



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO DALLA LANA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dalla Lana School of Public Health Strategic Planning Exercise Towards 2021 and Beyond

Research Capacity Enhancement Sub-Committee Report

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Terms of Reference:

Building on commitments to put in place enhanced, flexible scalable and research development and support services aimed at taking the Dalla Lana School to increased global leadership in key, selected research indicators:

- (1) to assess options for new platforms to facilitate excellence in research quality, productivity and public health relevance at the School
- (2) to suggest investments in core research support and development services; human resources and inter-sectoral networks; laboratory, office and bio-repository facilities; and data storage and processing infrastructure that are essential to support preferred options for achieving success on selected indicators
- (3) to provide advice to the Dalla Lana School faculty on how to foster innovative, effective, inclusive and solutions-oriented research activities and initiatives.



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Strategic Direction One

A. Provide a clear statement of the first suggested strategic direction

Methodological support centre to increase research quantity and quality. This would include support for both quantitative and qualitative methods.

B. Provide clear rationale/statements on the following:

1. What will be the anticipated return / “payoff” / “value” on direction?
(*Measured in different ways likely for various stakeholders*)

Increase the quality and quantity of research produced. The quality would be reflected by publication in better journals.

Will allow researchers to tackle deeper questions and solve harder problems.

This would especially help newer researchers develop their own research team.

This would provide training opportunities for students.

Would provide continuing educational programs.

2. Does this direction align with the strategic plans of the University of Toronto, or any of its other faculties, units or partners (*alignment is not a requirement; refer to documents on Crush site*)? If yes, please specify how.

- a) President’s Strategic Priority of Strengthening International Partnerships
- b) President’s Strategic Priority of Leveraging our Location.
- c) Also addresses concerns to revamp (graduate) education.

3. Alignment with current themes at the School, or its units (direction does not have to align with any current themes) and list any relevant cross-cutting themes that the strategic direction incorporates.

- a) As stated above, themes such as global health, health city, clinical public health discuss directions of research. In all cases, after the direction is decided, one needs to bring solid methodologic tools to address each of these directions.



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4. Outline the implementation resources you imagine would be important/ helpful.
(Implementation does not need to be the focus)

Need to have scientist level (PhD) methodologists dedicated to lead the unit. Their performance evaluation would be based on their research support record.

Need other support staff as the group grows. This would also include student trainees.

Invest in more money at Research Services Unit.... Dedicated resources.

- 5) Comment on the risk of the suggested strategic direction

Risk: cost.... Will cost resources to implement. Would expect that in the beginning there will be a cost, but over time, then there will be indirect support from successful grants to pay for itself.



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Strategic Direction Two

A. Provide a clear statement of the second suggested strategic direction

DLSPH will increase research productivity and grant capture through the establishment of an enhanced infrastructure to support research.

B. Provide clear rationale/statements on the following:

1. What will be the anticipated return / “payoff” / “value” on direction?
(*Measured in different ways likely for various stakeholders*)

Increase success rate of grant applications and
Increase quality of research produced.

Build national and international profile for DLSPH and the University

Capacity to win awards will allow us to accept more students and for them to complete faster.

For students: useful for applying for grants and student awards. Improve completion rate and not prolong student tenure.

Learning and training opportunity for students.

2. Does this direction align with the strategic plans of the University of Toronto, or any of its other faculties, units or partners (*alignment is not a requirement; refer to documents on Crush site*)?
If yes, please specify how.

- a) President’s Strategic Priority of Strengthening International Partnerships
- b) President’s Strategic Priority of Leveraging our Location.
- c) Also addresses concerns to revamp (graduate) education.

3. Alignment with current themes at the School, or its units (direction does not have to align with any current themes) and list any relevant cross-cutting themes that the strategic direction incorporates.

4. Outline the implementation resources you imagine would be important/ helpful.
(*Implementation does not need to be the focus*)

Grant writing support: budgets and financial, writing, pre & post grant writing,

Internal grant peer-review process.

CV collation, letters of support



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Peer reviewers, grant reviewer/writer.

Boiler templates for writing grants/budgets.... Past successful versions (bank of old grants)

(See some of the process established at SickKids, St. Mike's/LiKaShing. e.g. eligibility for bridge funding only if the grant has gone through internal peer-review).

Internal manuscript review,

Monitoring Post grant metrics (i.e., publications from grants, citation indices, H-index)

Invest in more money at Research Services Unit.... Dedicated resources.

Note: there are some skills that might already be part of communication centre at DLSPH
Communication office resources could be added.

5. Comment on the risk of the suggested strategic direction

Risk: lack of uptake./participation. People need to take advantage of these services. People should both get there grant reviewed and be reviewers. At St. Mikes: incentive is that if one goes through then there is possibility of bridge funding if the grant has undergone internal peer-review but is unsuccessful.

Risk: cost.... Will cost resources to implement. Would expect that in the beginning there will be a cost, but over time, then there will be indirect support from successful grants to pay for itself.

Mitigate risk by using including support for research support as a line item in grant budgets
(LiKaShing/St. Mike's has specific text to be included in all budgets specifying 3% of the grant request for the Research Office.)



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Strategic Direction Three

A. Provide a clear statement of the third suggested strategic direction.

Accelerate and enhance collaborative faculty centres of excellence

B. Provide clear rationale/statements on the following:

1. What will be the anticipated return / “payoff” / “value” on direction?
(*Measured in different ways likely for various stakeholders*)

Galvanize research. Increase visibility.

Increase impact with greater spread of knowledge.

Improve knowledge translation through organized and facilitated seminars.

Building research community that collaborates both internally and externally/internationally through new and strengthened relationships.

Opportunities for enrichment of the faculty. Academic talks and seminars that bring faculty together. Speakers from outside the school.

2. Does this direction align with the strategic plans of the University of Toronto, or any of its other faculties, units or partners (*alignment is not a requirement; refer to documents on Crush site*)? If yes, please specify how.

President’s Strategic Priority of Strengthening International Partnerships

3. Alignment with current themes at the School, or its units (direction does not have to align with any current themes) and list any relevant cross-cutting themes that the strategic direction incorporates.

4. Outline the implementation resources you imagine would be important/ helpful.
(*Implementation does not need to be the focus*)

Implement process for proposing, selecting and supporting new centres.

Implement process for evaluating continued support for ongoing centres or sun setting of central support.

Coalesce to a critical mass, develop synergies.

Build students and trainees into the process.



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5. Comment on the risk of the suggested strategic direction

Lack of faculty engagement: insufficient critical mass.

Key faculty retire or move (or change interests)

Mitigate: establish transparent criteria for central faculty support for such centers (not obviating the opportunity for individual faculty to lead centres within the faculty).

Possibility that too many centres will be created. There is a need for a sun setting mechanism to retire centres which have out lived their usefulness. (So, perhaps not all of these centres need to be EDU's. Perhaps having structures which are less permanent are desired.)



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Strategic Direction Four

A. Provide a clear statement of the fourth suggested strategic direction.

Develop centre of excellence for Big Data.

B. Provide clear rationale/statements on the following:

1. What will be the anticipated return / “payoff” / “value” on direction?
(Measured in different ways likely for various stakeholders)

Develop and strengthen external partnerships.

Improved access to and use of data including biobank, survey, health administrative (ICES), and qualitative data.

Develop collaborative relationships and support industry and international organizations (e.g. WHO)

2. Does this direction align with the strategic plans of the University of Toronto, or any of its other faculties, units or partners *(alignment is not a requirement; refer to documents on Crush site)*?
If yes, please specify how.

President’s Strategic Priority of Strengthening International Partnerships

President’s Strategic Priority of Leveraging our Location – we are in close proximity with the local and provincial public health (Toronto Public Health and Public Health Ontario), ICES, etc.

3. Alignment with current themes at the School, or its units (direction does not have to align with any current themes) and list any relevant cross-cutting themes that the strategic direction incorporates.

4. Outline the implementation resources you imagine would be important/ helpful.
(Implementation does not need to be the focus)

Develop and share standards, supports and processes for ensuring open data access to be implemented across faculty research.

Work with more external non-profits (i.e., data access) Stats Canada, ICES, CIHI to set up direct data sharing agreements.

Fundamental institutional support for Biobanking (storage of samples that goes beyond the duration of the grant that paid for the collection). Freezer banks +HVAC to keep rooms cool.



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5. Comment on the risk of the suggested strategic direction

Capability to share data

High cost for supporting infrastructure