MRFA Response to the Strategic Research and Scholarship Plan (2018-23)

General Overview

The following response is in two parts. The first part provides general comments on the overall scope of the draft plan. The second part consists of a chart with comments on particular elements, correlated, as requested, to the line numbers.

The draft plan seems to privilege an exclusive rather than inclusive approach to scholarship, with extra funding going to prolific researchers. As an institution, Mount Royal values an inclusive approach to scholarship and teaching in which faculty members have the opportunity to apply and receive grants even if they are not "stars." At what point does privileging the few take needed resources away from the many? We do not want to create classes of faculty.

The goal of increasing research by 5% seems arbitrary. What would this mean in terms of monographs, funded grants, or articles? Has any thought been given to how Mount Royal's full-time to contract faculty ratio is reflected in our research record? Faculty at Mount Royal do more teaching and service than their counterparts elsewhere. Perhaps the best way to increase research productivity is to increase the number of tenured and tenurable faculty.

Along the same lines, the draft plan calls for growth in infrastructure and administration. While the MRFA agrees that the university needs to support research, attention should be paid to increasing the faculty complement.

A. General Observations

Regarding Guiding Principles and Values (Starting on Line 166)

Some of these read more as areas of focus than "principles and values". It is necessary to better-articulate the underlying principles, and say why these are important, as well as why areas of focus are justified. Later in the document, it will be necessary to say how each will be undertaken. There are several about which the Plan is essentially silent, including "diversity and inclusion", "indigenous research" and "international research". Also, how do these "values" and "principles" align with those articulated in the ISP and Academic Plan?

Regarding Actions and Measures

Where targets are specified, it is not always clear what action(s) are proposed to reach them. Conversely, not all proposed actions are accompanied by measures of success. In some cases, this makes it less clear what GFC might in fact be approving. For each action, should the Plan not also assign accountabilities for implementation, and governance oversight of implementation? In many cases, actions describe what might require significant reallocation of funds, but without costing (and other resource) estimates for actions (it is therefore not possible to compare options weighted by priorities against other initiatives).

Any actions for identifying/exploring issues should be accompanied by a commitment to report back to GFC at the conclusion of the study. Several of Strategy 2.1's associated actions call for the development of "budgeting processes", "funding models", "guidelines", "strategies", etc. for

resource allocations in support of research and scholarship. Actions of concern include insufficiently clear descriptions of initiatives that would potentially internally redistribute institutional funds in support of "institutional priorities" (decided by whom?), "matching" funds for "individual and team grant applications", "start-up funds" for new TSS hires, allocation of reassigned time for "scholarly intensification", funding to support research chair positions in each Faculty, etc. Although the intent might be to give administrators a mandate to develop and implement these initiatives, this mandate and its implications are not sufficiently clear to warrant GFC approval.

Regarding the Nature of Undergraduate Education (Relates esp. to Goal 1)

Undergraduate programs are historically less about knowledge creation, and more about established bodies of disciplinary knowledge as well as disciplinary methods of inquiry. While undergraduate research can be a valuable aspect of the latter, this document seems to be suggesting a major refocusing on it. If this is what is being argued, it might not be appropriate – at the least, not without a much more clear articulation about the purpose, nature and degree of focus on undergraduate research and how it's meant to enhance undergraduate education. The ISP and Academic Plan indicate that there will be the *opportunity* for every student to participate in undergraduate research projects, but this Plan appears to be elevating the intensity of this aim.

This degree of institutional commitment to the primacy of student research will demand considerable overhaul of curricula and pedagogic methods, which at the present time are largely devoted to teaching students disciplinary methods of inquiry and established bodies of knowledge, rather than focusing on student-conducted research and knowledge creation. The costs of redevelopment of courses so that they center upon student research will be very great as faculty will require extra time to go beyond their existing responsibilities to develop the required student research courses and projects, and then to devote the considerable amount of instructor attention required to deliver them.

Regarding the Role of Scholarship at Mount Royal

Mount Royal's mission is centered on "teaching and learning informed by scholarship". We need a more precise and comprehensive articulation of:

- what this means;
- how having faculty engaged in scholarship informs the teaching/learning function of the university in a broader array of educational contexts (i.e. not just a focus on the opportunities for undergraduates to be involved in knowledge-producing research projects);
- why it is important;
- how it aligns with our undergraduate focus (without graduate studies) and BASI mandate.

This articulation will also need to align with the ISP, Academic Plan, and the (forthcoming) Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan. Note ISP Goal 3 in particular – this suggests general faculty engagement with scholarship instead of a well-supported minority of high-producers.

For a good starting point, see page 19 of the Academic Plan:

[…] faculty must have sufficient time to engage with their research, professional and scholarly communities, as well as with the wider community. This is not only so that they can be active followers of, contributors to and recognized experts among these communities, but also because this engagement enriches their students' undergraduate experience. **Teaching informed by scholarship means bringing the most up-to-date thinking about pedagogy and discipline-specific understanding into the undergraduate classroom.**

Regarding the Research, Scholarship and Community Engagement "Mission Statement"

The draft document proposes a research "mission":

> To co-create a culture of innovation fostering excellence in research for inspirational undergraduate education, community-engaged change-making for the betterment of society, and the advancement of knowledge and practice through creative, scholarly expression.

Why is a "mission" statement necessary in a 3rd tier planning document, i.e. beyond the articulations of institutional mission in the ISP and Academic Plan? In any case, this could well be a statement about research at a research-intensive institution, and doesn't speak to MRU's particular undergraduate focus and BASI mandate.

Lines 115-116: "Mount Royal University embraced a research and scholarship mandate when we transitioned from a community college to university in 2009." This is misleading – MRU does not have a "research and scholarship mandate" in the same sense that a CARI institution does. Moreover, not all faculty are on the TSS work pattern. Although faculty on the TS stream often create and publish scholarship, publication is not part of their official duties.

Regarding Alignment with the Existing Academic Plan

Overall, there is a lack of clear alignment between the goals, strategies, actions and measures of this Plan with the commitments and "markers of success" laid out in the Academic Plan. The latter should be more clearly and explicitly referenced, addressed and operationalized (e.g. those on pages 9-11 of the Academic Plan with respect to scholarship).

It is also necessary to be more explicit with respect to coordination with other academic initiatives (teaching and learning strategic plan; academic plan implementation; balancing of priorities outside of academic affairs) – see lines 188-191.

B. Overreliance of Contract Appointments, and the Strategic Importance to Scholarship and Research of a Well-Supported, Primarily Full-Time Faculty Complement

Lines 42-45: it is recognized (correctly) that engagement in research and scholarship by Mount Royal faculty members provides a wide spectrum of benefits to students, to the faculty member(s) conducting the work, and to our university as a whole. If this is true then it should be the case that the vast majority of faculty teaching our students are engaged in scholarship, and not the minority as is the case now.

Note as well ISP Strategy 7.2 (see lines 134-140): "We will support the scholarship, research and community engagement of our faculty. As a knowledge seeking community, Mount Royal appreciates that intellectual inquiry benefits us all. The sharing of this knowledge takes many forms, each of them equally important. Be it through traditional peer reviewed publications, performances, presentations or openly accessible work, Mount Royal recognizes the contribution of our faculty as scholars, researchers and public scholars." Presumably this would apply to all ~800 of our faculty. This requires a better-supported faculty complement and is supported and compensated to engage in scholarship, and that is primarily full-time.

Lines 197-203 include the statement that "Disciplinary research remains a cornerstone of academic development one cannot underestimate the importance of disciplinary expertise and the care that goes into the preservation and creation of ideas in the university's many independent subject areas. Mount Royal supports research and scholarship in the disciplines, old and new." However, most teaching is done by contract faculty who are not paid for this work. The integration of General Education across our curricula is given as a further example of our commitment to fostering disciplinary research in support of our strengths. Interestingly, this is an area in which the use of contract appointments is particularly high.

Overreliance on contract appointments, and a correspondingly undersized full-time faculty complement, undermines our ability to foster a community of active scholars. It therefore undermines our ability to meet the corresponding goals of the ISP, the Academic Plan, and the Scholarship and Research Strategic Plan. There are numerous examples where the Plan's various goals/strategies are compromised without having an appropriately-sized full-time faculty complement, for example:

- with respect to increasing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration (Goal 5)
- with respect to our desire to foster diversity of scholarship (line 39)
- regarding Strategy 4.3: improve the scholarly reputation of Mount Royal through better external communication on research and scholarship – it will be hard to improve this reputation with a majority of the credit instruction provided by contract faculty who are not paid to engage in scholarship

High services loads are noted as an obstacle (line 62). Increasing the full-time complement will have the added positive effect of mitigating high service loads. Note also that maintaining a high instructor FTE to student FLE ratio will help to ensure personalized learning, while also that the teaching time demands associated with an increasing ratio (already acute due to our teaching-intensive nature) do not erode research time.

A key element of the Plan regards the goal of 5% growth in output per year – about 28% over the life of the Plan. It is not clearly articulated how exactly these goals are to be met. However, growth goals *could* be met through growth in the number of full-time faculty positions under the TSS work pattern. For example, adding 13 TSS positions in the first year of the Plan's implementation would correspond to a 5% increase in scholarship-engaged faculty, which could be accomplished through a reallocation of approximately 0.5% of Mount Royal's operating budget.

We note concerns about the funds that will be required to establish the proposed new office of undergraduate research, accompanied by a new Director position. It is suggested that the considerable funds required would be better-allocated in support of additional full-time faculty positions for employees to actually undertake scholarly work.

C. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Lines 192-196: "Diversity and inclusion" are listed as core values on which the Plan is founded, but there is no discussion about how the achievement of the stated aspirations will be undertaken in practice. It is problematic that there is no mention of equity-related actions or measures. It is suggested to start with plans to systematically gather equity-related data with respect to research and scholarship activities across the institution.

D. Curricular Matters, Academic Governance and Academic Freedom

In many places, the plan appears to direct efforts for curriculum and course development/review. This raises questions not only about the time and resources required for these efforts (which could be extensive) and how they will be supported, but also about the academic freedom of faculty to undertake them (if and when they judge them to be appropriate) through collegial processes.

E. Focus on Growth and Concerns Regarding Internal Reallocation of Funds

Lines 121-122: "This plan provides direction on the internal allocation of resources to facilitate continued growth and to direct those resources to institutional priorities."

It is not clear why these particular scholarship output goals have been selected, and how their targets were established – be more clear about each target: why, how, and how measured?

A major focus of this plan is on stimulating growth in research output (including with respect to scholarly areas of institutional focus) by intensifying the work of existing (or a subset of) current TSS faculty. The idea seems to be to direct resources and time to a smaller group of high-output researchers whose scholarly programs align with identified institutional priorities, and to position them for success in securing external research funding (lines 121-127). But, it is not explained:

- How does this allow us to achieve our scholarship output goals (assuming those are important and the targets are appropriate)?
- How do benefits transfer to students and other faculty; how are they leveraged for other, broader benefits to MRU and its community?

Lines 61-69: Note that TSS is still a teaching-intensive work pattern with roughly 1 course less per fall/winter semester than TS (and note also that there are TS faculty who engage in scholarship).

Lines 69-69: "Expansion of research and scholarly capacity will need to employ strategies to allocate appropriate time for research" – if this means allocating extra reassigned time only for a subset of scholars, it will not have the desired overall effect. Reducing teaching workload by SICH for scholars would entail some combination of greater use of contract appointments (and

that's a non-starter; we need to move in the exact opposite direction via more full-time faculty) and/or higher workload for other TS/TSS faculty. This creates two problems:

- Exacerbation of existing and serious inequities across different faculty cohorts and appointment categories;
- The setting up of a vicious cycle where those who get more time produce more as a result, and are therefore more likely to be more successful in getting more time in the future. A certain amount of this, to allow faculty to align their workloads with their preferred focuses, is appropriate. But, we need to ensure that what we do doesn't just establish workload category traps that faculty fall into and can't shift out of if they aspire to change focus somewhat - that should be possible over the span of a career.

Finally, the institution has many functions, areas of important activity and needs, all competing for allocation of limited resources. It is reasonable for this Plan to establish priorities for resource allocations within existing scholarship-related budgets. However, it is not reasonable for this Plan to unilaterally direct internal resource allocations away from other functions, toward the research function. Any decision to prioritize the reallocation of resources to foster growth in research cannot occur without consideration and balancing of other needs, i.e. it cannot be decided purely within a research-planning silo.

F. Alternative Approaches

It is unfortunate that the Plan does not discuss mechanisms that could be explored to provide flexible workload arrangements in support of scholarship (e.g. team teaching, or balancing teaching-heavy vs. teaching-light semesters) that can already be accommodated within the framework of the Collective Agreement.

It is also unfortunate that there is no mention of enhanced supports for faculty who are considering applying for, applying for, or undertaking sabbatical leaves for the first time.

G. Miscellaneous

Regarding the meanings of the terms used ("research", "scholarship", etc.) starting on line 70: there should also be explicit reference to the CA definition and the Addendum on T, S & S. The institutional tenure and promotion criteria document also has definitions which should be noted.

Line 46: "We are at a moment of great relevance for innovation and undergraduate research in Canada and beyond" – what does this mean? Also, the word "innovation" is overused throughout the draft, and its meaning in this context is unclear. Are we talking about the research faculty are doing, or how MRU organizes itself to facilitate this?

Comments re: Boyer's Model (see the section starting on line 239): why the focus on "scientific" discovery research, specifically? Regarding the characterization of the scholarship of integration: this is one aspect of the scholarship of integration. However, it's not only and narrowly about interdisciplinary synthesis. Regarding the characterization of the scholarship of teaching and learning: this description is correct. SoTL researchers are not necessarily teachers, and teachers are not necessarily SoTL researchers, nor is it necessarily focused on improvement of the researcher's/teacher's own courses/programs/etc. The characterization of how outputs are disseminated (e.g. just with a community of practice) could also be misleading.

Lines 106-11 re: the AshokaU Changemaker Campus Network include the statement that "through the process of designation, we have committed to advancing the volume and impact of our research and scholarship in creating positive societal change." Was advancing volume and impact part of a commitment made during this designation process? There was no such commitment discussed or approved through the governance process.

Lines 555-559: "What does success look like for Mount Royal research and scholarship in 5 years? Quantitative and qualitative measures are required to track progress on our research and scholarship aspirations. The 2018/19 academic year will be used to establish baseline data on many of the measures identified in this strategy. A particular emphasis will be placed on developing and measuring the impact of research and scholarship." These plans presuppose much greater institutional ability to monitor, track, and generate reports on faculty activity. How is it supposed that the University will be able to gather and mine this data?

H. Comments on Specific Plan Goals, Strategies and Actions

I.e. those starting on line 300 of the Plan.

Regarding Goal 1 (Our Students): Provide Mount Royal Students with Undergraduate Research Opportunities

Note: this should not only be to provide experience for those who might go on to conduct future research (e.g. in graduate education) or so that students can be better "consumers of research". Rather, the broader objectives should be (1) to foster deeper understanding of established disciplinary knowledge through active learning activities, (2) to acquaint students with established disciplinary modes of inquiry and habits of thought, and (3) to develop general critical thinking skills more broadly.

Regarding Strategy 1.1: Clearly develop, deliver and evaluate the intentional integration of research and scholarship into all Mount Royal degree programs

This could be fostered as part of the curriculum review, development and approval process. However, it would ultimately be a matter of collegial governance at the curriculum level, while also needing to respect academic freedom at the instructor/course-delivery level.

Regarding "top 10" success (line 325): This is an ambitious goal. 1) What would be the corresponding absolute numbers that would give rise to this statement of a relative percentage? 2) What specific factors are within our control that would allow us to increase the performance? 3) Why is this an important goal, strategically? For example, are we wanting to promote MRU as a institution that specializes in preparing students for graduate school? Is this realistic? Or, is there some other driver?

Regarding Strategy 1.2: Provide advanced opportunities for students with interests and aptitudes for conducting research and scholarship

It's important to articulate the motivation for this. It should also be recognized that without graduate students at MRU, part of the drive for this comes from faculty interest around building their own research agendas.

Similarly to above (re: Strategy 1.1), curricular matters such as the evaluation and implementation of honours programs is the purview of collegial governance.

Regarding the action to "increase the internal funding available for students to support independent, supervised research and to participate in the dissemination of research findings at local, national and internationally appropriate venues" – this has a workload implication for faculty, which must be considered as part of the workload model and collective bargaining.

Regarding Goal 2 (Our Faculty): Enhance Support for Research and Scholarship

Regarding Strategy 2.1: Increase the availability and effective distribution of internal research and scholarship funds

See comment above. Realistically, this is about *re*distribution of institutional funds unless availability is increased through public or private external funding.

A benchmarking exercise is meaningless without a precise definition of "similar institution". MacEwan is the only other similarly-mandated institution in Alberta (and it makes no sense for BASIs to benchmark against CARIs). Are there similar non-AB institutions to which we can meaningfully compare ourselves? Comparisons to institutions with graduate programs, or where teaching workloads are different (e.g. where faculty have teaching assistants for marking and teach only the lecture component of courses) would be questionable.

Unless there is enhanced public or private funding from externally, from where would the growth in internal research funds be redistributed? "Strategic" decisions about reallocation cannot be based on scholarship goals alone, in a vacuum.

Line 368: "Review the extent and location of all internal funds currently available for allocation to research and scholarship at Mount Royal with the aim of ensuring that our resources are being directed to meet institutional priorities." Decided by whom? Any prioritization of ISP goals should have been done through the governance process (with GFC involved in academic priorities). Also: allocation of resources and funds to faculty engaging in institutional priority areas could potential disadvantage some who are working in other areas with respect to tenure processes (etc.)

Line 371: "Explore the opportunities for pooling resources to create more effective institution-wide access to internal research, scholarship and innovation funds." What does this mean?

Line 377: "Develop greater internal capacity for grant review and adjudication of internal competitions." How? What is the challenge this is intended to address?

Line 378: "Support for new faculty. The budgeting process for new faculty hires in TSS should include an allocation of 'start-up funds' for research and scholarship."   As above – this may be very beneficial to new TSS faculty, but from where would the funds be redirected? This should apply to any faculty member new to TSS (not necessarily new hires).

Line 380: "Reassignment for scholarly intensification. The strategic use of reassigned time will be optimized to provide opportunities for faculty requiring more time for research." Are there dangers of a vicious cycle, and how would these be avoided? How will scholarly intensification benefit MRU's students and academic community more broadly?

Line 382: "Establish an internally funded model for the establishment of research chairs. The aim is to have at 382 least one in each faculty over the next five years." How would this be funded? What would be the intent and responsibilities?

Regarding Strategy 2.2: Increase the procurement of external research funds

Lines 390-393: Measures are specified for increased success in securing external research awards, including Tri-Agency awards, but it is not stated explicitly how this success will be achieved. This should be articulated clearly. There is also not clear rationale for why the stated targets have been chosen, specifically. How have these numeric targets been derived?

Lines 394-397: Not clear what actions will be undertaken to achieves these results.

Lines 398-400: Similarly, the plans for the new externally funded and CRC research chairs are not clear. What are these positions, and how will they benefit our students, our programs, our faculty, and the broader MRU community? In what areas will these be established, how will these align with our other goals, and how will knowledge be mobilized?

"Ensure the implementation of indirect costs policies and procedures to increase the support required to provide research support. Indirect cost recovery should increase by 50% over the term of this plan" – note the need to consider an appropriate teaching workload backfill cost recovery model, in any case where it is possible that research funding is used to purchase reassigned time.

Regarding Strategy 2.3: the range and depth of supports to enhance research and scholarship capacity

The actions for identifying needs, and for providing enhanced supports for faculty throughout Mount Royal's community of scholars, are important. The ORSCE has an important role to play in coordinating and facilitating these efforts.

Regarding the action to "continue to implement and expand the Research Development Officer program based on the partial secondment of faculty members to provide peer support for research and scholarship development" – this is a good initiative, in that it is an action which should provide enhanced resources and supports Mount Royal's broader scholarly community. However, note that this use of the term "secondment" is not consistent with the definition in the Collective Agreement. A more accurate term should be used, as what is proposed is not a true "secondment".

Regarding the action to "identify and deliver workshops and events to increase knowledge, awareness and skills of the Mount Royal research and scholarship community. These events can be implemented in collaboration with internal and external partners" – this is also a good initiative for similar reasons to those stated in the previous paragraph. **Resources, workshops etc. should include being about key research-related policies and procedures (e.g. re: research integrity, research confidentiality, etc.)**

Regarding Goal 3

Regarding Strategy 3.1: Establish priorities and seek support for expansion of physical research infrastructure

Regarding the action to "Review, revise and implement the recommendations of the 2013 report from the Mount Royal Research and Infrastructure Task Force" - This report is five years old. No implementation should be approved until the report is reviewed/revised, and findings are presented.

Regarding the action to "relocate the Office of Research Scholarship and Community Engagement to a more central and appropriate space within the next year" – This move will be expensive, and should not be undertaken so quickly (and likely as a temporary move) in light of the subsequent bullet point about establishing a larger research hub with significant space, and another accompanying action item: "Evaluate the optimal space and location requirements for ORSCE within the long-term planning activities of the institution."

Regarding Strategy 3.4: Increase the digital and information technology infrastructure to support research and scholarship

What does "collaborate with other Canadian post-secondary institutions to meet the emerging requirements for digital research data management" mean?

Regarding Goal 4

Regarding Strategy 4.1: Enhance the culture of research and scholarship at Mount Royal through better internal communication

"Develop a system for the efficient creation of Web-based faculty research and scholarship profiles" – yes, but more generally allow faculty to build their own web-based profiles more broadly (i.e. not just for research/scholarship).

Regarding Goal 5

Regarding Strategy 5.1: Develop and implement mechanisms to increase formal and informal opportunities for scholarly collaboration

"Create formal categories, guidelines and procedures to engage visiting scholars, fellows, research associates, volunteers, etc." – Note that, where these are to be categories of employment, the question of designation as academic staff may be an issue.

"Support and establishing learning communities and communities of practice" – support and recognition of these is important – more information on concrete plans for doing so would be helpful.

I. Chart with Other Comments By Line Number

Line 1	**Change-making through research and scholarship** The title stresses "change-making," but not all research is about creating change. The title of the plan thus seems a little "gimmicky."
Lines 24-28	The phrase "community-engaged change making for the betterment of society" implies that change is valuable for its own sake. Not all change is for the betterment of society, and we should be careful not to judge research by empty terms such as "change."

Line 49	The term "provide an unmatched crucible for intellectual and creative development" is pretentious.
Line 51	**"advance to national leadership"** in the area of undergraduate research. Becoming a national leader in undergraduate research is a laudable goal. However, supports for faculty and students need to be in place. Will faculty who supervise students be rewarded for their work, either monetarily or with time? If Mount Royal approximates a "graduate school" model at the undergraduate level, there should be some acknowledgement of the extra work involved. Graduate courses, for instance, are often extremely small. Will the research-intensive courses proposed in the current document by similarly sized?
Lines 61-65	**"The conduct of research and scholarship . . . occurs in the context of relatively high teaching and service loads"** This paragraph correctly identifies the high teaching and service load of our MRU faculty. We agree that "The expectations for both the type and volume of research need to align with these conditions." It will be interesting to hear what strategies will be employed "to allocate appropriate time for research."
Lines 70-77	Based on what we have heard from faculty members, the application of the Boyer model might need to be rethought.
Lines 100-01	**Community Engaged Research** There needs to be a stronger definition of what constitutes "community engaged research." What will be the fate of traditional research that is not community based?
Lines 121-23	"**internal allocation of resources to facilitate continued growth . . .**" When this draft states that "this plan provides direction on the internal allocation of resources to facilitate continued growth and to direct those resources to institutional priorities" how will this impact on less privileged areas? What does "continued growth" actually mean? What does it mean to direct resources towards "institutional priorities?" Does this mean that some areas will receive proportionately less funding because they are not "priority" areas?
Lines 123-24	Can our "areas of capacity, strength and accomplishment" be better identified? We should be careful about privileging some types of research over others.
Lines 125-27	"Overall, our aim is for growth and advancement of scholarship in alignment with our identity. This will require increasing the capacity of our professoriate while providing the critical physical infrastructure required for research and scholarship." What does it mean to "increase the capacity of our professoriate"? Does this imply that the current faculty must produce more scholarship with limited resources? If we are increasing the research capacity of our faculty, will we also be acknowledging that 51% of our faculty are contract and that many of them have active research agendas? One way to increase the capacity of our professoriate is to provide contract faculty with the resources to carry out more research.
Lines 168-77	The word "ecological" is somewhat odd in this context, but the plan makes a good point when it says, "*Nor is the process linear. The ecological system of knowledge is*

	complex and multi-dimensional, often messy and confusing, with many modes of feedback and many cross connections." We should be careful that we do not lose this understanding of research as we go forward. "Deliverables" should not reduced to a set number or type.
Lines 201-03	Fused sentence This is an important point. Mount Royal must continue to recognize that "disciplinary research remains a cornerstone of academic development. One cannot underestimate the importance of disciplinary expertise . . . and the university's many independent subject areas." Other parts of this draft plan, however, suggest that some areas will be privileged over others
Lines 204-32	All the types of research listed here have a place at Mount Royal, and all these types should be fostered and preserved.
Lines 233-36	"Permission to fail. Mount Royal will cultivate a culture of risk-taking. Research and scholarship s should include 'the permission to fail'. Rather than inculcating students with a fear of failure, research and scholarship is an opportunity to build resilience and share experiences of advancement through lack of initial success. Research is a platform to 'try things out', learn and try anew." Does "permission to fail" include faculty? Sometimes research projects do not succeed as planned. How does "permission to fail" relate to academic standards (student grades, faculty annual reports, etc.)
Lines 256-61	Perhaps the writers should add "for example," as in "For example, Scientific scholarship of discovery aims . . ." There is more to the scholarship of discovery than science.
Lines 263-64	"Selection of established and emerging examples to be identified through the Mount Royal community consultation process in January & February" What does "selection of established and emerging examples" mean? Has this consultation begun?
Lines 315-16	**Strategy 1.1. "Clearly develop, deliver and evaluate the intentional integration of research and scholarship into all MR degree programs."** This could be fostered as part of the curriculum review, development and approval process. However, it would ultimately be a matter of collegial governance at the curriculum level, while also needing to respect academic freedom at the instructor/course-delivery level.
Lines	**Strategy 1.2 "Provide advanced opportunities for students with interests and aptitudes for conducting research and scholarship"** It's important to articulate the motivation for this. It should also be recognized that without graduate students at MRU, part of the drive for this comes from faculty self-interest around building their own research agendas. Similarly to above (re: Strategy 1.1), curricular matters such as the evaluation and implementation of honours programs is the purview of collegial governance.
Lines	**"Every program includes the opportunity for students to participate in at least**

| 318-20 | **one senior level research or capstone project through individual or group work, or directly engaged with faculty (from ISP Strategy 3.3).”**

Again, this goal is laudable and we support it in principle, but resources must be in place for both faculty and students. If faculty are expected to increase their research output *and* provide senior level research projects and supervision, something has got to give. There needs to be more reassigned time for faculty supervising undergraduate research. |
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| Lines 321-23 | **“All Mount Royal degree programs will be asked to provide a summary of their intentional approaches to develop research and scholarship skills through their curriculum, including the implementation of senior-level opportunities (for completion at the end of 2018/19).”**

See above. This is a question of funding and resources. Also, is the ORS interfering in curriculum development here? It is important to recognize faculty autonomy in setting curriculum content and goals. |
| Lines 324-26 | **“Graduate schools recognize the quality of our undergraduate student research experiences, with Mount Royal placing within the top 10 per cent of Canadian universities in graduate school acceptance rates (from ISP Strategy 3.3).”**

While not wishing to denigrate MRU, which we believe is an excellent undergraduate institution, is it realistic to think that MRU will place within “the top 10 percent of Canadian universities in graduate school acceptance rates”? Other institutions have (a) more students, (b) faculty who are given more time to complete scholarship, and (c) more programs that lead naturally into graduate school. Some of our major programs, such as Business and Nursing, have a strong graduation to workplace agenda. Students might return to school down the line, but the expectation for most students is that they will join the workforce after graduation, not complete more studies. A more reasonable goal would be to increase the number of student placements in graduate school, *as appropriate to the disciplines*. |
| Lines 335-37 | “**Increase the internal funding available for students to support independent, supervised research and to participate in the dissemination of research findings at local, national and internationally appropriate venues.”**

This is an important goal. If students are actively involved in undergraduate research, there should be a funding pool which assists them in disseminating their work. |
| Lines 338-39 | **“Encourage faculty to hire undergraduate research assistants”**
How will this goal be financed? Will there be a pool of money to which faculty can apply for research assistant salaries? |
| Lines 347-48 | “**Establish an initial secondment supported by re-assignment at a 2-course equivalents in the 2018-19 academic year to develop a plan for an undergraduate research office.”** |

	This is one of the few areas where there is a specified cost in terms of reassigned time. While we agree that reassigned time would be necessary for this secondment, there are other areas of the plan where reassigned time is equally important.
Lines 349-50	"**Establish a Director of Undergraduate Research position through the Academic Director model or equivalent.**" Mount Royal has a tendency to address problems by increasing administrative positions rather than providing ground level support. Let's hope that this is not the case here.
Lines 356-57	**Strategy 2.1: Increase the availability and effective distribution of internal research and scholarship funds.** While this goal seems like a good one, the words "effective distribution" could be problematic is they imply that prolific researchers are rewarded at the expense of less prolific faculty. We should avoid a two-tier approach to research at MRU.
Lines 359-63	**"Conduct a benchmarking exercise in 2018-19 to compare the internal resources allocated to supporting research and scholarship at Mount Royal compared to similar institutions. The results of the analysis will be used to create a strategy to provide an appropriate amount of internal support to research and scholarship. The initial measure will be the percentage of the institutional operating budget."** On one hand, this is an excellent first step in the development of a research strategy, as it will provide a means for judging whether MRU needs more funds overall rather than doing more with less. It is essential that the study address not only funds earmarked directly to research but the hidden benefits that research universities might have, such as Teaching Assistants and less teaching intensive workloads (both in terms of the number of classes taught and the amount of service work expected). We are not necessarily saying that MRU faculty need to teach fewer classes, but we are saying that our higher class load must be factored in to any discussion of research funding and productivity. Realistically, however, this is about *re*distribution of institutional funds unless availability is increased through public or private external funding. A benchmarking exercise is meaningless without a precise definition of "similar institution". MacEwan is the only other similarly-mandated institution in Alberta (and it makes no sense for BASIs to benchmark against CARIs). Are there similar non-AB institutions to which we can meaningfully compare ourselves? Unless there is enhanced public or private funding from externally, from where would the growth in internal research funds be redistributed? "Strategic" decisions about reallocation cannot be based on scholarship goals alone, in a vacuum.
Lines 364-65	**"In 2019-20, set a target for the annual growth of internal research funds based on the previously described benchmarking exercise."**

	This is an important aspect of the plan.
Lines 368-69	**"Review the extent and location of all internal funds currently available for allocation to research and scholarship at Mount Royal with the aim of ensuring that our resources are being directed to meet institutional priorities."** Supporting institutional priorities is important, but we should not be guided solely by institutional priorities. There may be times when the most important and "change making" research does not fit institutional goals, or the fit to the goals is only clear after the fact. We have to leave room for inquiry and scholarship which goes "outside the box." In other words, faculty research agendas should be based on individual curiosity and creativity and not on fitting research into pre-ordained categories. Decided by whom? Any prioritization of ISP goals should have been done through the governance process (with GFC involved in academic priorities). Also: allocation of resources and funds to faculty engaging in institutional priority areas could potential disadvantage some who are working in other areas with respect to tenure processes (etc.)
Lines 373-74	**"Create a revolving fund to provide resources for unique opportunities that arise for Mount Royal to engage in research and scholarship that aligns with institutional priorities."** See above
Lines 375-76	**"Create guidelines and allocate funding to provide the matching support required on individual and team grant applications."** This makes sense.
Lines 378-79	**"Support for new faculty. The budgeting process for new faculty hires in TSS should include an allocation of 'start-up funds' for research and scholarship."** This is essential. Ideally, there should be consideration of course release so that new faculty (and anyone new to the TSS stream) have time for scholarship. The tenure track at MRU places considerable demands on new faculty, including a high teaching load and expectations for substantial service. Thus, time might be the most important commodity for encouraging scholarship among new (and continuing) faculty.
Lines 380-81	**"Reassignment for scholarly intensification. The strategic use of reassigned time will be optimized to provide opportunities for faculty requiring more time for research."** As mentioned above, this is an important goal, and if this involves finding more funds to support faculty, it will be a considerable benefit. However, the word "strategic" could imply concentrating research dollars among the few by taking funding away from the many. Time for research can beget more research and thus the funds could become more and more concentrated in the hands of the few.

	In a sense, is there any faculty member on TSS who does not require more time for research? There need to be some criteria here.
Lines 382-83	**"Establishing research chairs will improve MRU's national visibility as a research institution. Ideally, funding for some of these research chairs will come from external funding and not through cannibalizing existing funds at MRU."** This is very important. We should not undermine what little we have. However, "the aim is to have at least one [research chair] in each faculty over the next five years" has huge funding implications. How would this be funded? What would be the intent and responsibilities?
Lines 384-86	**"Review and revise the operation of the Scholarship Review Committee to better meet the growing needs for internal review of grants and provide training for committee members to enhance the quality and consistency of review."** Good point.
Line 390	**"Increase the annual amount of external research awards by an average of 5% per year."** This is a good aspirational goal, as long as it is supported institutionally.
Lines 391-97	Again, aspirational goals are good starting points, and having more grant money flowing into MRU will be beneficial for the institution. Collaborating and pooling of funds also makes sense.
Lines 401-02	Establishing **"new relationship[s] with private foundations"** makes sense, but MRU should be careful to avoid the conflict of interest allegations that have plagued some other universities. Partners should be carefully chosen to avoid associations with companies that exploit workers or degrade the environment.
Lines 403-05	**Indirect cost recovery** We recommend that this be part of the "benchmarking" study mentioned above. To what extent do other institutions expect faculty grants to cover indirect costs?
Lines 410-417	**Peer support** is very important, and it makes sense that experienced faculty should provide insight to their less experienced colleagues. The "partial secondment" of faculty members recognizes that peer support can be a lot of work.
Lines 420-21	**"Create a full-time position to provide grant support in ORS"** While it is likely that such a position is necessary, care should be taken to ensure that added administrative costs are matched by added funding for scholarship itself. In other words, the research plan should avoid administrative expansion at the expense of on-the-ground funding.
Lines 431-38	**"Improving the physical infrastructure around research is important. The current research office space is likely not adequate for an expanding research program, and if faculty are hiring research assistants, there needs to be office space for them to work and space to store equipment and data."**

	Since institutes are, by policy, self-supporting, we should ensure that the "indirect costs" model mentioned above applies not only to research grants but to institutes' requirements for administrative support and physical space.
Lines 460-61	**"Ensure the ongoing financial requirements for the sustainability of institutes and centres are included in the priorities for institutional fund development."** This goal sets off major alarm bells. Institutes are supposed to be self-funding and not be a drain on the central operating funds of the university. Strategy 3.3 suggests a new funding model for institutes that we must examine very carefully before we decide to implement.
Lines 462-63	**"Review the financial model and long-term operation of the Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to ensure that it best supports the ongoing development of this priority research area."** Although the University approved funding for the Institute of Teaching and Learning in fall 2017, this is still an institute and theoretically subject to the "Institutes at Mount Royal University Policy," 2.1.1.a., which states that "Institutes are responsible for ensuring that they are Financially Self-Sufficient through revenue from endowments or through external cost recovery (i.e., through grants, contracts and donations)." The university should be careful not to siphon funding away from the overall research funding pool.
Lines 466-67	**"Support the development of the Trico Changemaker Studio"** This is another area of the plan which has resource implications**.**
Lines 472-73	**"Review the current needs of MRU researchers for research software to ensure the cost-effective delivery of a full-range of required software"** Software needs are likely to grow, so this is an appropriate goal.
Lines 490-92	**"Expand the research and scholarship identity of Mount Royal through the next revision of the institutional 'brand' articulation. The current version does not explicitly acknowledge research and scholarship."** While this goal is important, and the University should be positioning itself in this way, we also need to be aware of our mandate as a BASI.
Line 501	**"Increase the quantity of peer-reviewed research dissemination by 5% per year**." As mentioned above, percentages can be problematic. First, there is the risk of valuing quantity over quality. Second, there is no indication of how this increase would be monitored.
Lines 502-03	**"Increase the quantity of professional and community-engaged dissemination activity by 5% per year as measured by the number of active projects."** See above

Lines 509-516	Increasing public understanding and improving the public perception of MRU as a research and teaching U. This is an important goal. In order to develop a profile as a research institution, we need to publicize what we do.
Lines 518-33	**Increase opportunities for collaboration** **Strategy 5.2: Develop and implement mechanisms to increase formal and informal opportunities for scholarly collaboration.** This initiative could be used to encourage contract faculty to become involved in Agency-funded projects. As long as sufficient resources are available, the initiatives mentioned in this section will likely benefit scholarship at MRU.
Lines 534-46	**Strategy 5.2: Develop new research and scholarship partnerships in the public and private sector** The Trico Changemaker Studio may well become "a recognized hub" but only once the studio is defined and its parameters are understood. Like the goal of a 5% increase in scholarship, the "25 per cent increase in new formal and informal partnerships" is not meaningful without a baseline measurement. Again, we are not sure whether faculty will be asked to do more with less or whether there will be additional resources so faculty can meet expectations. Since many contract faculty members teach in courses with ties to the community (Social Work, Nursing, etc.), this could be an area in which we encourage contract faculty to do research (assuming that it does not become a requirement for reappointment and that contract faculty are provided with appropriate time and resources to do the work).
Lines 547-60	**Implementation and timing** **What does success look like for Mount Royal research and scholarship in 5 years? Quantitative and qualitative measures are required to track progress on our research and scholarship aspirations. The 2018/19 academic year will be used to establish baseline data on many of the measures identified in this strategy. A particular emphasis will be placed on developing and measuring the impact of research and scholarship.** These are good questions, but the answers will be based on how we measure scholarship and what we value. The MRFA cautions against privileging certain kinds of research over others.