OFFICE OF THE VICE-DEAN RESEARCH REPORT

REPORT CONTENTS





The University of Saskatchewan's main campus is situated on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

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.

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
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Respect
- Fairness
- Consistency
- Adaptability
- Dedication
- Excellence





REFLECTIONS FROM THE VICE-DEAN RESEARCH



I am delighted to introduce the 2024 Office of Vice-Dean Research (OVDR) Report.

In 2024, OVDR continued supporting our faculty, undergraduate and postgraduate students via an array of internal funding initiatives such as Research Start-Up, College of Medicine Research Award, College of Medicine Bridge Funding, Funding to Ameliorate Interruptions of Research, College of Medicine Graduate Student Award, Emergency Leave Grant Parental and Maternity Leave Funding, College of Medicine Travel Award, Interdisciplinary Graduate Scholarship, MD-MSC/PhD and MPT-PhD Matching Funds Program, Publication Funding, Biomedical Summer Research projects, Dean's Summer Research Projects and MD Research Experience and Interdisciplinary Research program.

Since the onset of support opportunities in 2016, funding has been critical to success of our faculty and students in research. Once again, I want to extend my warmest congratulations to all our researchers on this success!

As time flies by, the College of Medicine will have a new generation of leaders to support our researchers and students. I welcome Dean Sarah Forgie and my successors to the OVDR.

March Routoml.

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

A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE: DEAN SARAH FORGIE

I am honored to serve as Dean of the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan and to join this incredible community of learners, educators, researchers. and healthcare professionals. Since beginning my term on July 1, 2024, I have been inspired by the dedication and innovation that fuel our college's mission. Together, we have a tremendous opportunity to shape the future of medical education, research, and healthcare leadership-guided by principles collaboration, of equity, and community engagement.

ahead, one of my Looking priorities is strengthening our connections-both within the College of Medicine and beyond. I am deeply committed to forging stronger ties between our college and Saskatchewan's medical ensuring that research practitioners, and education directly enhance patient care and healthcare outcomes.

Having spent my life in the prairies, I understand the challenges of practicing medicine in rural and remote areas, including the sense of isolation that can come with it. How can we help? How do we reduce the feelings of burnout and frustration? These are questions that drive me. I want to foster a sense of connection—between physicians, learners, and researchers—so that we are supporting one another and continuously improving healthcare in Saskatchewan.



Ultimately, my vision is to build on the collaborative environment that makes the College of Medicine a leader in medical education and research. This is a place where we attract, train, and retain outstanding academic leaders—people who will shape the future of medicine not just in Saskatchewan, but across Canada and beyond.

I look forward to the journey ahead and to working with all of you to make this vision a reality.

SARAH FORGIE MD, M.Ed., FRCPC Dean, College of Medicine

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ASSISTANT DEAN GRADUATE STUDIES

Reflecting on 2024, I am inspired by the resilience and achievements of our students. I remain committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment that empowers them to excel academically and professionally.

This year, I updated the Health Sciences Graduate Program Manual to include teaching assistantship opportunities, comprehensive funding policies, and candidacy assessment guidelines. These updates aim to clarify processes and expand opportunities for our students.

Another key focus was enhancing financial support for graduate students. Through the College of Medicine Graduate Student Awards (CoMGRAD) program, I advocated for increased award amounts, raising stipends to \$25,000 for Master's students and \$30,000 for PhD students. I also encouraged departments to adopt higher minimum stipends to address rising living costs.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the exceptional support of our program coordinator, Ally Wiegers. Together, we navigated complex challenges and ensured the continued success of our graduate programs.

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

This past year, the Office of the Vice-Dean Research has worked incredibly hard to support and advance research excellence within the College of Medicine.

The initiatives highlighted in this report underscore the dedication of our OVDR office to support faculty research endeavors. Through these strategic investments, we have empowered researchers to pilot innovative theories addressing emerging health challenges, pursue success with Tri-Agency funding, and amplify the global impact of our institution.

As we reflect on this year's milestones, we remain dedicated to fostering an environment where research thrives, inspiring new opportunities for growth and collaboration in the years ahead. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to make the College of Medicine a leader in research innovation.





In the 2023/2024 fiscal year, researchers in the College of Medicine were awarded \$41,268,597 in research funding, including

\$16,232,041 in Tri-Agency funding.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

RESEARCH-ACTIVE FACULTY:

487

NUMBER OF FACULTY AWARDED PROJECTS IN 2023/2024:

153

RESEARCH FUNDING AWARDED TO COM FACULTY IN 2023/2024:



2015/2016 2016/2017 2017/2018 2018/2019 2019/2020 2020/2021 2021/2022 2022/2023 2023/2024
Number of Awards

FACULTY INITIATIVES



COMRAD

RESEARCH START-UP

College of Medicine Research Award



COMBRIDGE College of Medicine Bridge Funding



FAIR RESEARCH GRANT

Funding to Ameliorate Interruptions to Research

GRADUATE INITIATIVES



03

COMGRAD

FUNDING

College of Medicine Graduate Student Award



INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

02 EMERGENCY LEAVE GRANT PARENTAL LEAVE GRANT MATERNITY LEAVE BRIDGE FUNDING

> **COMTA** College of Medicine Travel Award



MD-MSC/PHD AND MPT-PHD MATCHING FUNDS PROGRAM



PUBLICATION FUNDING

UNDERGRADUATE INITIATIVES



BIOMEDICAL SUMMER RESEARCH PROJECTS



DEAN'S PROJECTS

Dean's Summer Research Projects and MD Research Experience



INTERDISCIPLINARY SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM

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.

OVDR FACULTY START-UP INVESTMENT

51

\$13.6 M

From the 2015/2016 fiscal year to March 2025, the OVDR has provided \$13,560,457 in startup funding to

College of Medicine faculty members,

\$25.9 M

Facilitating the launch of new faculty research programs. To date, these researchers have secured \$25,853,730 in external research funding

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.

Return on investment data is calculated from completed projects from 2016-2022.

FUNDED PROJECTS

Since the initiative's initiation in 2016, the OVDR has funded 259 CoMRAD projects.



OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

From 2016 to 2024 the OVDR committed \$7,034,346 to fund this initiative.



RETURN ON INVESTMENT



Submissions for external funding; and



in external funding dollars received so far

DISSEMINATION

CoMRAD Funding has resulted in the following:



COMBRIDGE

Initiated in 2016, the CoMBRIDGE program seeks to support research excellence and encourage re-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 42 CoMBRIDGE projects since 2016. Fourty-one of these have supported CIHR Project Grant reapplications, and one supported a SSHRC Insight Grant.



OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

Awarded amounts are dependent on availability of funds, competition program, and number of eligible applicants. To date, \$2,794,000 has been awarded by the CoMBRIDGE program.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT



FAIR RESEARCH GRANT

The FAIR (Funding to Ameliorate Interruptions to Research) Research Grant was established in 2021 to help researchers maintain or revitalize their research programs following a leave from College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan.

Applicants may request up to \$10,000 to contribute towards research assistance (personnel to perform data collection, analysis, etc.), travel for research purposes (conferences, workshops, etc.), publication costs, and operating expenses excluding equipment.

The OVDR has funded eight Fair Research Grants since it's inception.

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE GRADUATE RESEARCH AWARD

The College of Medicine Graduate Research Award (CoMGRAD) 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 2024 we awarded 30 new CoMGRADs; 20 at the MSc level and 10 at the PhD level.

To date, CoMGRAD has supported 239 graduate students and Postdoctoral Fellows.



OVDR FUNDS

In 2024, \$719,000 was allocated to CoMGRAD awardees.

The OVDR has invested \$6,165,833 to support CoMGRAD trainees since 2016.



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.

PARENTAL LEAVE FUNDING

The College of Medicine has implemented a progressive parental leave grant 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, seven students have been granted parental leave funding.

MATERNITY LEAVE BRIDGING FUNDING

As a complement to the Parental Leave Grant, the Maternity Leave Bridging Funding initiative was introduced in 2021. The CoM recognizes that students may face delays and funding gaps during the transition to parental leave (e.g. delays in paperwork, needing to take leave early, etc.).

To address this issue, Maternity Leave Bridging Funding provides \$1,500 to students who have set up parental leave, regardless of the source of funding (e.g. CoM Parental Leave Grant, Tri-council support, etc.). This funding is payable during the first month of the planned leave or the month prior where a leave begins earlier than originally planned. There have been seven students so far who have received this funding.

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.

Between 2017 and May 2024, the CoMTA has provided 182 awards to our trainees, for a total program cost of \$228,575.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT



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). In 2024, 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.

MD-MSC/PHD AND MPT-PHD MATCHING FUNDS PROGRAM

A matching funds program for MD-MSc/PhD and MPT-PhD students was established in 2021 to catalyze the training of clinician-researchers in College of Medicine. This new program provides an up-front source of funds that can be matched (up to 50%) with supervisor grant funding or scholarships which require matching funds. In 2022 we provided the 40% match of a CoMGRAD award for one MD-MSc student.

PUBLICATION FUNDING

Between the 2019/2020 to 2023/2024 fiscal years, the Publication funding has helped support graduate and undergraduate students, post doctoral fellows, and residents produce:



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.

This is a cost-shared award and supervisors are required to match 40% of the award amount.

FUNDED PROJECTS

The Office of the Vice-Dean Research has supported 193 undergraduate Biomedical Summer Research Projects since 2016.



OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

From 2016 to 2023 the OVDR committed \$1,216,800 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 and facilitate an understanding of the vital role research plays in today's health care.

Dean's summer research projects span a broad range of research topics, reflecting the diverse interests and expertise within the College of Medicine. In 2024, students worked on projects with goals ranging from improving patient-centered care and advancing surgical techniques, to addressing health equity and the use of emerging technologies.

FUNDED PROJECTS

The Office of the Vice-Dean Research has supported 593 undergraduate Dean's Summer Research Projects and Experiences since 2016.



OVDR FUNDS COMMITTED

From 2016 to 2023 the OVDR committed \$2,920,597 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, cosupervised by a faculty member from both colleges.

In 2024, this program expanded to include partnerships between Medicine, Pharmacy and Nutrition, Nursing, and Kinesiology.





FUNDED PROJECTS

Twenty-four interdisciplinary projects have been funded since 2017, with a proportional program cost of \$87,310 to the College of Medicine.

GRADUATE/POST DOCTORAL INITIATIVES

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"I greatly valued this experience, as I was eager to explore the research field, and it proved to be both incredibly helpful and inspiring."

"As someone who is very passionate about pursuing a career in research, this summer program provided opportunities to develop countless skills that will be extremely valuable moving forward. Seeing a project like this through from conception, through all experimental techniques, to analysis and finally presentation on a poster provided a holistic experience with research that has only made me more excited to pursue it."

"I felt that the program was an amazing look into a career in research. It enabled me to have hands on experience in a lab while also being mentored by my supervisor and seeing what a career in this field may look like."

"This program is essential for students who see themselves entering fields of research. You form relationships with supervisors and grad students and researchers from all over Canada through attending conferences and you really get true insights into the life of a scientist."

"I've gained a deeper appreciation for the time and effort that goes into quality research."

75% OF 2024 SUMMER STUDENTS REPORTED THEIR RESEARCH EXPERIENCE MADE THEM MORE LIKELY TO PURSUE RESEARCH IN THE FUTURE

LESS EQUALLY LIKELY LIKELY

MORE LIKELY TO PURSUE RESEARCH

1% 25% 75%

819/0 OF SUMMER STUDENTS RATED THEIR RESEARCH

EXCELLENT OR EXCEPTIONAL

EXPERIENCE AS:

FACULTY RESEARCH AWARDS

The OVDR is proud to continue recognizing the outstanding contributions in medical research through the second year of its faculty research awards.

These awards celebrate faculty members who have made significant advancements in their fields, demonstrating leadership, collaboration, and a commitment to improving patient care and healthcare outcomes. Below, we are excited to announce the recipients of this year's awards, whose exceptional work continues to shape the future of medical research.

For more information on award timelines and future recipients, please visit the College's awards webpage at medicine.usask.ca/awards.php.

RESEARCH CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Dr. Don Cockcroft was selected as the recipient of the College of Medicine Research Career Achievement Award in recognition of his contributions to respiratory medicine research, patient care, and education. Over his nearly 50-year career at the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Cockcroft has become an internationally renowned clinician-scientist, pioneering groundbreaking studies on asthma and airway diseases.

Beyond his scientific contributions, Dr. Cockcroft has received numerous prestigious honors, including Fellowship in the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and multiple lifetime achievement awards. His research has not only advanced medical knowledge but has also improved patient outcomes and clinical practices worldwide. This award celebrates Dr. Cockcroft's extraordinary legacy in respiratory medicine and his enduring contributions to the College of Medicine and the broader medical community.

ANNUAL EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARDS

Dr. Laura Hopkins was nominated in recognition of her transformative contributions to advancing patient-centered care and quality of life outcomes for ovarian cancer patients in Saskatchewan.

Nominators described Dr. Hopkins as a leader in cancer research, and highlighted her pivotal role in establishing the University of Saskatchewan Tumor Biobank and the first ovarian tissue cryopreservation program in the province.

Dr. Hopkins' work bridges clinical practice and scientific inquiry; enhancing treatment outcomes, empowering patients, and setting new standards in gynecologic oncology care. These remarkable achievements position her as a deserving recipient of the 2024 Annual Research Excellence Award.





RESEARCH MINGLING MINDS AWARD

Dr. Daniel Fuller has been selected as the recipient of the College of Medicine Research Mingling Minds Award in recognition of his exceptional interdisciplinary research program, innovative approaches, and dedication to embedding equity and social justice in public health and urban planning practices.

Dr. Fuller was lauded by his nominators for his "unwavering commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration," noting his leadership at the intersections of urban planning, public health and artificial intelligence.

His impactful leadership has set a benchmark for advancing interdisciplinary research and promoting healthier, more equitable communities.

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 the incredible staff at the OVDR whose dedication and talent keep our office running.



Sydnie Gengler (Research Navigation Specialist), Chantal Jantzen (Research Financial Analyst). Shelley-May Neufeld (Research Impact Analyst), Megan Truscott (Director of Research), Keleigh Garcea (CTSU - Project Manager Clinical Operations), Ally Wiegers (Project Coordinator), Nayoung Kim (Student Project Coordinator).

Not pictured: Mira Bisso (Graduate Programs Coordinator), Alyssa Gallagher (Graduate Programs Coordinator)

COVER ART

Mason Beaulieu, MD Student. The Prairie Scientist. 2024.





OVDR@USASK.CA

