

Strategic Research Plan 2026-2031
Canadian Mennonite University
(Passed at CMU Senate on 2026-08-27)

Institutional Context

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is an Anabaptist Christian university offering academic programs in the arts, humanities, sciences, and business. Located in Winnipeg and chartered in 1998 by the Province of Manitoba, CMU was granted membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC, now Universities Canada) in 2008. The university is guided by four commitments: educating for peace and justice; learning through thinking and doing; extending generous hospitality with radical dialogue; and modeling invitational community.

Canadian Mennonite University offers a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Students can pursue 18 Bachelor of Arts majors, as well as Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Therapy, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Social Work degrees. At the graduate level, the university offers Master of Arts degrees in Christian Ministry, Spiritual Care, and Theological Studies, in addition to a Master of Divinity and Master of Business Administration degrees. Menno Simons College, CMU's downtown program, offers an Arts major in Conflict Resolution Studies in affiliation with the University of Winnipeg.

CMU's second 5-year Strategic Research Plan (SRP) aims to reflect salient common emphases of research at CMU as they engage with the priorities of the Tri-Council funding agencies and establish goals to strengthen research infrastructure. CMU's Research Office brings the Strategic Research Plan (SRP) to Senate annually for attention, conversation, and revision. In addition, the Office of the Vice President Academic initiates periodic review of the SRP and associated research activities.

Research Growth at CMU

CMU has experienced significant growth in its research infrastructure. The Research Office now includes a director with a doctoral degree and expertise in academic research, research development, and administration and a research grants coordinator with expertise in administration and research finance. In 2023, CMU expanded its research capacity via an international research partnership with Zimbabwean academic and partner organizations funded by Global Affairs Canada and Mennonite Central Committee. This partnership has provided substantial external funding, new research-related hires (including our first post-doctoral researcher), and increased research opportunities for faculty and students. CMU's research profile was further elevated in 2024 with the appointment of its first Canada Research Chair, marking an important milestone in national recognition of the university's scholarly strengths, and providing significant research opportunities for trainees and expanding national and international research networks.

Across the university, the Research Office has strengthened faculty engagement through regular one-on-one meetings, complemented by researcher development sessions, improved administrative tools, and expanded support for an increasing number of research coordinators and trainees. Internal and external funding activity has grown steadily, with multiple grant submissions and awards across Tri-Council and other agencies, alongside new initiatives such as the institution's first faculty competition for a research-related course release, as well as enhanced collaborations in equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), research security, and interinstitutional partnerships. CMU

was also awarded the Canadian Council of Animal Care's Certificate of Good Animal Practice in 2024. Together, these developments demonstrate a maturing research ecosystem marked by increased support staffing, improved processes, increased external recognition, and deeper faculty involvement in research across CMU.

The President's Council approved CMU's EDI Action Plan in April 2026. This plan outlines a comprehensive, evidence-informed strategy to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and intercultural health at CMU by addressing systemic barriers and fostering a culture of belonging across research, teaching, staffing, and campus life. Grounded in institutional commitments and informed by community consultation and data, the plan identifies eight strategic priorities—including trust-building, resourcing, recruitment, research integration, data collection, and accessible physical spaces—with measurable actions and accountability mechanisms. For the research enterprise specifically, the Action Plan emphasizes integrating EDI into research design and hiring practices while building capacity and reducing barriers for equity-deserving scholars.

Going forward, a central goal in this SRP's action is to continue to increase Tri-Council and other funded research, leading to the flourishing of faculty members' externally funded research, including the Canada Research Chair's program of research. As a small and ambitious research and teaching institution, CMU is committed to rigorous academic excellence.

Research Values and Commitments

Research at CMU is shaped by a commitment to academic excellence, critical inquiry, and practices that reflect its Christian and Anabaptist foundations, including attention to peace, justice, and the wellbeing of communities. CMU affirms a broad and inclusive understanding of scholarship, encompassing theoretical, disciplinary, applied, creative, and community-engaged research. Consistent with the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), CMU evaluates research in terms of its quality, integrity, and contribution, supporting diverse forms of scholarly work across all disciplines.

CMU's Research Distinctives: Community-engaged, Peace, Teaching, Interdisciplinary, Applied and Discovery

CMU is a community-rooted institution committed to student-centred learning and academic excellence. With a strong interdisciplinary culture, the scholarship of CMU's faculty bridges and integrates multiple fields of study. Research and teaching are approached as forms of scholarly and relational practices that foster critical inquiry, knowledge creation, and meaningful dialogue. As a Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren-affiliated university, CMU actively seeks to build justice, peace, and community well-being. These distinctives are meant to be considered overlapping lenses, not categories, as most research at CMU will engage multiple distinctives. CMU also affirms the equal importance of theoretical, disciplinary, creative, and applied research.

CMU's research strategy builds on these distinctive qualities as a university and aims to contribute as a research institution through the following research priorities:

1. Community-Engaged and Relational Research

Research is collaborative, reciprocal, and contributes to knowledge that addresses real world challenges. This includes partnerships and scholarship with community organizations and

under-resourced populations focused on their concerns, such as healthy dialogue, health equity, human rights, and global development.

2. Peace, Church, and Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies

Research is rooted in the university's commitment to Christian faith, integrating theological, historical, and philosophical inquiry. Informed by Anabaptist/Mennonite traditions, this work reflects a commitment to peace, justice, and nonviolence, and explores their significance for church, society, and global engagement.

3. Teaching-Integrated and Student-Centered Research

Integrating the scholarship of teaching and learning, CMU research provides meaningful research training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students resulting in presentations, publications and research in the classroom.

4. Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Research

Research crosses disciplinary boundaries and engages diverse global and cultural contexts. This includes far-ranging engagements such as interdisciplinary poetics, literary criticism, political theology, environmental and sustainability research, AI research bridging complex systems and society and critical research in business.

5. Applied Research and Knowledge Mobilization for Flourishing (including research creation)

Research that connects theory and practice, contributes to societal wellbeing, and shares knowledge widely through performance, publications, partnerships, and public engagement.

6. Research for Knowledge and Understanding

Research that advances foundational knowledge through theoretical, disciplinary, and discovery-driven inquiry, contributing to deeper understanding of the world and informing innovation and application.

SRP Action Plan

Within this 5-year plan, CMU will advance an ambitious research agenda by strengthening institutional capacity, investing in enhanced support for faculty scholarship, and expanding its success in receiving Tri-Council funding. To support this growth, CMU will continue to build robust research infrastructure through increased staffing, improved administrative systems, and sustained alignment with Tri-Council and ethical standards. At the same time, enhanced faculty incentives for research, professional development opportunities, and support for student research trainees will enable a wider range of high-impact, interdisciplinary, and community-engaged scholarship. Together, these efforts will elevate CMU's national research profile, deepen its partnerships, and strengthen the contribution of research to both academic excellence and the public good..

1. Strengthen Research Leadership, Institutional Capacity and the Research Office's Financial Sustainability

Goal: Expand institutional research support and increase the financial sustainability of the research office while strengthening policies that enable faculty to undertake a wide range of research activities.

Key Indicators:

- Portfolio of research supports refined and expanded
- Additional institutional resources and guidance developed to support faculty research.

- Shared research infrastructure (e.g., GPU computing capacity) developed and made available across multiple faculty research programs.

Outcomes:

- Faculty experience more effective support for grant writing, budget development and post-award administration.
- CMU develops stronger institutional capacity to manage and grow research programs.
- The Research Office has sufficient resources to support its increased capacity
- Grant administration and compliance processes become more efficient and reliable.

2. Expand Faculty Research Capacity and Incentives

Goal: Approve and implement a course release policy through Senate that incentivizes research projects funded by Tri-Council agencies and other sources, while also strengthening internal incentives and professional development opportunities for faculty research. Continue to engage in university wide conversations about faculty load.

Key Indicators:

- Course release policy approved by Senate.
- At least three research development workshops offered annually (e.g., grant writing, collaborative research, research design).
- New or expanded internal research incentive programs including research load implemented.

Outcomes:

- Faculty have greater institutional support to pursue research alongside teaching responsibilities.
- Greater faculty capacity to initiate and sustain research projects, including community-engaged and interdisciplinary work.
- Increased faculty participation in research activities and grant applications.

3. Expand Tri-Council Funding and Elevate Research Excellence

Goal: Increase CMU's Tri-Council research funding to increase Research Support Funds amounts, maintain eligibility for Canada Graduate Scholarships, and increase the number of future Canada Research Chairs. As well, CMU aims to apply for research infrastructure funds from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

Key Indicators:

- Year-over-year increases in Tri-Council funding secured by CMU researchers.
- Growth in the number of Tri-Council grant applications submitted by faculty.
- Completed application to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

Outcomes:

- CMU maintains strong eligibility for federal research funding programs and ability to host Canada Research Chairs.
- Institutional research funding grows to support broader research infrastructure.
- CMU strengthens its national research profile and competitiveness.

4. Build Capacity for High-Impact Student Research

Goal: Expand institutional infrastructure and resources to support undergraduate and graduate research trainees working with CMU faculty.

Key Indicators:

- Development of training resources for faculty on hiring and training research assistants.
- Identification and adoption of best practices for research trainee supervision and mentorship.
- Increased number of students employed as research assistants.
- Position faculty to embed research as a core element in student academic programs.
- Faculty supported in identifying supplementary RA funding streams (e.g., NSERC USRA, Mitacs) to sustain student research positions.

Outcomes:

- Faculty are better equipped to supervise and mentor student researchers.
- Undergraduate and graduate students gain meaningful research experience.
- Research projects benefit from stronger student participation and support.

5. Lead in Ethical and Tri-Council Research Excellence

Goal: Ensure CMU meets and maintains Tri-Council requirements, including Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) standards, and an updated Research Data Management (RDM) institutional strategy, developed in collaboration with the Library and IT departments. Develop greater awareness and engagement with Indigenous research protocols in relationship with Indigenous peoples and data governance standards such as Ownership Control Access and Permission (OCAP); Ownership, Control, Access and Stewardship (OCAS) and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's National Inuit Strategy on Research NISR).

Key Indicators:

- Revised Research Data Management Strategy completed.
- Annual faculty training on EDI and RDM expectations.
- Continued institutional compliance with Tri-Council policies (EDI, RDM).
- Continue collaborations with Indigenous Knowledge-Keepers and communities
- Adherence to ethical conduct with Indigenous peoples and development of institutional protocols for engaging in research with Indigenous peoples.

Outcomes:

- CMU maintains eligibility for federal research funding.
- Research practices reflect high ethical, professional, and equity standards.
- Faculty are well prepared to meet evolving national research policies.
- Relationships of reciprocity with Indigenous peoples.

6. Expand Research Partnerships and Visibility

Goal: Increase the impact, partnerships, and visibility of CMU research through individuals and teams of faculty members research participation in research networks, stronger collaboration with community organizations, publicly funded institutions, governments, other academic institutions, and international partners.

Key Indicators:

- Partnership engagement strategy developed.
- Increase in collaborative research proposals and projects.
- Annual initiatives that highlight and celebrate CMU's collaborative research (e.g., research showcases, media communications).

Outcomes:

- CMU research contributes directly to community and societal needs.
- Faculty and students participate in more collaborative and interdisciplinary projects.
- The value of research within CMU and among external stakeholders becomes more widely recognized.

Research Planning and Approval

Research-related policies are created, monitored, and updated by the VP Academic and Director of the Research Office. The policies are reviewed at Senate for decision making. As a member of Universities Canada, CMU has a mandate to support faculty members as independent researchers engaging in scholarly activity both within and across disciplines, while remaining subject to the methodologies and evidentiary standards appropriate to the disciplines engaged. Like other small universities, programs of research are impacted by the larger teaching load requirement. As a result, CMU has been imaginative and strategic in the resources it provides in support of research. This support includes course releases to faculty pursuing funded research, access to services offered by the Research Office, quarterly opportunities to apply for internal research grants, financial support to present research at national and international conferences, and carefully managed committee and administrative loads to enable faculty to maximize their research time. CMU is committed to aligning research expectations with faculty workload realities through policies and practices that enable sustained scholarly activity alongside teaching and service responsibilities.

Faculty regularly engage in conversations about their research plans. Faculty are encouraged to identify collaborative research ventures with other researchers within and outside of CMU. The Academic Dean supports faculty research by assisting faculty members to develop long term plans for scholarship and the Director of the Research Office invites faculty to articulate research plans and projects. For the purposes of assessment, promotions, or appointment with tenure, CMU seeks to evaluate scholarly and research activity with broader understandings of research output as understood in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).