Annual Progress Report
2019/2020

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2019/2020 Annual Progress Report

With 200 years of achievement behind us, it may seem as if Dalhousie University has seen it all. Yet every year brings forth new accomplishments, new milestones — and new challenges.

I, myself, am a newcomer to this university, though I come with a rich appreciation and longstanding respect of its history, its legacy and its vital role as a regional leader with strong public purpose. I believe Dalhousie is ready to take a great leap forward as a truly global institution — a leap that will strengthen our local impact at the same time.

Our strategic plan will provide the Dal community with a roadmap to help us get to that destination. What this year’s Annual Progress Report showcases is that our journey has not slowed or stopped between plans. Our students, faculty and staff continue to boldly push forward in their work — strengthening our academic experience, innovating in research and discovery, forming powerful new partnerships and deepening our vital roots in Atlantic Canada and communities around the world.

This work continues through the current COVID-19 pandemic. We have just completed a winter term unlike any in our 200 years, ceasing most on-campus operations and moving 3,000 courses online with little more than a week’s notice. As I write this, we are working on returning to research and campus operations when health protocols allow and planning a fall term where instruction will be predominantly online. The pandemic also adds a great deal of uncertainty to our budget scenario, with the potential for a significant impact on our enrolment for the upcoming year.

Though there are surely challenges ahead, we can take pride in how we’ve worked together to support our students, faculty and staff over the past few months. We have worked across boundaries in new and unprecedented ways to achieve the best possible outcomes — whether it’s in virtual classrooms, in COVID-19 research programs or in the most robust emergency financial aid program ever implemented for our students.

Going forward, we will continue to succeed by bringing out the best in ourselves and our Dal community: our resilience, our creativity, our commitment and empathy towards our students and towards one another. We will move forward as one team, one community.

Sincerely,

Deep Saini
President and Vice-Chancellor

Message from the President

Though there are surely challenges ahead, we can take pride in how we’ve worked together.
Teaching and LEARNING

Providing unique hands-on work experiences for students
Teaching and Learning

Dalhousie’s academic experience stretches far beyond just the classroom and the lab. Part of providing students with the skills they need to succeed involves connecting them with opportunities to bring those skills to life — whether it’s through courses, co-ops or other experiential and work-integrated learning opportunities.

Dalhousie offers all undergrads access to experiential learning opportunities, with nearly 90 per cent of students taking advantage of them. When it comes to applying their skills outside the classroom, this opportunity is invaluable for our domestic and international students. We recognize that working while in Canada can pose some additional challenges for our international students — and that’s why, this year, Dalhousie launched a new pilot initiative: the International Student Work Experience Program (ISWEP), a new avenue for international students to hone their career-building skills and gain valuable work experience during their time at Dal. Any full-time international student with a valid study permit is eligible to apply for part-time paid positions with on-campus staff and faculty employment partners. Students who apply to the program access a range of different kinds of work experiences, including peer-to-peer jobs, research jobs and administrative-type jobs.

Developed by Career Services in collaboration with the International Centre, the program is a natural fit for students who might be preparing to apply for co-op positions as part of their academic programs or those who are in the early stages of learning about what it might be like to work in Canada. “We’ve looked at some data that indicates students want to stay in Nova Scotia,” said Karen McCrank, director of career services at Dal’s Bissett Student Success Centre. “This is a way for us to help students understand that there are opportunities here and to support them in staying.”

Gaining Real-World Experience at Home and Around the World

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RESEARCH

A vision of impact — validated by global recognition
RESEARCH

This year, for the first time, Dalhousie entered the Top 100 in Times Higher Education’s (THE) University Impact Rankings. Dal ranked 85th among the 767 institutions from 85 participating countries. It’s a testament to Dal’s unique role as the region’s leading research institution that we were the only university in Atlantic Canada to earn this recognition.

When Dalhousie introduced a new strategic direction for research and innovation in the fall of 2018, the university grounded its vision for the future in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — an ambitious, 15-year plan adopted by all UN member states in 2015. “By aligning our strategic direction with the same goals that leaders around the world have committed to, we are able to leverage our greatest research strengths to partner with others around the globe and focus our efforts on solving some of the world’s most complex issues of this century,” says Alice Aiken, Dal’s vice-president research and innovation.

Also taking inspiration from the UN is THE, which is a source of some of the most significant global rankings of universities around the world. Two years ago, THE launched the University Impact Rankings as the only global performance tables to document evidence of universities’ social, environmental and economic impact, rather than just research and teaching performance. They include metrics based on all 17 of the SDGs across three broad areas: research, outreach and stewardship.

“Achieving standing in the top 100 universities in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings is something we should all take great pride in,” says Deep Saini, Dal president and vice-chancellor. “Taking our place among the best in the world shows the profound difference our work is making in the lives of our students, our communities and around the globe.”

IN 2019/2020, DALHOUSIE WAS AWARDED RESEARCH GRANTS AND CONTRACTS TOTALING OVER $181M COMPARED TO $168M IN 2018/2019

GROWTH IN OUR SIGNATURE RESEARCH CLUSTERS

SUSTAINABLE OCEANS - Dalhousie’s Ocean Tracking Network received an additional $13.4M from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI).

HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES, HEALTHY POPULATIONS - a second CIHR Institute now hosted at Dal (Human Development, Child and Youth Health (HDCYH)). The Institute comes with $4M in operational support funds and an additional $3.3M in operating support grants.

RESEARCH FUNDING

Six Dal researchers garnered A TOTAL OF $1.5M IN AWARDS through the NEW FRONTIERS IN RESEARCH FUND (NFRF)’S EXPLORATION stream.

Eighteen Dalhousie researchers have been awarded funding from the CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION (CFI) John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF) competition, TOTALING $2.6M.

Fifteen Dalhousie researchers were each awarded grants and/or contracts valued at $1M OR MORE during the past fiscal year. The total value of these AWARDS EXCEEDS $33M.

RESEARCH GRANTS & CONTRACTS

NSERC DISCOVERY GRANTS - applications increased to 81 (from 72)

CIHR PROJECT GRANTS – applications decreased from 72 to 70

SSHRC INSIGHT GRANTS – applications increased to 25 (from 16)

GRANT APPLICATIONS

19% for CIHR (up from 17% in 2018/2019)

36% for SSHRC (up from 25% in 2018/2019)

59% for NSERC (64% in 2018/2019)

PEER-REVIEWED TRI-AGENCY FUNDING COMPETITIONS SUCCESS RATE

NINE NEW AND RENEWED CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS

1 TIER 1

7 TIER 2

2 CIHR

5 NSERC

2 SSHRC

Dalhousie ACCOUNTS FOR APPROXIMATELY 2.4% OF U15 RESEARCH FUNDS butProduces 3.9% of U15 PUBLICATIONS.

Dal’s number of publications per $M research funding (21.9) CONTINUES TO OUTPACE THE U15 AVERAGE.

PUBLICATIONS
Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Creating an ecosystem for our region’s success
Atlantic Canada’s future depends on our collective ability to develop talent and foster the skills, experiences and mindset necessary to drive our region forward. Innovation and entrepreneurship (I&E) are the keys to developing talent that can make this impact locally, nationally and globally. As the region’s only U15 research university, Dalhousie has a vital role to play in driving I&E forward, helping students and researchers develop the capacity to commercialize their research or transition it from idea to impact.

Dalhousie has significantly expanded its extra-curricular I&E programming over the past five years, with Dal Innovates offering an institution-wide suite of programs. It’s about supporting our students and researchers to be the best innovators, creators and entrepreneurs they can be.

- Sandboxes offer programming to inspire and support students engaging in creativity, collaborative problem-solving and innovation. Dal hosts five sandboxes, together with the Government of Nova Scotia and other academic and industry partners: ShiftKey (Computer Science), Cultiv8 (Agriculture), SURGE (Science), IDEA (Engineering) and Pulse (Health, Medicine and Dentistry).
- The Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship (NNCE) delivers campus-wide flagship programs for entrepreneurship, including Collide, Ready2Launch, Path2Innovation and Lab2Market (for which Dalhousie is the national co-lead along with Ryerson).
- Emera ideaHUB is the centre for deep technology and engineering-driven I&E at Dalhousie. Launched in partnership with the generous support of Emera, Micco Companies and Clearwater, the Emera ideaHUB brings together Engineering students, researchers and faculty with companies, to market and launch new physical products and grow their startups.
- Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) is an objectives-based mentoring program for seed-stage and massively scalable science and technology-based companies. Dalhousie hosts the Atlantic division of the global CDL network.

The university’s I&E ecosystem also includes student societies, industry partnerships and commercialization through Industry Liaison and Innovation and curricular and co-curricular programs, both existing and those currently in development. By collaborating across sectors and disciplines, Dal Innovates is working to advance the social, economic, environmental and health outcomes of our region.
SERVICE

Celebrating historic milestones in access and support
A university education has the power to lift people up, to empower them as they seek to make their way in the world and build fulfilling lives and careers. But not everyone enters post-secondary studies on an equal footing and, indeed, some individuals face barriers even getting there in the first place. That’s why 50 years ago this spring, Dalhousie launched the Transition Year Program (TYP).

An eight-month program centred around building academic and critical-thinking skills, TYP provides opportunities for individuals from African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaq communities who lack the usual educational qualifications to prepare for all aspects of academic life and gain access to university. “As Dalhousie embarks on a concerted program of diversity and inclusion, it bears underscoring that TYP has been the trailblazer,” says Isaac Saney, who has been an instructor in the program for nearly 30 years and its director since 2014.

This year also marked significant milestones for the Black Student Advising Centre (BSAC) and the Indigenous Blacks & Mi’kmaq (IB&M) initiative, both of which celebrated 30 years of providing support and access. IB&M, designed to help increase representation of Black and Mi’kmaw individuals in the legal profession, has seen more than 200 of its graduates go on to pursue careers in all areas of the legal profession. And BSAC continues to offer Black students from all over the world with what director Oluronke Taiwo calls a “home away from home.”

Now, the university is building further upon the impressive work of these initiatives and programs as it moves to implement some of the recommendations of the Lord Dalhousie report released last fall. A new scholarship to honour contributions from individuals of African descent, planning for further scholarly inquiry around Lord Dal and faculty efforts and a commitment to expand the Black Studies minor into a major are just a few of the steps underway so far.
Partnerships and Reputation

Shared passions can create partnerships that change the world.
As Canadian business leader and philanthropist Stephen A. Jarislowsky was creating a multi-million-dollar foundation, a curious British ocean-lover, Derek Tittensor, was biking five miles every day to the seashore to collect animals and marine life.

Little did they know that years later, they would be partners, working together to explore changes in marine ecosystems with the goal of developing sustainable solutions.

This past September, Dr. Tittensor became the inaugural Jarislowsky Chair in Marine Ecosystem Forecasting — the first of its kind in Canada. The chair was established through a $2-million donation from the Jarislowsky Foundation and a matching contribution from Dalhousie’s Ocean Frontier Institute (OFI).

“Our mission is simple: to create lasting change and encourage innovation and leadership by funding excellence in research — conducted by top people who also serve as mentors to the next generation — for the betterment of Canada,” explains Jarislowsky. “We want to make Dalhousie the international reference point for marine ecosystem forecasting. Over time, the results generated by this new chair will feed into better, more realistic regulation and better policy-making, not only in Canada but in jurisdictions worldwide.”

This powerful partnership is already making waves. Thanks to the funding provided to the Chair, Dr. Tittensor and his team created a policy brief that was distributed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP25 — one of the largest and most prominent international conferences in the world.

Another one of Dr. Tittensor’s innovative projects involves developing “target-seeking” scenarios. “We’re starting with the desired outcome — a sustainable and biodiverse ecosystem — and creating scenarios to identify the policies and actions required to achieve that result,” he explains.

It’s partnerships like this one, fuelled by passion and philanthropy, that enrich Dalhousie’s capacity to make a difference in the world.
People, Infrastructure & Support

New leadership, new inspirations
Dalhousie has entered the early years of its third century strengthened by renewal in its leadership team — bringing new ideas and a powerful mix of backgrounds, accomplishments and diversity to Dal.

What unites Dal’s newest leaders most of all is their depth of experience on the regional, national and global stage.

Deep Saini, who joined Dal this January as president and vice-chancellor, began his educational journey in his country of birth, India, before building a career as an academic and university leader in Australia and Canada. He most recently served as president at the University of Canberra, where he led the development and implementation of a new strategic plan positioning the school as a national leader in professional education and experiential learning, mission-oriented research as well as in equity, diversity, inclusion and access.

Also new to her leadership role at Dal — but hardly new to Dal — is Law grad and Stewart McKelvey partner Candace Thomas, who after eight years on the Board of Governors took over as its chair last July.

Newly minted chancellor Scott Brison, also a Dal alum, spent more than 20 years serving the public as a Member of Parliament and handling an array of challenging portfolios including as President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government.

And Theresa Rajack-Talley, who joined Dal as its first vice-provost of equity and inclusion last year, has brought unique new perspectives informed by her work at the University of Louisville.

But leadership renewal also means paying tribute to those moving on from their roles, and Dal will continue to benefit from the work of leaders such as departing Chancellor Anne McLellan, outgoing Board Chair Larry Stordy, past Interim Presidents Peter MacKinnon and Teri Balser, and retiring Vice-President Finance and Administration Ian Nason, whose nearly 40-year career at Dal comes to a close this year.

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Throughout the 2020 winter term, Dalhousie and universities across Canada and around the world had to reckon with the looming spectre of a global pandemic. As a cross-campus set of interdepartmental teams gathered regularly to undertake precautionary planning, it wasn’t long until decisive action was required to ensure the health and safety of all who work and study at Dalhousie.

Within a two-week period in mid-March, Dalhousie ceased all in-person instruction and faculty and staff worked quickly to transition all winter- and summer-term courses into a remote, distance-based model.

Most on-campus operations became virtual, with the vast majority of staff working from home. Front-line workers remained on campus, as did those researchers working on understanding COVID-19 and its impact. Meeting this extraordinary challenge required extraordinary effort across the university — and everyone stepped up, from professors and instructors to support staff and students, to make it all happen.

Going forward, working together, we will continue to put our students first and ensure our vital mission continues through this pandemic.
MARCH 23

- As residences implemented their partial closure, residence team members delivered care packages to a small number of students who remained on campus.

- Dozens of custodians continued to make the trek to campus each day to support students in residence who had nowhere else to go, researchers battling COVID-19 and other essential service staff like security officers, thermal plant operators, clinicians and others.

MARCH 31 - APRIL 21

Students, staff and faculty found amazing ways to contribute to COVID-19 efforts. Here are just a few examples:

- An interdisciplinary team from the Faculty of Engineering connected with colleagues at the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) to explore solutions for a face shield that could be used by frontline health-care workers.
- Newly graduated Bachelor of Science in Nursing students began volunteering with Nova Scotia’s 811 service.
- SuperNOVA, a not-for-profit initiative at Dal that promotes science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM), launched an at-home learning series to help keep children engaged and learning.
- Dalhousie’s Costume Studies program faculty and a small team of student volunteers began stitching together face masks.
- Medical students held a donation drive to collect personal protective equipment (PPE) for front-line health-care workers.
- Faculty of Computer Science-based technology innovation sandbox ShiftKey Labs hosted a virtual hackathon where teams of students and professionals came together to find solutions to some of the challenges brought by COVID-19.

MARCH 31

- ProjectDAL announced ways that members of Dal’s community can help. As of June 3, close to $200,000 was raised through the generosity of over 520 donors.

STUDENT EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND
- intended for loss of employment, unexpected travel costs, food insecurity issues and housing concerns.

STUDENT TECHNOLOGY FUND
- intended to provide students with the resources and technology they need to continue their studies remotely.

COVID-19 RESEARCH FUND
- led by the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation and intended to help fund the critical work around the development of vaccines and antiviral drugs.

MAY 4

- Dalhousie researchers joined colleagues within the Nova Scotia research community with a collective investment of just OVER $1.5 MILLION TO FUND 40 COVID-19 FOCUSED RESEARCH PROJECTS.

MAY 12

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that a research team at the Dalhousie-headquartered Canadian Centre for Vaccinology (CCfV) would be working with a vaccine manufacturer to run the first Canadian clinical trials for a potential COVID-19 vaccine. The trials would be carried out by Dr. Scott Halperin and his team of CCfV researchers at Dalhousie, with testing set to begin within weeks of the announcement.
Building on Dalhousie’s Strategic Direction, *Inspiration & Impact*, over the past 18 months a cross-university, highly collaborative process was launched to renew the university’s strategic priorities. The planning approach has engaged hundreds of students, faculty and staff starting with a broad survey and continuing with “learning circle” groups to explore in depth key priority areas. In fall 2019, eight self-study teams were developed, each of which continued the engagement process across the university and used evidence to develop high-level recommendations based on the following emerging strategic themes:

- Research future
- Culture and climate
- Campus health and well-being
- Future of teaching and learning
- Student experience and success
- Sustainability and environmental responsibility
- Internationalization and global engagement
- Dal purpose and social responsibility

This process has demonstrated energy, enthusiasm, depth of knowledge and inspiration from the many individuals involved thus far. The work of the eight teams is currently being reviewed and will be instrumental to informing a renewed strategic plan for Dalhousie — a plan that builds on our previous strategic directions, emphasizes Dal’s role as a regional leader guided by public purpose and continues to move us boldly onto the international stage.

As we moved into the final phase of the strategic renewal process, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The impact of the pandemic, our managing through this unprecedented time and our response to the implications of the pandemic is a further essential factor that will be integrated into the setting of Dalhousie’s strategic priorities in the months ahead.