

Malaspina University-College Strategic Research Plan Summary

Introduction

Malaspina University-College is committed to excellence in teaching and learning. Our academic culture is grounded in these values, and our key research themes derive their importance from them. Malaspina's research mission is to engage faculty and students in inquiry, enhance teaching and learning, advance disciplinary knowledge, and encourage interdisciplinary interaction among faculty and students. Early involvement in research helps students cope with complexity in a challenging world. We thus regard research as a foundation of undergraduate education and we are dedicated to helping our students contribute to national continuity in research training for the decades to come.

Institutional Background. Malaspina was established as a community college in 1969, when it offered university-transfer programs and two-year diploma programs. We were granted university-college status in 1989, offering university baccalaureate degrees in association with the University of Victoria. We were given independent degree-granting status in 1995, and in 2000 we were accredited by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). Recent legislation allows Malaspina to offer applied degrees at the Masters level. Malaspina is an evolving institution, measuring itself against the highest national and international standards in post-secondary education.

Principles and Objectives of the Strategic Research Plan

The principles informing this institutional research plan are as follows. Malaspina is committed to:

- research of the highest national and international standards
- research expressing intrinsic relationship with teaching, learning, and the educational experience in general
- research reflecting broad interdisciplinary opportunities
- integrated research focusing on niches specific to our regional situation and expertise
- independent research beyond the parameters of this research plan.

The general objectives of the institutional research plan are:

- to support student success through research activity, especially research involving the participation of students
- to support research promoting the strength and credibility of the institution
- to encourage interdisciplinary research in keeping with the size and character of the institution
- to promote linkages between research and teaching and learning
- to build on Malaspina's geographical location and regional connections, focussing on research applicable to the needs and concerns of coastal communities
- to develop regional, national, and international partnerships and collaborations with other universities, government, and industry contributing to research and learning environments at Malaspina.

Malaspina will broaden research capacity across the institution. We will take advantage of our academic strengths, regional connections, and geographical location. Our history as a regional institution invites us to emphasize research applicable to the cultural and economic concerns of the region. Our research objectives, however, are not limited by regional issues. Among important regional needs is a faculty and student body informed by research of international scope.

Malaspina will focus on strategies for the recruitment and retention of faculty with active research programs, work conditions conducive to research, and general support for the scholarship that leads to research. The growth and development of research capacity will be enhanced by partnerships with other universities, government agencies, and industry.

Key Research Themes

Community Health. Malaspina will apply a multidisciplinary approach to the examination of health, human and social wellbeing, and environment. The demographics of the coastal and Vancouver Island region suggest a good fit with faculty research expertise in diverse subjects: chronicity, disability, and adaptations; the promotion of health and prevention of illness from infancy to old age; the complexities of health behaviour; and the strengths and resilience of individuals, families, groups, and communities. Healing approaches, culture and context, mental health, professional relational practice, and intervention outcomes will also serve as key areas for research.

Research in the field of community health has been a fixture of many disciplines at Malaspina. We have secured grants focussing on community health issues, First Nations health, and the history of health-care practices. Among three themes identified for recent Canada Research Chair recruitment purposes was one on the “Social Organization of Health Care.” Malaspina hosts the Centre for Coastal Health, an independent society serving a network of investigators in the fields of human, animal, and environmental health, which has attracted notable funding from the Michael Smith Foundation. Malaspina is the editorial home of two journals, the *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* and *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*.

We have strong relationships with First Nations communities. Research in this sphere will focus on strength and capacity of First Nations communities through consideration of such subjects as: the historical influence of health professions; approaches to contextual intervention; and child, youth, and family change. In 2004, Malaspina was allocated a BC Regional Innovation Chair in Aboriginal Early Childhood Development; we anticipate appointing to the position in 2006. We will continue to stress relationships involving the study of rural communities, First Nations, and health.

Malaspina’s Aids to Small Universities “Three-Year Research Development Plan” submitted to SSHRC in 2005 identified the creation of a new Centre for Community-based Research to support this research theme.

Cultural Communication and Expression. An important research theme involves the intersection of new technologies and fields emphasizing cultural communication and expression. We will focus on repositories of oral tradition, histories, archival materials and other means of disseminating knowledge; conventional and experimental artistic works and research about the artistic process; cultural translations; and new media.

Malaspina has multifaceted background in this area. Our emphasis on dissemination is evident in numerous electronic research resources, such as the *Great Books* and the *Canadian Letters and Images* websites. The Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre links this theme to Malaspina's research focus on coastal studies; through attention to translation and the development of English-language resources, the centre stresses first-contact intersections among Europeans and the peoples of the Pacific coasts of North and South America. In the sphere of artistic production and scholarly reflections about the artistic process, we have undertaken to publish presentations by the distinguished holders of Malaspina's Gustafson Chair of Poetry, beginning with renowned poet Robert Bringhurst. Because the arts community and culture are so strong, and so bound up with our institutional profile, we view them as an important priority for future development.

We have been active in the emerging field of humanities computing. We intend to use this as a strategic means of supporting the theme of cultural communication and expression. Malaspina's Centre for Digital Humanities Innovation will serve as a vital link between technological aspects of this theme and expertise found in many disciplines.

Integrated Sciences. Research programs in the Sciences are driving forces of institutional research, which we will link through the creation of a research hub, the Integrated Science Centre. The intention of this theme is to focus our environmental sciences niche in such a way as to encourage strong interdisciplinary research in fisheries and aquaculture, resource management, toxicology, ecosystem health, environmental chemistry, and reusable resources and energy. At the same time, this theme will support current research in other scientific fields, such as nanotechnology. It also touches on other research themes through its broad concern with such matters as community and ecosystem health and policy related to resource management. Malaspina has had marked success in funded independent research in these spheres, and this new theme will contribute to the continuation of such research and many new research intersections.

Through our existing research centres, we have developed expertise that is both regionally relevant and internationally significant. In light of the historical dependence of our region on natural resources, our communities now face complex challenges. Because for research purposes their complexity ranges across many disciplines, addressing these challenges calls for an integrated science model, which will in turn draw on expertise found in many parts of the institution. The proposed Integrated Science Centre will thus bring benefits to all aspects of the sciences as well as contributing to research in the social sciences, humanities, and other disciplines. It will provide facilities for the first time conducive to integrated faculty research, and it will provide research opportunities for students. The year 2004 saw the beginning of NSRC-funded student research programs at Malaspina in fields related to this theme, and in partial fulfillment of our objective of encouraging renewed opportunity for student research at the University-College.

Coastal Resource Management and Policy. Malaspina has a reputation for research in resource management and policy, and we regard this as a niche well suited to the setting, history, and character of the institution. Under the umbrella of the Institute for Coastal Research, this theme will contribute to research intersections among science and non-science disciplines. Much of this research relies on strong ties to dominant regional resource-based industries and ongoing exploration of new economic opportunities.

Research into sustainable management of resources in a changing economy joins scientific questions and their solutions with questions of social and economic impact and appropriate policy and regulation. It focuses attention on ethical concerns of major importance regionally, nationally, and internationally. For example, interdisciplinary research programs which include work on the ecosystem interactions of shellfish farming take into account legal and policy implications of new techniques of water quality monitoring, and the impact of federal, provincial, local, and First Nations jurisdictions on aquaculture, tourism, and marine protection. One example of a pertinent collaboration is a 2004-2005 grant-funded policy study on integrating shellfish aquaculture in marine-protected areas, led by faculty in Political Science and Recreation and Tourism. In 2004, Malaspina was allocated a BC Regional Innovation Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development; we anticipate appointing to the position in 2006. Among three themes identified for recent Canada Research Chair recruitment purposes was one on “Interdisciplinary Research on Sustainable Coastal Community Development.” We will continue to respond to the efforts of the granting councils to cultivate interdisciplinary research into the problems and opportunities of a sustainable resource-based economy, and to make knowledge mobilization an integral part of our research in this area.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Malaspina will emphasize research in the scholarship of teaching and learning. We have great expertise in this area, and we are committed to fostering excellence in teaching practice and the systematic investigation and enhancement of pedagogical approaches to the advancement of learning. Research topics pertinent to the scholarship of teaching and learning include: the development of scholars in the post-secondary system; inter-disciplinary dialogues and reflective practice; integration of discipline research in student learning experiences; approaches to deep learning; processes of knowledge construction; and learning communities. To the end of facilitating such research, Malaspina’s Aid to Small Universities “Three-Year Research Development Plan” submitted to SSHRC in 2005 identified the creation of a new centre for research in teaching and learning, which will become the focal point of related research activity.

To foster the scholarship of teaching and learning, Malaspina routinely invites faculty and administrators to engage in inquiry about teaching and learning. We are associated with the Carnegie Foundation and the American Association for Higher Education, through the Carnegie Academies for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Campus Program. We have partnered with the University of Portland in leading a cluster of universities on a theme of “Supporting Scholarly Work in Learning-centred Universities”. With the University of British Columbia, Malaspina co-hosted the 2005 meeting of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Vancouver. As a result of our commitment to this theme, we are now participating in discussions towards a Canadian research coalition, along with universities in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec. This work has led to greater understanding of the developmental continuum from effective teaching, through scholarly activity, to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Malaspina’s growing range of research facilities and the projects related to them provide a wealth of opportunity for students to become active researchers. We expect that new faculty will avail themselves of the support offered by the Teaching and Learning Centre, and of structured opportunities to participate in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Linking this theme with other forms of research is a key element of our research strategy. We will build environments in which faculty and students actively develop and enhance disciplinary concepts through direct

engagement with research. We have invested in institutional and departmental structures needed to fulfill the strategy.

The Integrated Science Centre (ISC).

The planned ISC is intended to integrate research activity in the sciences, until now, our principal target for CFI funding. We have applied for CFI funding for two new laboratory facilities to be housed in the ISC, including as a centrepiece of the ISC, an Integrated Environmental Sciences Research Laboratory. In addition, the ISC will house existing research centres in new facilities, including the Applied Environmental Research Laboratory, the International Centre for Sturgeon Research, and the Centre for Coastal Health. The Centre for Shellfish Research is located in a brand new facility, which will be linked to the ISC by covered walkway. The ICR will serve to link research activities in these various facilities, as well as in offsite research facilities.

Inter-Institutional and Inter-Sectoral Collaborations

Malaspina has partnered with regional, national, international, academic, government, and private groups, including: Nis'ga, Snuneymux, and Quw'uts'un First Nations; federal and provincial grant agencies, HRDC, Heritage Canada, the Pacific Biological Research Station (Nanaimo); the Bamfield Marine Research Station universities consortium, humanities computing affiliations with the University of Victoria and the TAPOR project, the Synergies project through Simon Fraser University, numerous environmental and resource management partnerships with universities in Canada and abroad, the University of Portland through the Carnegie Academies, and the University of British Columbia, Oregon State University, and the National Research Council's Institute of Marine Bioscience in fisheries and aquaculture projects. We have created a mutual-interest-based consortium with Camosun and North Island Colleges. We have had great success in partnerships with private resource-based industries on Vancouver Island, which have led to shared research ventures, the production of research for health, industrial, and other purposes, industry training, and shared use of resources.

Assessment of Success in Meeting Research Objectives:

The Vice-President, Academic is responsible for overseeing assessment of the institution's success in meeting the objectives of the strategic research plan, and for periodic reviews of the plan. Assessment and review are based on information provided by faculty, deans, and the Director of Research. Malaspina will create annual activity-based objectives for each research theme. Activities will be routinely assessed for their status (e.g., initiated, in progress, completed; measurable results), and their place in the strategic research plan will be assessed through standard institutional processes.

The strategic research plan is part of Malaspina's routine annual strategic planning process, culminating in an annual revision of the Institutional Service Plan, which drives other processes, such as the institutional capital planning process, and is a requirement of the BC Ministry of Advanced Education. Strategic planning is subject to full internal scrutiny at the faculty and department level, in senior administration (Management and Executive Committees), and in institutional governance bodies (Board, Education Council). The institution's performance is measured annually against the strategic research plan and the Service Plan.