May, and approval and prioritization work is still ongoing to ensure faculty, students and staff can conduct their work in a safe manner.

Through these challenges, our office worked hard to provide support for research resumption, communication and strategies to ameliorate the effects of the pandemic. We founded new funding programs, altered existing programs, and worked with other units on campus to provide avenues for research recovery and resumption.

In this report, we describe our on-going initiatives and their impact. We have indicated any changes to our normal programming with a COVID-19 asterisk.



**2020 wasn't the year we expected, but it provided us an opportunity to come together, evaluate what matters, and get creative.**

I am immensely proud of our faculty, students and staff for their resilience and hard work during such times of adversity.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marek Radomski".

**MAREK RADOMSKI**  
**MD, PhD, DSc, Dhc, MPAL, FCAHS**  
**Vice-Dean Research, College of**  
**Medicine**



## ASSISTANT DEAN GRADUATE STUDIES

Over the past four years the OVDR has strived to enhance supports for our graduate and postdoctoral trainees. When we chose Learner Wellness as a focus for last Fall (2019) we never imagined the storm that was on the distant horizon for 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a very challenging time for all of us; however, we recognize that our graduate and postdoctoral trainees bear stresses that have disproportionately increased.

Our primary strategy to address this has been to maintain and expand the lines of communication with students, fellows and supervisors. We have also worked in close partnership with the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Registrar to strive for clear and timely messaging. This is a tough time, but I have been greatly inspired by the tremendous goodwill of our community and commitment to, as best we can, support our students and fellows financially and otherwise. When the pandemic has passed and we look back, I believe we will be most proud of how we supported each other.

## RESEARCH MANAGER

Much of our work in 2020 has been focused on supporting our researchers through the difficulties imposed by COVID. We have done a lot of work to expanding communication with our faculty, staff, and students and provide multiple forums for sharing information. We're going to take these lessons forward with us and endeavor to maintain this solid connection with our research community.

Finally, I want to thank the amazing team that I have the privilege of working with every day. This tight-knit group of individuals see the value in investing in each other, which allows us to be productive, engaged, energetic and resilient. During a year that proved to be more difficult than ever before, this team doubled-down and produced excellent results. I could not be more proud of these amazing individuals.





## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### RESEARCH-ACTIVE FACULTY:

# 438

### NUMBER OF FACULTY AWARDED PROJECTS IN 2019/2020:

# 158

In the 2019/2020 fiscal year, researchers in the College of Medicine received awards totaling \$29,197,313.18, including \$13,407,432 in Tri-Agency funding.

For the last three years CoM researchers have maintained a consistent level of funding in both dollar amounts and number of research projects funded through external and internal initiatives.

Gathered data also show a consistent number of faculty receiving awards. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year 158 unique CoM researchers received 344 awards.

### RESEARCH FUNDING AWARDED TO COM FACULTY IN 2019/2020:

# 29,197,313

400

300

200

100

0

2015/2016

2016/2017

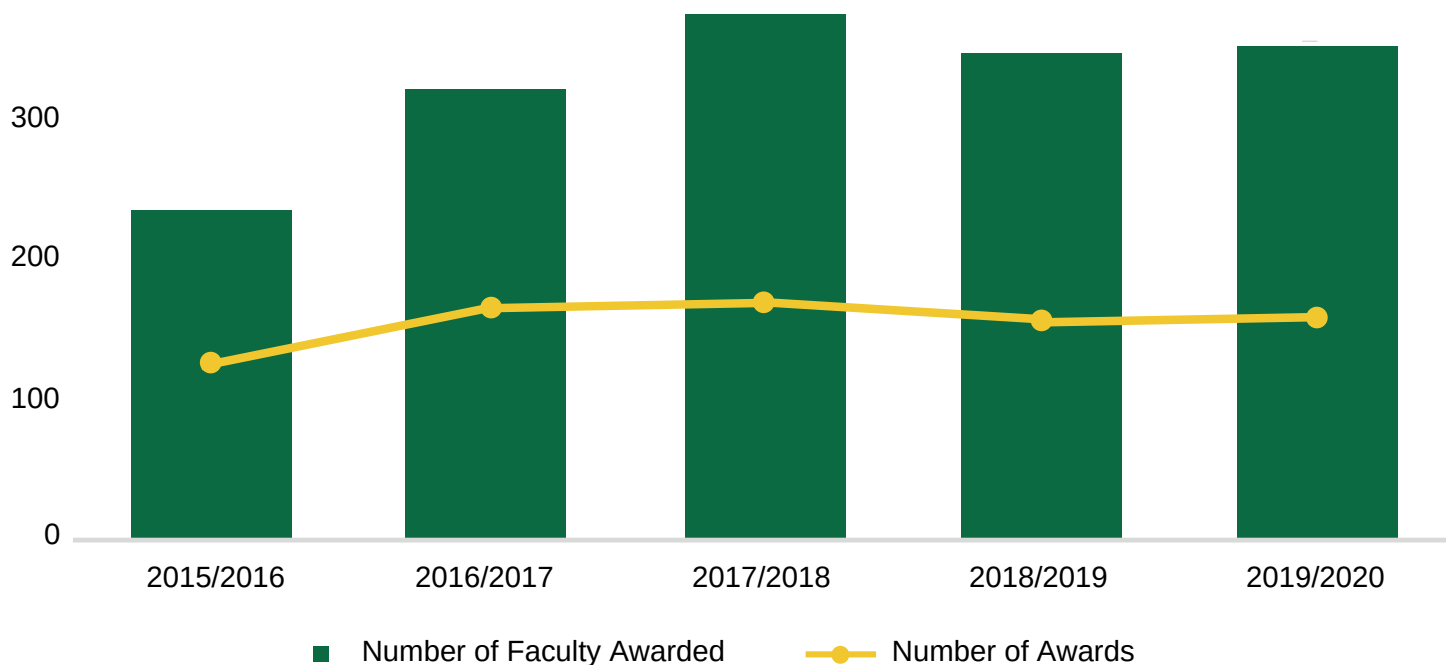
2017/2018

2018/2019

2019/2020

■ Number of Faculty Awarded

—●— Number of Awards





# THE STATISTICS

The University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine has made significant investments in health research. Since 2016 the CoM has developed a series of initiatives to support health researchers by providing bridge funding, researcher start-up packages, seed funding, as well as trainee (undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral) support.

**The University has already realized significant return on these investments.**

In 2016, the U of S College of Medicine held 26 Tri-Agency grants, but after consistent investment through 2020, they held 55 in the 2019-2020 year. This increase in external funding improved the U of S ranking from 14th to 12th place in the MacLean's 2019 University Rankings in the Medical/Science Grants category, where we have remained to date.

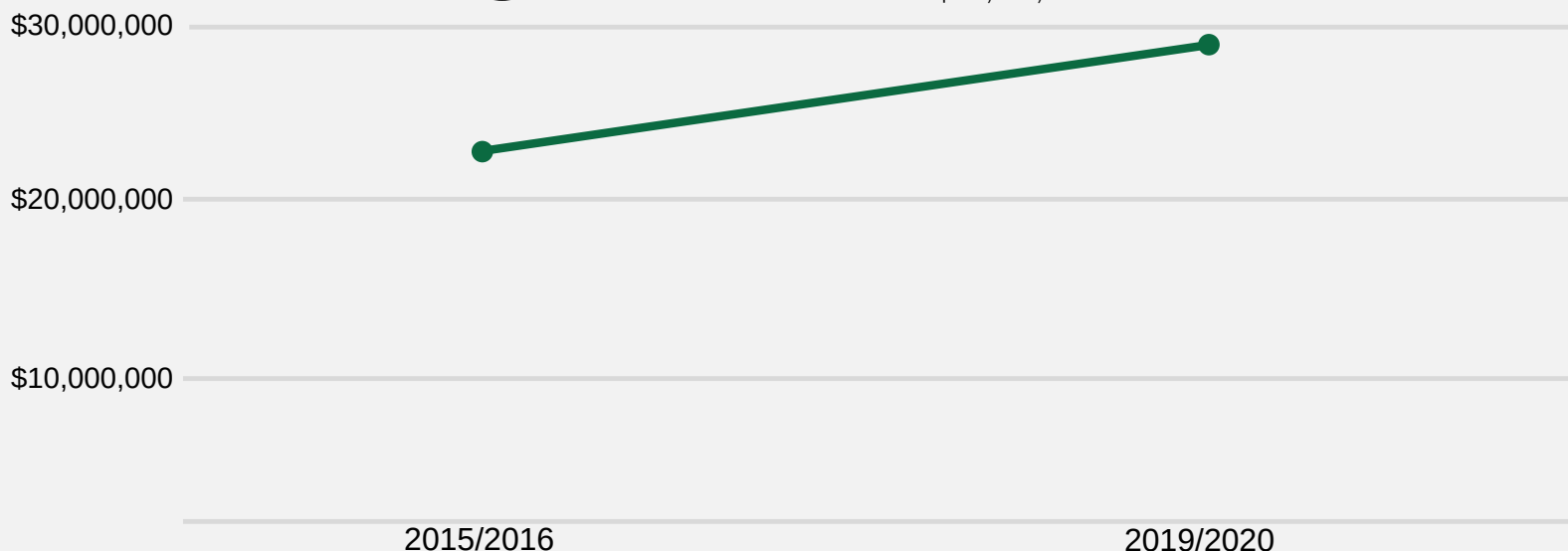
**The significant increase in external funding contributed to the University's improvement from 15th to 14th place in the U15 overall.**

## 12<sup>TH</sup>

the U of S is now ranked 12th in  
McLean's 2019 Medical/Science  
Grants Category

## TOTAL REVENUE

Since 2015/2016, the college's total external research funding dollars received has increased from \$22,740,805 to \$29,197,313.





## FACULTY INITIATIVES

**01**

**RESEARCH START-UP  
FUNDING**

**04**

**SUPPLEMENTAL  
PUBLICATION FUNDING**

**02**

**COMRAD**

College of Medicine Research  
Award

**05**

**RAPID RESPONSE  
COVID-19**

**03**

**COMBRIDGE**

College of Medicine Bridge  
Funding

## GRADUATE/POSTDOCTORAL INITIATIVES

**01**

**COMGRAD**

College of Medicine Graduate  
Student Award

**03**

**INTERDISCIPLINARY  
GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP**

**02**

**COMTA**

College of Medicine Travel Award

**04**

**PARENTAL LEAVE GRANT  
EMERGENCY LEAVE GRANT**

## UNDERGRADUATE INITIATIVES

**01**

**DEAN'S PROJECTS**

Dean's Summer Research Projects  
and MD Research Experience

**03**

**INTERDISCIPLINARY  
SUMMER RESEARCH  
PROGRAM**

**02**

**BIOMEDICAL SUMMER  
RESEARCH PROJECTS**

# RESEARCH START-UP FUNDING

New researchers often require institutional support to establish productive research programs in advance of generating external research funding. Negotiated as part of the recruitment package, the OVDR accepts applications to provide funding for start-up costs and equipment for a maximum of the first three years of a new faculty members research program.

Start-up funding is a valuable recruitment incentive when seeking to attract world-class faculty members. Despite COVID-19, four biomedical faculty were recruited in 2020 with start-up assistance.

This year the OVDR implemented some changes to the Start-up Funding Program to provide more equitable distributions of funding between research pillars and across genders. The OVDR is committed to vigilance in monitoring and addressing disparity in our programs.

## OVDR FACULTY START-UP INVESTMENT

**\$7,875,319**

Since 2016, the OVDR has provided \$7,875,319 in startup funding to

—

**29**

College of Medicine faculty

—

**\$12,947,928**

Allowing faculty members to launch their research programs, having secured \$12,947,928 in external funding to date



# COLLEGE OF MEDICINE RESEARCH AWARD (COMRAD)

A competitive funding opportunity open to all faculty members with a primary academic appointment in the College of Medicine. The purpose of the CoMRAD is to provide seed funding for novel pilot and/or feasibility studies that will facilitate future applications to external funding sources on a provincial, national, and global level.

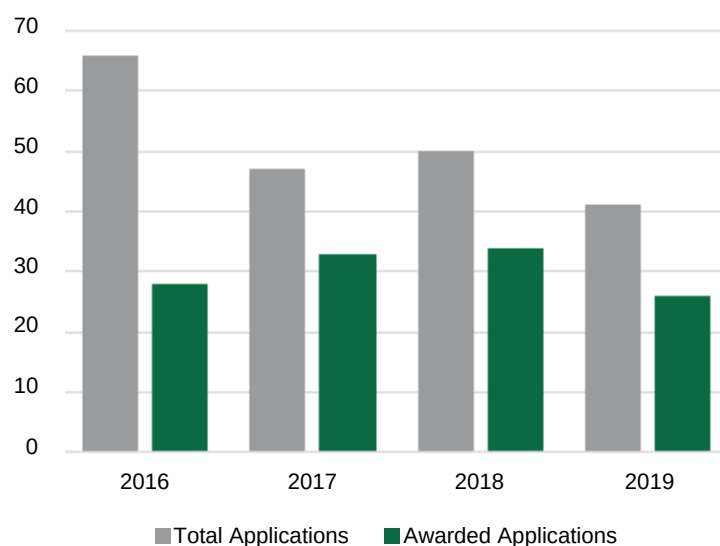
As 2018 and some 2017 awards are still ongoing, return on investment data is calculated from completed 2016 and 2017 projects.



To help stimulate the College's post-COVID research resumption, the 2020 CoMRAD competition (in progress) will have relaxed conditions on budget and PI eligibility.

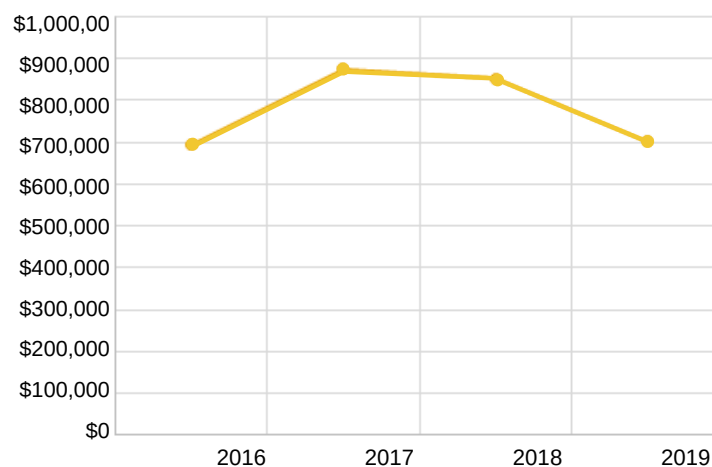
## FUNDED PROJECTS

Since the initiative's initiation in 2016, the OVDR has funded 121 CoMRAD projects.



## OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

From 2016 to 2019 the OVDR committed \$3,120,803.15 to fund this initiative.



# RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**138**

Submissions for external funding

**—****\$10,141,183**

Total external funding dollars received so far

## DISSEMINATION

CoMRAD Funding has resulted in the following:

**91****PUBLICATIONS****117****ABSTRACTS****114****CONFERENCE  
PROCEEDINGS****30****NEW OR EXPANDED  
COLLABORATIONS****91****INVITED  
LECTURES****2****BOOK CHAPTERS****3****PATENTS OR  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY****26****TRAINEES SUPPORTED**

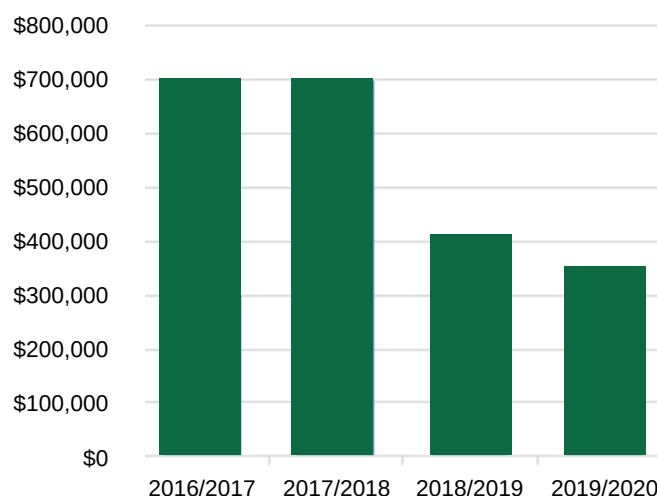


# COMBRIDGE

Initiated in 2016, the CoMBRIDGE program seeks to support research excellence and encourage application for Tri-Agency funding. Based on availability, Bridge Funding can be obtained by College of Medicine faculty who received a high score in a Tri-Agency competition but were not funded to assist their re-application efforts.

## FUNDED PROJECTS

The OVDR has funded 22 CoMBRIDGE projects since 2016. Twenty of these have supported CIHR Project Grant re-applications, and one for a SSHRC Insight Grant.



## OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

Awarded amounts are dependent on availability of funds, competition program, and number of eligible applicants. To date, \$1,764,000 has been awarded by the CoMBRIDGE program.

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT



9

To-date, the CoMBRIDGE program has facilitated 9 Tri-Agency re-submissions

3

successful Tri-Agency applications, resulting in

\$2,769,303

total external funding dollars

## PUBLICATION FUNDING

Since 2017, the Publication Funding initiative has helped support faculty produce:

50

PUBLICATIONS IN OPEN-ACCESS JOURNALS

4.01

AVERAGE JOURNAL IMPACT FACTOR

405

PUBLICATION CITATIONS

In 2019, the funds supporting this initiative were redirected to help support publications published or co-published with students and trainees. Awards from 2019 on are reported in the undergraduate section of this report.



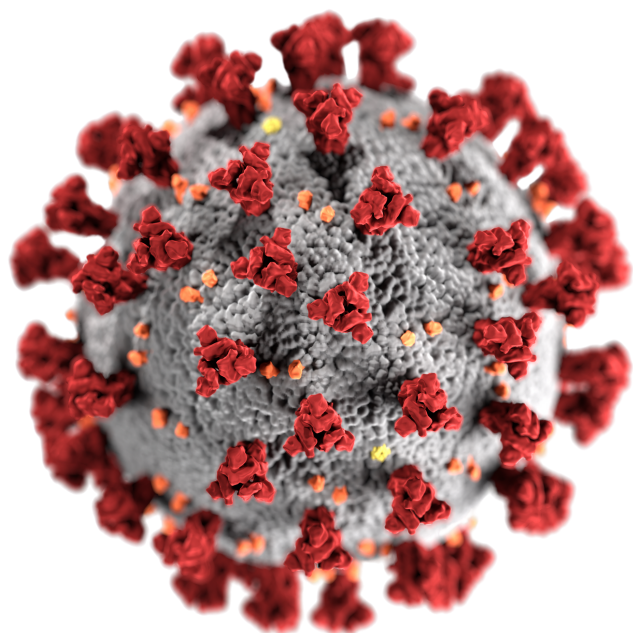
# RAPID RESEARCH COVID-19



The Office of the Vice Dean Research (OVDR) and the Respiratory Research Centre (RRC) launched the Rapid Research COVID-19 initiative to provide funding to catalyze small-scale, time-sensitive research projects focused on contributing to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and/or its negative consequences on people and communities.

Rapid Response COVID-19 funding sought to support research projects that:

- Provide evidence to inform the clinical and public health response
- Provide evidence to inform decision-making and planning at the provincial, national and international levels
- Are highly feasible and produce timely and concrete deliverables



## FUNDED PROJECTS

The OVDR and RRC funded 12 Rapid Research COVID-19 projects.

## OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

Each project was awarded \$10,000. The OVDR contributed \$60,000, half of the total program cost.

# INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

The Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Scholarships (IGS) are intended to support graduate students who are conducting interdisciplinary research co-supervised by a faculty member from the CoM and a faculty member from the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition (CoPN). These scholarships are intended to increase dynamic interdisciplinary research projects being completed by competitively selected individuals. In 2020, the Adil Nazarali Interdisciplinary Graduate Scholarship in Neuroscience was offered as part of the competition to an applicant with a specific research focus in the area of neuroscience.

The OVDR has supported five students through this initiative between 2017 and 2020 so far.

## PARENTAL LEAVE GRANT

The College of Medicine has implemented a progressive parental leave program intended to support graduate students with growing families.

CoM graduate students not receiving other forms of financial support may apply for financial assistance during a leave to serve as the primary care-giver immediately following the birth of a child prior to the completion of the student's program.

Since piloting this program in September 2018, three students have been granted parental leave funding.

## EMERGENCY LEAVE GRANT

Available once per student per academic program, College of Medicine graduate students may apply for financial assistance during a medical or compassionate leave occurring prior to the completion of the student's program.

Applicants may receive \$1000/month for up to two months.



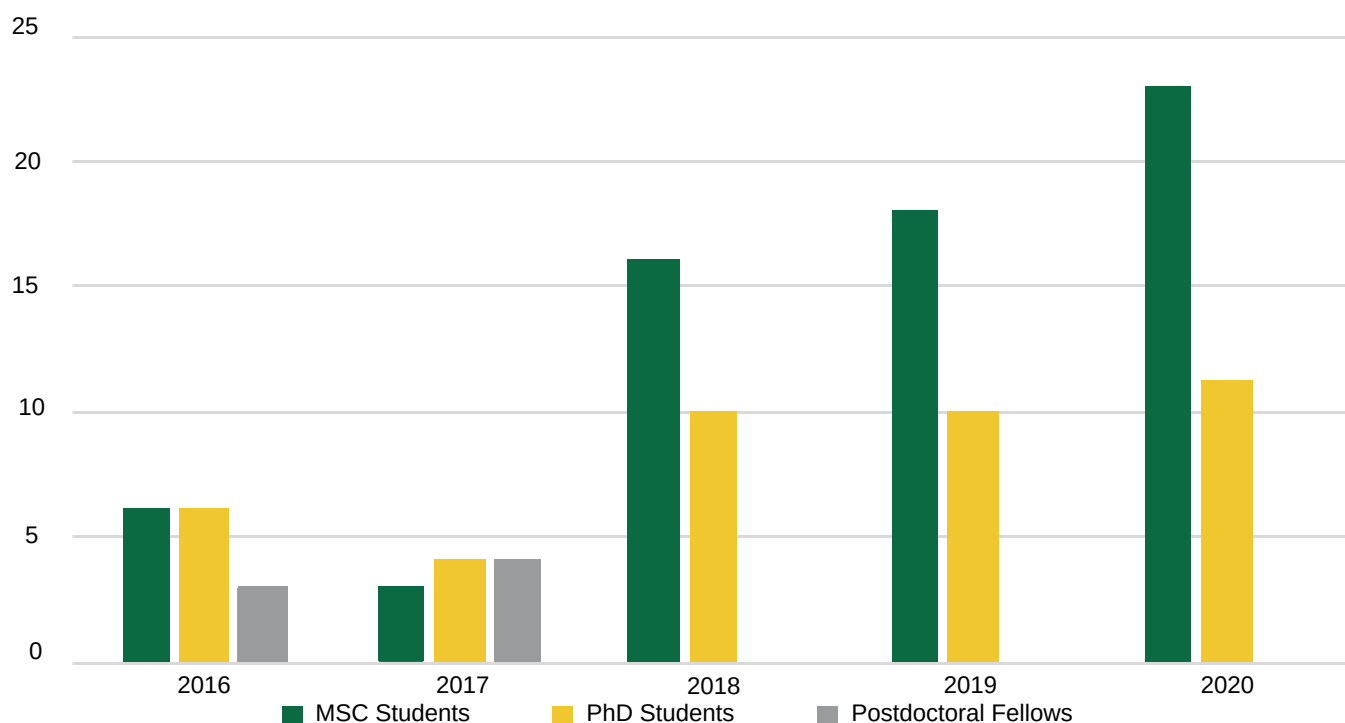
# COLLEGE OF MEDICINE GRADUATE RESEARCH AWARD (COMGRAD)

The College of Medicine Graduate Research Award is a competitive funding opportunity available to College of Medicine graduate students. The purpose of the CoMGRAD is to provide support to graduate students and faculty supervisors from the College of Medicine who demonstrate a passion for research that has been, or will be, translated into advancements in science.

## FUNDED TRAINEES

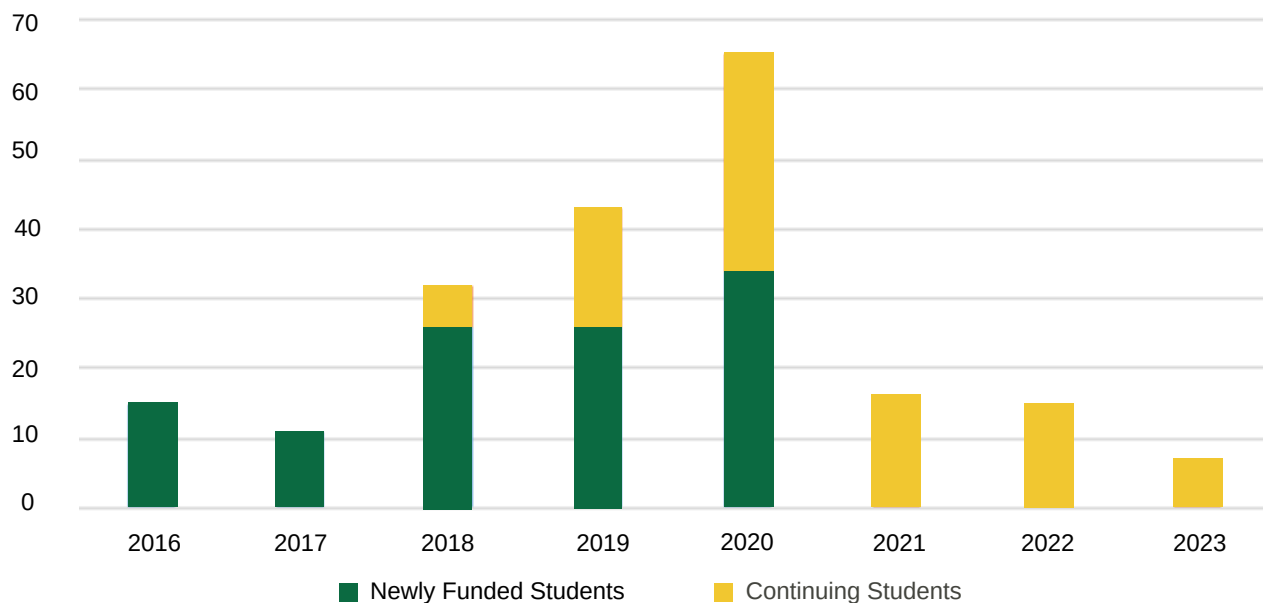
In 2018, due to fiscal constraints, the CoMGRAD guidelines were amended so the program would only support graduate students and would no longer support Postdoctoral Fellows. In order to maximize the number of students supported, the program was also revised to a cost-sharing funding model, where the faculty supervisor contributes 40% of the award value.

In 2020 we awarded 34 new CoMGRADs, 23 at the MSc level and 11 at the PhD level. To date, CoMGRAD has supported 115 graduate students and Postdoctoral Fellows.



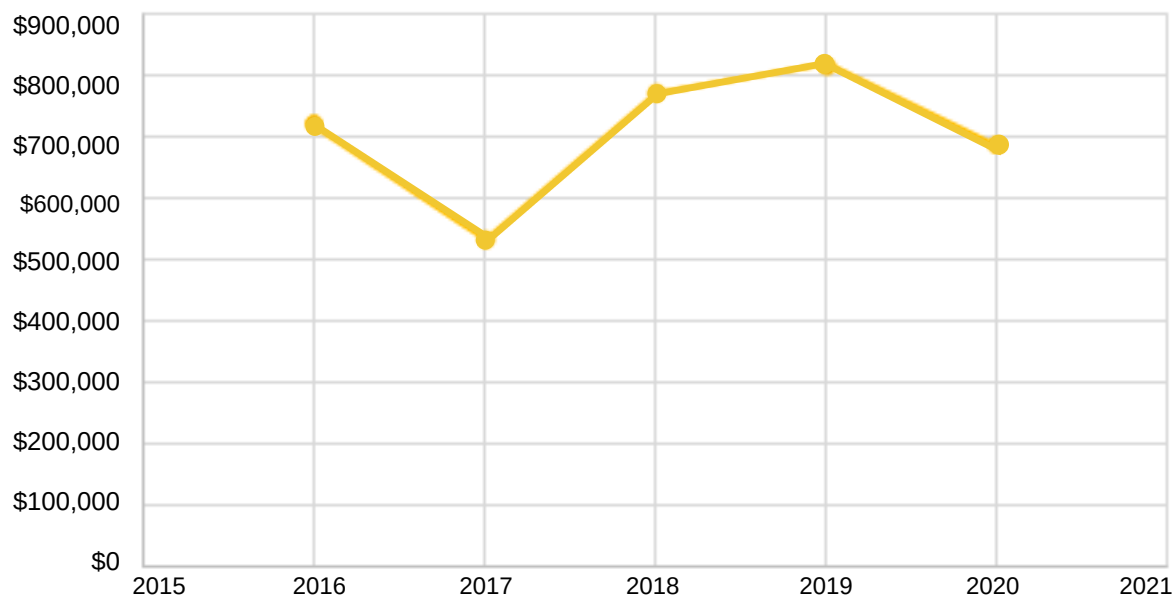
## ONGOING COMMITMENT

In response to student feedback, CoMGRAD funding was modified in 2017 to provide multi-year awards. Master's students may now receive funding for up to the first two years in their program, and PhD students up to the first three years in their program.



## OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

The OVDR has invested \$3,988,166.64 to support CoMGRAD trainees since 2016.

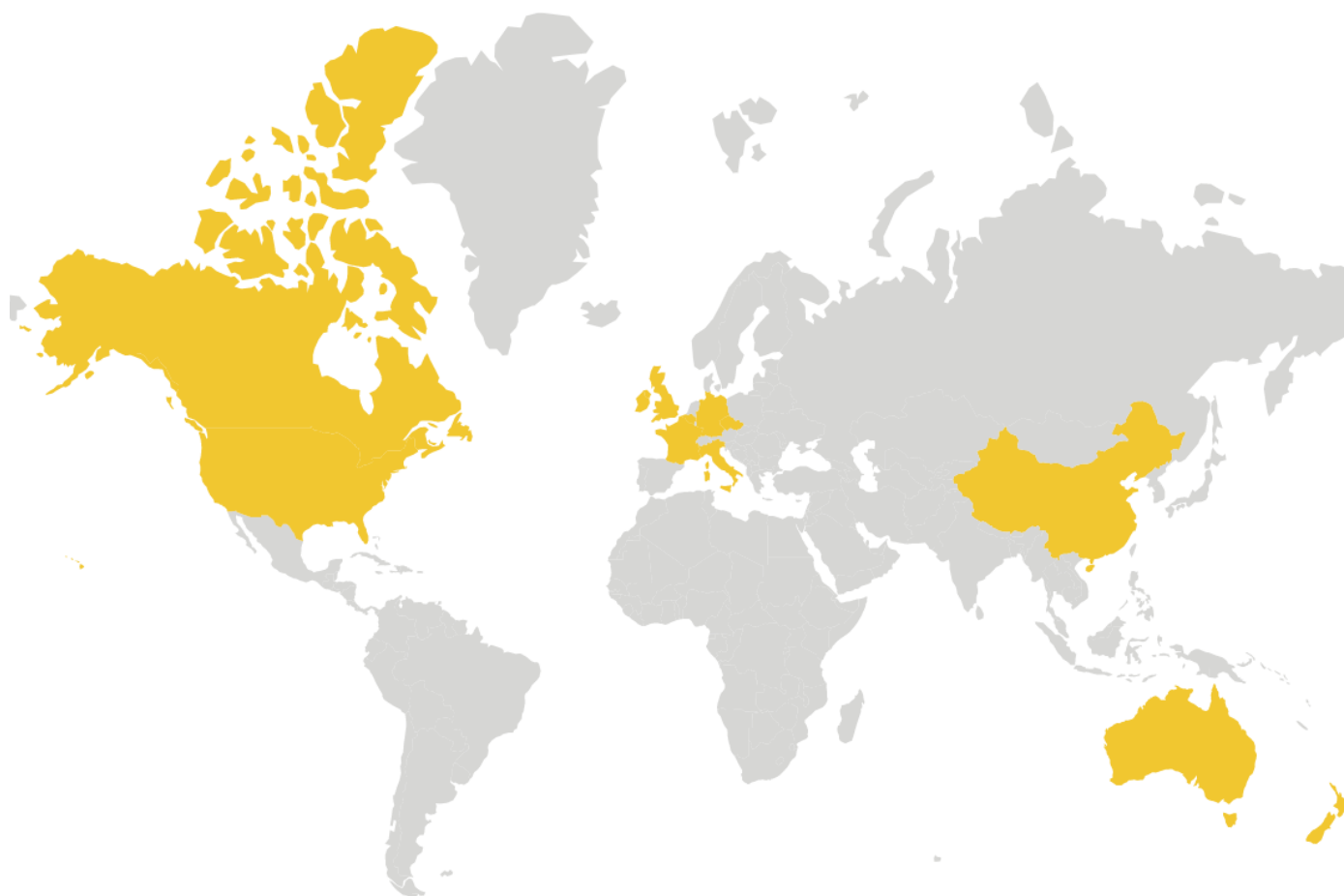


# COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TRAVEL AWARD (COMTA)

Graduate students and post doctoral fellows in the College of Medicine are encouraged to participate in national and international scientific conferences and workshops. Trainees may apply to the Conference Travel Fund for up to \$1,500 to support attendance at scientific meetings.



Due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on travel and in-person meetings, for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, students may instead apply for virtual conference funding of up to \$250 to assist with registration costs for online meetings.





## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**85**

CoMTA funding has helped 85 students attend scientific meetings in

**—****14**

unique countries

**—****606,788**

total kilometers travelled by our students since 2017

## PUBLICATION FUNDING

Since 2019, the Publication funding has helped support graduate and undergraduate students, post doctoral fellows, and residents produce:

**17**

PUBLICATIONS IN OPEN-ACCESS JOURNALS

**3.91**

AVERAGE JOURNAL IMPACT FACTOR

**30**

PUBLICATION CITATIONS

# BIOMEDICAL SUMMER RESEARCH PROJECTS

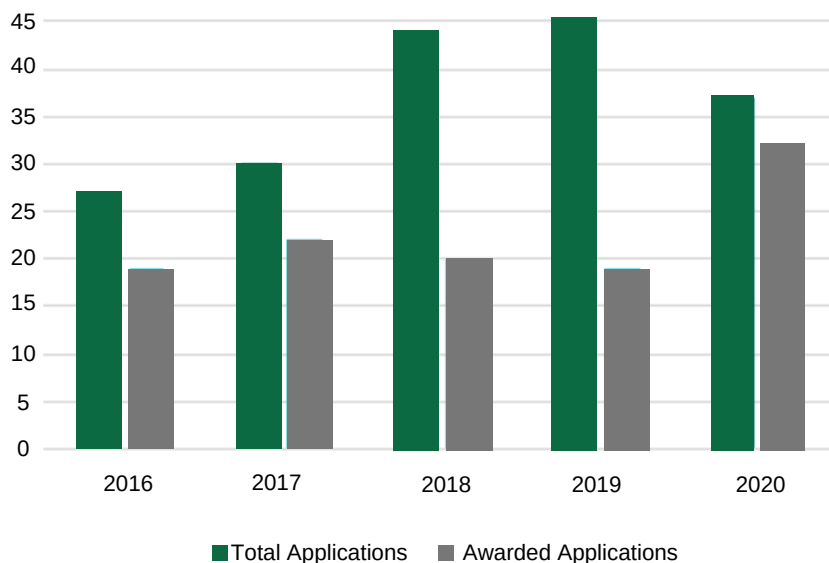
The Biomedical Summer Student Research Program is intended to assist in the research training of our undergraduate students enrolled in the Anatomy and Cell Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology, Physiology, and Pharmacology programs. The intent of these awards is to give students valuable research experience and encourage students to continue on to a graduate studies program.



In 2020, projects were conducted remotely for the majority of the program, however through collaboration between the OVDR, project supervisors, and cluster leaders, students were able to gain some in-person laboratory experience in August.

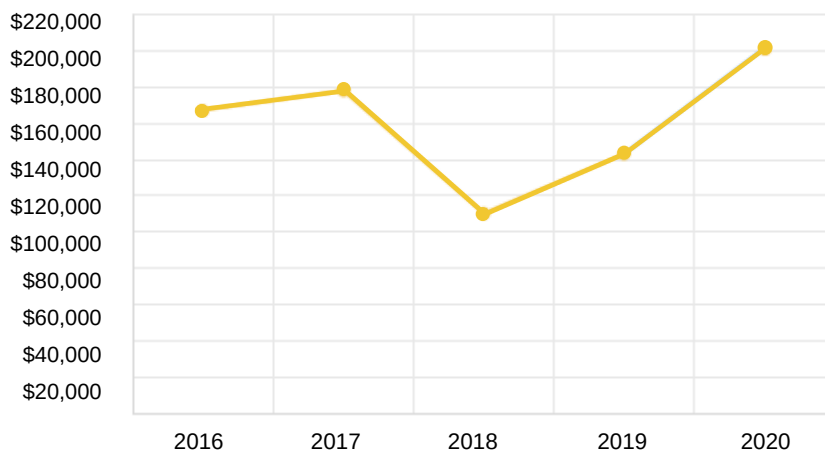
## FUNDED PROJECTS

The Office of the Vice-Dean Research has supported 112 undergraduate Biomedical Summer Research Projects since 2016.



## OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

From 2016 to 2020 the OVDR committed \$801,249.66 to fund this initiative.



# DEAN'S SUMMER RESEARCH PROJECTS

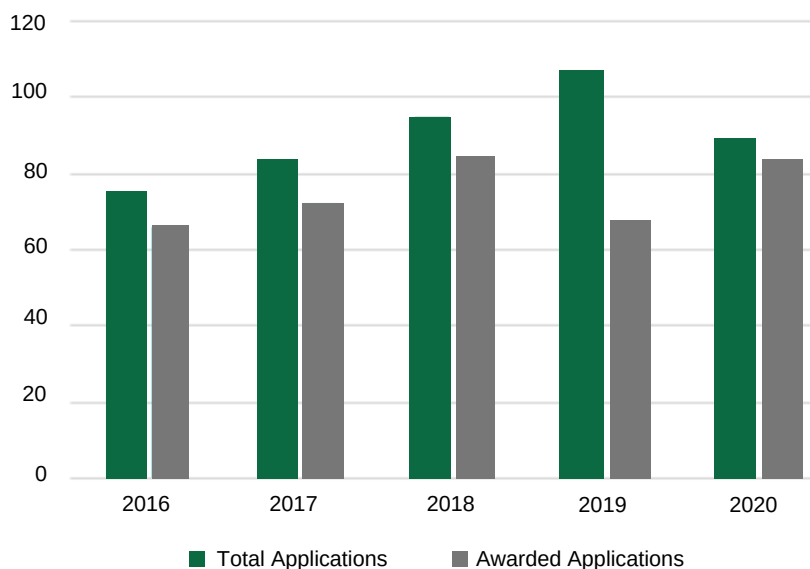
The Dean's Summer Research Projects provide undergraduate medical students with exposure to scientific research. The program is intended to ignite a passion for research in our medical students and facilitate an understanding of the vital role research plays in today's health care.

In 2020 all Dean's summer research projects were carried out remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



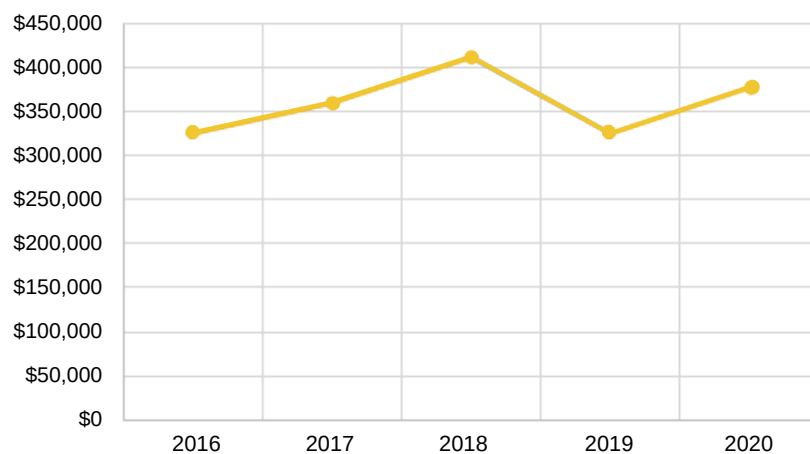
## FUNDED PROJECTS

The Office of the Vice-Dean Research has supported 372 undergraduate Dean's Summer Research Projects and Experiences since 2016.



## OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

From 2016 to 2020 the OVDR committed \$1,803,400 to fund this initiative.



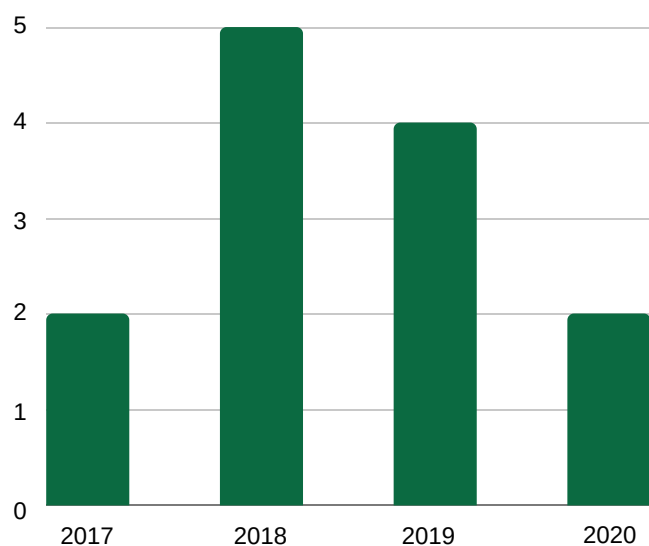


# INTERDISCIPLINARY SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Interdisciplinary Summer Research program, founded in 2017, provides competitive undergraduate salary awards to provide research training of summer students enrolled in either the College of Medicine or the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, co-supervised by a faculty member from both colleges.



In 2020 interdisciplinary summer research projects were largely carried out remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## FUNDED PROJECTS

Thirteen interdisciplinary projects have been funded since 2017, with the program cost of \$100,370.50 shared evenly between the College of Medicine and College of Pharmacy and Nutrition.

## 62% OF 2020 SUMMER STUDENTS REPORTED THEIR SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE MADE THEM MORE LIKELY TO PURSUE RESEARCH IN THE FUTURE

LESS  
LIKELY   EQUALLY LIKELY   MORE LIKELY TO PURSUE RESEARCH



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"Mentorship has been fantastic. I believe an appropriate balance between autonomy and support was established that has helped me to learn a lot."

"The opportunity to do research with faculty is incredible. It extends beyond research to mentorship and relationship building. Having these opportunities facilitated by the Dean's Summer Research program is huge for me in terms of future career planning."

"It was a great experience, I would love to do it again. I would also encourage people looking for a summer project to consider this program."

"I am so happy to have been a part of this program. I learned so much, not only about the topic and specific research techniques, but also about the research process in general. Though it was different than I had expected due to COVID-19 restrictions, I was able to adapt to the new format and still learn a lot."

# ADVANCEMENTS IN EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

*"All persons, regardless of disability mental or physical, religion or religious creed, family status, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, race or perceived race, nationality, place of origin, ancestry, colour, receipt of public assistance, and gender identity..." (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission) are valued for their individuality and contributions to the diversity and functions of the College of Medicine.*

## GROWING MOMENTUM

The OVDR's Research Equity and Diversity Specialist role was established in September 2018 to raise awareness, develop and share resources, and help researchers address sex, gender, diversity, and inclusion within their research. In July 2020 this role was promoted from our office to the larger College of Medicine.

OVDR equity, diversity, and inclusion activities and initiatives since September 2018 include:

### GUIDANCE

**01**

Providing workshops, a speaker series, as well as advice and assistance with the sex and gender and EDI requirement of grant applications.

### SELF-REFLECTION

**02**

The OVDR is in the process of assessing their internal funding programs and policies to evince best practices in EDI.

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

**03**

Implementing a sex and gender requirement within the CoMRAD competition, mirroring that required by external competitions in order to better prepare researchers to apply for national funding.

### FOSTERING COMMUNITY

**04**

Developing capacity through formation of Sex and Gender Champions groups for researchers and students, and connection of groups to national networks.

### EXPANDING EDI ALLIES

**05**

Establishing of Departmental EDI Committees, who are working on education, awareness, and furthering EDI principles in the recruitment process



# WELLNESS SUPPORT

Mental health and wellness challenges are unfortunately common among university students. In 2019 a gap in wellness support was identified by College of Medicine graduate students. A number of local CoM initiatives were put into place to help support these students in addition to resources available from the University.

**01**

## **HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR HEALTH SCIENCE GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Froehlich Chow, three public health students Abukari Kwame, Aisha Sajid, and Humira Inam, conducted a health needs assessment as a course project for PUBH 803. This literature review and student survey provided valuable information that helped inform wellness strategy and implemented supports.

**02**

## **WELLNESS FACILITATOR**

The OVDR hired a student wellness facilitator, whose responsibilities include seeking out and communicating wellness opportunities to College of Medicine graduate students, maintaining the wellness resource webpage, and assisting College of Medicine graduate students in locating and accessing wellness opportunities.

**03**

## **RESOURCE PAGE**

A resource page was developed to provide easy navigation to College and University supports.

**04**

## **DEDICATED COUNSELLOR AND COUNSELLING TIMES**

A graduate student counselor has been contracted by the College of Medicine. Her services are available through the Wellness Center and are allocated specifically to CoM graduate students. Due to high demand she currently has six counselling spaces available per week.

**05**

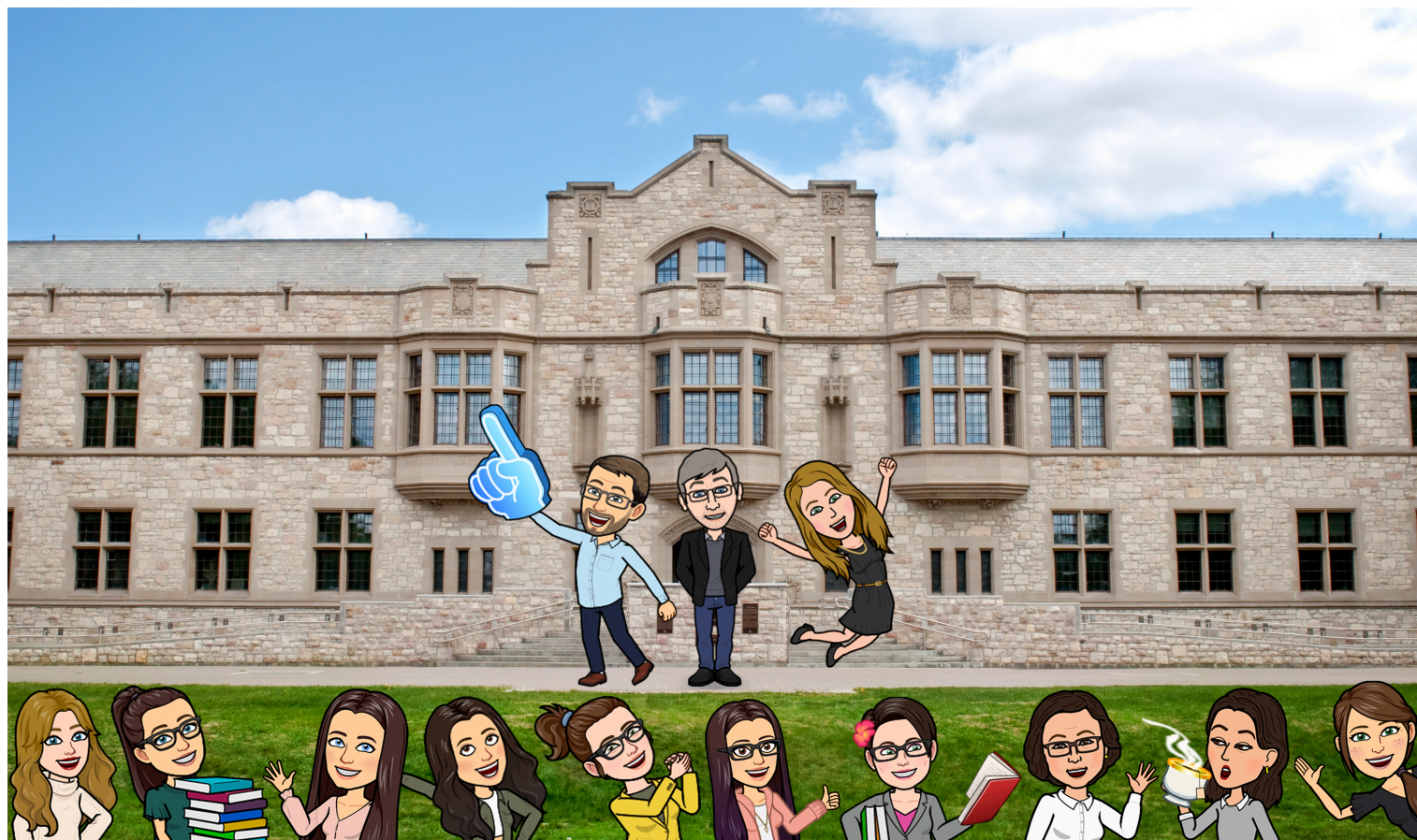
## **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING**

With the goal of having more individuals in our college who are confident engaging in conversations surrounding mental health, the OVDR will reimburse staff, faculty and graduate students for the costs to complete the Mental Health First Aid training through the Student Wellness Centre. We currently have four Mental Health First Aiders in the College.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The OVDR thanks our donors, the Tri-Agency Research Support Fund, and the College of Medicine for our funding. Our work and the consequent returns on investment to students, faculty, the College, the University, the scientific community and the public at large, are made possible only through their generosity.

The OVDR extends its thanks to Shelley-May Neufeld for preparing this report, and to all our OVDR family; even through the most extraordinary times, our staff brought their best selves to work (from home). They juggled their work duties with supervising home schooling, child care, mandatory quarantine, medical concerns and graduate research setbacks, all while providing important and exceptional service to the College and to our community. None of the incredible work described in this report could happen without their talent, creativity, and dedication.



**Back Row:** David Cooper (Assistant Dean Graduate Studies), Marek Radomski (Vice-Dean Research), Megan Truscott (Research Manager) **Front Row:** Chantal Janzen (Graduate Programs Coordinator - On Leave), Mackenzie MacAuley (Student Project Coordinator), Alyssa Kilgour (Graduate Programs Coordinator), Lara Hugo (Administrative Coordinator), Shelley-May Neufeld (Research Impact Analyst), Keleigh Garcea (Project Coordinator), Katie Adeoye (Research Financial Analyst), Bruna Bonavia-Fisher (Research Facilitator), Stefany Cornea (Student Project Coordinator), Leigh Dick (Research Financial Analyst - On Leave)

## COVER ART

**Mackenzie Bone**, 1st year UGME Student, 2020.  
COVID-19: Changing the Fabric of Our Society.  
Embroidery on Canvas.



[MEDICINE.USASK.CA/RESEARCH](https://medicine.usask.ca/research)



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[@USASK\\_OVDR](https://twitter.com/USASK_OVDR)