

## **Strengthening Research Capacity, Alliances and Outreach**

Recommendations

August 2007

### **Committee Membership**

Dr. Camille Limoges	Committee Chair; Retired Deputy Minister, Quebec Ministry of Research, Science and Technology
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### **Committee Overview**

With seasoned researchers and scholars, an unprecedented cohort of new full-time faculty, and a 100% increase in its research funding over the past five years, Concordia University is quickly evolving into a major research force.

Concordia now hosts 67 research chairs and close to 40 research units (institutes, centers and networks), many of which have established an enviable reputation at the national and international levels. Given the new pool of incoming professors, all extremely active in research, the areas of potential leadership and partnership are multiplying.

In an increasingly competitive environment, both challenges and opportunities are numerous. Concordia needs to build on its strengths and aspirations; it needs to consolidate existing areas of excellence and foster emerging, original areas of future research development. Institutional strategies are needed to catalyze interdisciplinary, cross-faculty and multi-institutional collaborations. The University has to promote its expertise, assess its reputation and take a leading role in local, national and international collaborative research initiatives. It has to intensify existing alliances with industry and the community to ensure the sustainable growth of its scientific and social impact.

There is a momentum and the timing is crucial. The future of Concordia as a comprehensive university is largely predicated upon the enhancement of its research profile which, in the very short term, calls for positively complementing its teaching and research/creative missions.

Enabling and empowering researchers involves recognition, facilitation, organizational and financial support, as well as attraction of graduate students. The Committee has been asked to suggest a series of innovative initiatives (punctual actions, programs, policies, etc.) which

will strike the right balance between university-wide strategies and faculty autonomy and culture.

## **Introduction**

This report is based upon a five-step process.

The committee has:

1. conducted an analysis of available documents, regulations, guidelines and indicators at the local, provincial and national level;
2. capitalized on the cumulative experience of its members: Concordia faculty and officers, and external participants;
3. conducted repeated round-table exchange exercises;
4. dedicated two full meetings to an extensive SWOT analysis;
5. and formulated recommendations and identified a framework for implementation.

## Summary of Primary Recommendations

The following recommendations are tightly interrelated and largely dependent upon one another; this is why all three primary recommendations are viewed by the Committee as of *equal significance and priority*.

**Recommendation 1: Accelerate the development and deployment of research capacity**

**Recommendation 2: Intensify outreach, visibility of expertise, and pursue partnerships and alliances**

**Recommendation 3: Strengthen university-wide policies and procedures in support of research and service to researchers, graduate and post-doctoral students**

### **Recommendation 1:**

**Accelerate the development and deployment of research capacity**

#### **Recommendation 1.1:**

**Maximize and promote faculty contribution to Concordia's research capacity and performance**

#### **Enabling strategy:**

In the current context of increasing competition for new faculty members between universities and high potential mobility of top researchers:

- Develop and implement measure for attraction and retention of high caliber faculty including:
  - Conducting a continuous planning process with all Faculties
  - Offering competitive compensation
  - Providing institutional and public recognition for achievements

Bridge the historical dichotomy between teaching and research by:

- Giving more weight to research performance and outreach in all evaluations of performance throughout the university career of each individual
- Emphasizing 'the effective training of graduate students' and 'the quality of student supervision' as criteria for evaluation of performance
- Systematically adding 'demonstrated research/ creation/ innovation capacity' as criteria at the hiring stage

#### **Recommendation 1.2:**

**Foster the development of new leadership opportunities, favor the emergence of critical masses, and ensure long-term sustainability**

#### **Enabling strategy:**

Support logistically and otherwise the development of areas of excellence and their interactions by:

- Providing researchers with timely and easily accessible information on funding agencies' programs and policies, as well as on research contract opportunities
- Providing strategic advice and assistance for grant or contract applications
- Offering systematic mentoring to young researchers
- Providing researchers and research units with internal support, including research time management and facilitation
- Facilitating Concordia leadership in large collective research endeavors and in large-scale multi-institutional research initiatives

**Recommendation 1.3:**

**Reinforce and capitalize on a pool of qualified graduate students and postdoctoral fellows**

**Enabling strategy:**

Improve recruitment and retention of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows by:

- Offering competitive fellowships and other forms of institutional support
- Providing all graduate students and postdoctoral fellows with timely information and guidance on external funding opportunities
- Developing incentives for researchers to involve their graduate students as research assistants and to train them in an effective organizational research environment
- Nurturing an undergraduate research culture through early involvement in research environments
- Promoting and taking better advantage of the exceptionally broad cultural experiences of Concordia students and faculty

Create a rich training environment and ensure a most profitable students' experience by:

- Favoring sustained activities for a rich scientific life on campus (conferences, meetings, exchanges, etc.)
- Monitoring and ensuring the quality of research supervision and study programs
- Measuring student satisfaction after degree completion

**Recommendation 1.4:**

**Promote and support interdisciplinary research initiatives**

**Enabling strategy:**

Seize upon the emphasis placed on interdisciplinary research by funding agencies at both levels of government as an opportunity

Capitalize on external recognition of Concordia's engagement with its partners in demanding research endeavors which cross disciplinary borders

Minimize the effects of the remaining silo mentalities by encouraging, supporting and rewarding the collaborations between disciplines and between experienced researchers and incoming faculty

**Recommendation 2:**

**Intensify outreach and visibility of expertise, and pursue partnerships and alliances**

**Recommendation 2.1:**

**Improve Concordia's public image as a world-class player in research, a vibrant locus of creativity and an exceptional hub of expertise**

**Enabling strategy:**

Intensify and encourage the use of the tools provided by the internet and the media

Promote and celebrate the public visibility of Concordia's researchers, creators, experts and their achievements in a more proactive, timely and intensive manner, in partnership with the funding agencies who are eager to publicize 'success stories'

Develop and implement institutional strategy to aggressively promote Concordia candidates for externally awarded prizes and distinctions for excellence in research, the arts and innovation, done at the same level of expertise as competitors who are also employing this strategy

**Recommendation 2.2:**

**Demonstrate the congruence between Concordia research expertise and key local/industry research needs**

**Enabling strategy:**

Through the use of institutional communications, make information on research relevance and expertise easily accessible to industry, aggressively promoting the congruence between the areas of expertise of Concordia's research base and the key industrial players in Montreal and its larger economic region

Applaud and make explicit the 'Montreal factor', that is the fit between Concordia and the broader community and industries to which Concordia is connected through contributions from research, expertise and the creative arts (building on the momentum of the work produced for the *Engaged in Montreal's Development* document)

Emphasize well-proven cases of return on investment through internal and external communications

**Recommendation 2.3:**

**Intensify activities that amplify the societal impact and benefits of research conducted at Concordia**

**Enabling strategy:**

Strategically identify local, provincial and national stakeholders who ought to be knowledgeable of the socioeconomic relevance of research conducted at Concordia

Elaborate strategies and tools to assist researchers in developing knowledge transfer skills

Develop systematic contacts in media to ensure contribution of Concordia researchers to social and political debates

**Recommendation 3:**

**Strengthen university-wide policies and procedures in support of research and service to researchers, graduate students and postdoctoral students**

In the course of the next year, develop a university-wide strategic plan, and a subsequent action plan for research and its support, under the responsibility of the VP Research and Graduate Studies. This planning process should aim to define a university-wide strategy which meets the general objectives identified in the present report. In parallel to this planning exercise, policies and guidelines concerning research must be reviewed, actualized, completed, made congruent and, afterwards, continuously kept up-to-date by establishing a mechanism to ensure ongoing assessment and improvement. In line with university-wide objectives and priorities, institutional support for research, including internal financial support, should be improved, increased, and better managed.