

The King's University
Edmonton, Alberta



Strategic Research Plan Summary
2021 - 2026

The core mission at King's is to *provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King*. King's, as part of the post-secondary system in Alberta, aspires also to contribute to the advancement of knowledge through a commitment to excellence in teaching and scholarly research. King's carries out its scholarly research and teaching in the context of a unique Christian liberal arts perspective and in this way provides a public benefit as a needed voice in the provincial post-secondary landscape.

The King's University believes that all people are worthy of respect. We consciously cultivate a safe, inclusive environment of mutual respect, where all may belong and flourish. We are committed to equity of access and opportunity for all our students, faculty, and staff in keeping with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act. The University extends this commitment to its research environment, striving to enhance the diversity among the faculty, staff, and student researchers. King's also strives to develop a deeper understanding of research that is not limited by the dominant western structures, while at the same time acknowledging the strengths these structures bring.

All researchers at King's should expect to be treated equitably in terms of access to institutional resources, the support they received from colleagues, and the opportunities available for them to advance their research careers. King's strives to go beyond common standards of equity and develop structures, resources, and a culture that uniquely helps each researcher discover their own path to becoming strong scholars who can contribute to the larger research community. Our institutional goal is that all researchers may develop flourishing research careers that provide meaning and fulfillment.

Objectives of the Strategic Research Plan

1. Engagement
 - a. Strengthen the interdisciplinary research being done in the identified research themes.
 - b. Continue to promote and facilitate collaboration with researchers at other universities, government, and non-government agencies.
 - c. Involve an increasing number of undergraduate students in active research projects.
2. Transformation
 - a. Provide a unique Christian liberal arts lens for scholarship that compliments the perspectives of other Universities.
 - b. More fully understand how the institution can foster a research culture marked by equity and inclusion.
 - c. Increase the diversity amongst researchers.
 - d. Ensure research is done that connects with and empowers traditionally marginalized communities.

3. Excellence
 - a. Assist faculty members to develop sustained programs of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.
 - b. Increase the funding obtained through external research operating grants and access research infrastructure support from federal and provincial government sources to maintain and/or upgrade the university's current research infrastructure.

A. Current Research Themes

The following five overlapping research themes can be identified at The King's University.

1. Religion, Culture and Society

The encompassing theme of Religion, Culture, and Society is a reflection of the liberal arts foundations/general education curriculum of The King's University. As a Christian university, investigating the role that belief plays in shaping both the perception of the world and our theorizing about it is fundamental to our identity and provides us with a unique lens for doing scholarship as well as a distinct position from which to investigate the interplay of religion, culture and society.

2. Community Engaged Research

CER is an approach to research that works towards positive societal change through collaborative relationships between universities and community partners. It focuses on bringing the tools of modern scholarship to the problems in our communities. With the appointment of a Community Engaged Research Program Manager, The King's University is committed to developing this research theme and to involving undergraduate students in it. Currently community engaged research is occurring in psychology, sociology, theology, and environmental studies. Research projects with community agencies and organizations have been completed in topical areas such as environmental sustainability, social justice, health, food security, poverty, and community well-being.

3. Pedagogy

As a teaching and research institution The King's University offers unique opportunities for scholars to engage in advancing pedagogical understanding in a wide range of disciplines through scholarship. The pedagogy theme of scholarship focuses on improving the ways we teach in the classroom and the ways we communicate to the broader society.

4. Human Health and Wellness

Human health and wellness extends across all areas of our university. The King's University believes that human health and wellness have physiological, psychological, social, and spiritual components. Our advantage as a small liberal arts and science institution is that our researchers can tackle our societal health and wellness challenges from multiple disciplines.

5. Environment and Transitions to Sustainability

The broad theme of Environment and Transitions to Sustainability includes a wide range of research projects that examine our current environmental situation and how we as humans might change to live in more sustainable ways.

Canada Research Chairs

Canada Research Chairs at The King’s University are used strategically to enhance institutional research capacity by attracting and retaining researchers who will build their long-term research programs at the University. The University identifies potential areas where the creation of a chair can provide the critical mass necessary for increased research excellence. Normally this is in an area where scholars at King’s are already doing research and will benefit from the excellence brought by a strong colleague, advancing the University’s mission of working for *renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King*.

Those researchers who are successful at filling Canada Research Chairs at The King’s University are expected to maintain research programs that produce significantly more scholarly output than other faculty members, develop collaborations that help colleagues increase their research potential, apply for external funding which helps maintain the University’s Canada Research Chair Status, and develop a national/international reputation for research excellence.

To accomplish this, Canada Research Chairs are supported with course reliefs, basic research funding, financial and human resources support, and support through the Office of the VP Academic and Research.

Distribution of Canada Research Chairs

Area	Tier	Discipline	Agency	Theme	Dates
Phenomenology of Religion	2	Philosophy	SSHRC	Religion, Culture and Society	2017 - 2022
Modern Literature and Print Culture	2	English	SSHRC	Religion, Culture and Society Pedagogy	2019 - 2024
Transition to Sustainability	2	Sociology	SSHRC	Sustainability	2021 (anticipated)

Action Plans

In order to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Research Plan, The King’s University has established the following action plans:

1. Engagement
 - a. Establish a Centre for Christian Thought and Action, as called for in the University’s Strategic Plan *Shared Vision 2020*. The latter was adopted in April 2015 as the five-year strategic plan for The King’s University. The academic focus of the interdisciplinary Centre is to sustain, promote, and invite Christian philosophical and theological reflection within, upon, and across all university disciplines. It will focus on the importance of Christian theological and philosophical reflection for the ongoing work of sustaining cutting-edge Christian scholarship in order to be in fruitful dialogue with contemporary culture. By its very nature, this Centre will provide foundational support for ongoing research projects on the teaching of religion in public school classrooms, the interaction of indigenous spirituality with religion and secular culture as manifested in oil sands development, and the impact of religion on the environment.

- b. Establish a Centre for Transition to Sustainability. The academic focus of this interdisciplinary Centre will be on how to move beyond critique of current unsustainable practices and propose processes and structures that will be conducive to long term sustainability. The anticipated success of the university's summer 2020 Tier 2 Canada Research Chair nomination with a focus on transition to sustainability will mark the first step in the establishment of this Centre.
 - c. Seek funding for additional positions, to be seconded to the Centre for Christian Thought and Action. Funding for these positions is anticipated to come from external sources.
 - d. Expand Community Engaged Research to include students and projects in more disciplines. This will enhance our ability to serve the community with academic scholarship that directly impacts local organizations while providing valuable experience for students researchers.
2. Transformation
- a. Create an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion action plan for the University that enhances scholarship by and for those in traditionally marginalized groups.
 - b. Improve faculty training and mentorship across the University with special focus on those from traditionally marginalized groups.
3. Excellence
- a. Enhance financial and support resources in the Research Office to keep faculty informed about research funding opportunities; increase the number of external grant applications; facilitate collaboration with researchers at other universities, government, and non-government agencies; and centralize the research grant administration.
 - b. Increase funding for undergraduate research students by identifying new sources of revenue, including creating an endowment for this purpose. Most of the current funding for undergraduate research students comes from NSERC in the form of the university's annual USRA allocations or through individual researchers' NSERC and SSHRC grants. Most of the current undergraduate research opportunities in the Faculty of Arts are funded by the Modernist Archives Publishing Project (MAPP).
 - c. Showcase undergraduate research by highlighting the involvement of undergraduate students in research when making presentations at regional, national, and international conferences, and by participating in annual undergraduate research conferences held together with the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, and Concordia University of Edmonton.
 - d. Continue to increase institutional research funding and funding for conference attendance by faculty members to keep up with increasing costs.

Expected Observable Outcomes

The King's University expects the following observable outcomes of the Strategic Research Plan.

1. Engagements
 - a. Successful launch of the proposed Centre for Christian Thought and Action in 2021 or 2022. One of the goals of the Centre should be to facilitate fruitful dialogue between faculty

members and leading spokespersons of contemporary culture. The daily operation of the Centre should be the responsibility of a managing director. The Canada Research Chair in Phenomenology of Religion will be part of this Centre as will our Director of Interdisciplinary Studies.

- b. Successful establishment of the Centre for Transition to Sustainability.
 - c. The appointment of one or more endowed faculty positions as part of the Centre for Christian Thought and Action.
 - d. The appointment of a Community Engaged Research Program Manager.
 - e. An increase in the number of collaborations with researchers at other universities, non-government, and government agencies.
2. Transformation
- a. Development of an EDI action plan along with programs and tools to enhance scholarship by and for traditionally marginalized groups.
 - b. Implementation of faculty mentorship programs.
 - c. Hiring of personnel to directly support faculty, especially those from traditionally marginalized communities.
3. Excellence
- a. An increase of the resources in the Research Office which should result in an increased number of Tri-Council grant applications and applications submitted to other research-sponsoring agencies. The Research Office will develop an effective grants administration and reporting structure.
 - b. An increase in the number of undergraduate students involved with faculty research, and an increase in the number of academic presentations and publications that involve undergraduate students.
 - c. Adoption of a funding formula that will keep faculty professional development funding allocations and internal research funding in step with the increased costs of attending conferences and conducting research.
 - d. Adoption of a multi-year plan to upgrade the university's research infrastructure. This will include standard research spaces but also new infrastructure to allow researchers to communicate their research in conventional (increase the publications from *The King's Press*) and online formats (recording studio, tools for online delivery and communication, etc.).

Planning and Approval Process

The King's University's *Strategic Research Plan 2021-26* was developed by the Vice President Academic and Research in collaboration with the five Deans of the University's faculties. The Research Plan is based on the University's *Shared Vision 2020* strategic plan, which was approved by the Board of Governors in March 2015. The *Strategic Research Plan 2021-26* was approved by the General Faculty Council of the University and by the University's Senate.