



MALASPINA University-College

Strategic Research Plan **December 15, 2003**

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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, now measuring itself against the highest national and international standards in post-secondary education.

Major Objectives of the Strategic Research Plan

The major 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 build on Malaspina's geographical location and regional connections, focusing 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, focussing on the themes described in this document. We will take advantage of the academic strengths of our faculty, our regional connections, and our geographical position. Our history as

a regional institution and our location on the east coast of Vancouver Island, close to many small and medium-sized communities on the Island and mainland coast, invite 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 in today's global economy is a faculty and student body informed by research of international scope.

Our research objectives will be supported by focus on the retention of young faculty with active research programs, involvement of our regional campuses in research, and improved integration with traditional academic faculties of the extensive network of partnerships already in place in such areas as Continuing Studies and International Education. The 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 theme of community health builds on two priority research preoccupations: health, which applies to the condition of life of people singly and in groups (such as women, First Nations, older adults, those in remote and rural communities); and community, which applies to peoples' senses of themselves in their 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.

Important research in the field of community health has been a fixture of many disciplines at Malaspina. We have received recent SSHRC grants focussing on community health issues, First Nations health, the history of nursing practices, women's health, and tobacco use, advertising, and gender. Malaspina hosts the Centre for Coastal Health, an independent society serving a network of investigators in the fields of human, animal, and environmental health. 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. We are known for our work in the field of rural studies, notably rural education, and we are home to the Rural Communities Research and Development Centre. In 2000, we hosted a groundbreaking conference on rural education with 200 delegates from around the world. We will continue to stress relationships involving the study of rural communities, First Nations, and health.

Cultural Communication and Expression. A growing research theme at Malaspina lies at the intersection of new technologies and fields emphasizing cultural communication and expression. We will promote wide-ranging research consonant with this theme. We will stress the production and dissemination of art. We will emphasize research related to communication through different media (including language, written, spoken, and performed; visual and tactile representations; music and sound; and technologies), from culture to culture, and kind to kind. We will focus on modes of communication and expression: 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 theme touches notably on research in many arts and social sciences fields. We are also known for artistic production and scholarly reflections about the artistic process. For example, our Creative Writing and Journalism faculty publish extensively in five different sub-fields, both producing major works of art and contributing to scholarly discourse. The fine and performing arts are a fixture of Malaspina's program offering, and they reflect regional demography: Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands have the highest concentration of artists, writers, and musicians nationally, and our region is rich in organic musical and artistic culture. Because the arts community and culture are so strong, and so bound up with our institutional profile, we view this as an important priority for future development.

In recent years, we have been active in the emerging field of humanities computing. We have hosted conferences, supported academic seminars, and affiliated ourselves (through our relationship with the University of Victoria) with the TAPOR project, a major humanities computing collaboration among Canadian universities. 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.

Environmental Resource Management and Policy. Malaspina has an established reputation for research in environmental and resource management, and we regard this as a niche well suited to the setting, history, and character of the institution. Faculty conduct research in environmental analytical chemistry, aquatic and wildlife biology, and fisheries and aquaculture management, among many other disciplines. Much of this research relies on strong ties to dominant resource-based industries of our region 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. The interdisciplinary research programs of the Centre for Shellfish Research, which include work on the ecosystem interactions of shellfish farming, the legal and policy implications of new techniques of water quality monitoring, and the impact of federalism on aquaculture regulation, and on aquaculture,

tourism, and marine protection, are examples of our ability to bring together research teams from many disciplines to focus on task-oriented research problems. 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.

For the future, we plan to strengthen our science research capacity in the centres and institutes that contribute to the environment and resource management theme. At the same time, we will put enhanced research capacity to work for our local communities and First Nations by supporting our social sciences and humanities faculty to develop community-based research projects.

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 foster the scholarship of teaching and learning, Malaspina has invited faculty and administrators to engage in inquiry about teaching and learning. We have 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.” This work has led to greater understanding of the developmental continuum from effective teaching, through scholarly activity, to the scholarship of teaching and learning. With this work in mind, we recently hosted multiple workshop sessions with Alan Jenkins, co-author of *Re-Shaping Teaching in Higher Education: Linking Teaching with Research* (2003).

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.

Research and Research Training Infrastructure

In the last five years, Malaspina has created physical and conceptual structures and a substantial body of policies and procedures to buttress research and scholarship. We

have developed and revised policy governing animal care, research involving human subjects, and scholarly ethics and integrity. We will continue to monitor our policies and procedures with close attention to the needs of the granting agencies, but also in the best interests of responsible, ethical, and safe research.

We have significantly increased our administrative and financial support for research. After much deliberation, we have centralized research services in the Research and Scholarly Activity Office, whose Director and staff work actively with faculty, assisting them with grant applications, highlighting research opportunities, and offering various kinds of training sessions and workshops. We have earmarked substantial funding for purposes directly related to research. This funding takes the form of release time from instruction, built-in professional development stipends, sabbatical leaves, and research and travel grants. With the exception of built-in stipends, financial support is by application and subject to the assessment of merit. Malaspina makes substantial direct investment in research and work opportunities for students.

In addition to supporting the research activities of individuals and small groups of faculty, we have established three hubs to facilitate focussed research interaction, each encompassing a wide range of interdisciplinary research and research training activities. Besides offering research facilities and contexts for intellectual exchange, these hubs yield significant opportunities for students to enjoy paid employment, first-hand research experience working independently and with faculty, and training and assisting in the training of others. The three hubs are the Institute for Coastal Research, the Centre for Digital Humanities Innovation and the Teaching and Learning Centre.

A. The Institute for Coastal Research (ICR)

The ICR provides space and equipment for research. It encourages interdisciplinary interaction through seminars and events related to its principal emphases: issues critical to the sustenance of coastal BC communities. It supports wide-ranging research. For example, through the ICR a political scientist is examining the regulation and policy of resource industries. Studies on the economic effects of aquaculture in Marine Protected Areas and parks are underway in Tourism and Recreation Management. Faculty in History, Education, and Liberal Studies are exploring the challenges faced by small communities (Rural Communities Research and Development Centre), and mapping the historical development of the coast (Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre). These and other research projects involve partnerships with national granting agencies, governments, and First Nations. In the future, the ICR will contribute significantly to research on subjects related to the health of coastal communities and their environments.

The ICR was established to coordinate research made possible by the receipt of infrastructure grants from the CFI. The two laboratories made possible by these grants, which have attracted notice at Malaspina and elsewhere, are:

The Applied Environmental Research Laboratory (AERL).

The AERL, established in 2001, specializes in collaborative research partnerships involving environmental sampling, chemical analysis, data interpretation and project development. This facility has introduced equipment and technology condu-

cive to new levels of accuracy in analytical research and new forms of research application.

The Centre for Shellfish Research (CSR). In the last two decades, our Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has developed a solid international reputation. The CSR, created in 2002, was a logical extension of research strengths in this area, and its success speaks well for the future of research in related fields, also demonstrating the need both for shellfish research and a high level of support from industry and government. CSR research projects will focus on technical, environmental, and social aspects of the shellfish industry on the Pacific coast. A proposal for a Deep-Water Research Laboratory and Field Facility for shellfish aquaculture research will provide a floating production research system, nearby inter-tidal tenure, and on-shore shellfish field laboratory to complement the CSR. These field facilities are the critical next step in taking research results into the coastal ocean environment for practical evaluation.

A third centre is undergoing development. This is the International Centre for Sturgeon Studies, which will create an integrated and internationally supported approach to the conservation, population enhancement, and aquaculture of sturgeon. Many species of sturgeon around the world, including white-sturgeon populations in BC, are endangered. Malaspina is a leader and innovator in sturgeon culture research in BC, and the only academic institution in Western Canada to have captive white-sturgeon brood stock.

B. The Centre for Digital Humanities Innovation (CDHI)

Created in 2002 with support from CFI and BC KDF, the CDHI was designed to promote computer-assisted research and training in the arts and social sciences. In the arts, the computer assists in writing, composition, arrangement and staging. The electronic medium also affords new possibilities for display, performance, and dissemination. In disciplines where the research culture emphasizes knowledge transfer, the computer serves as a pedagogical tool of enormous importance, and this subject ranks among CDHI priorities. The CDHI employs techniques in digital representation of image-, text-, and sound-based cultural artefacts, production and study of new digital artefacts, and research into pedagogical concerns associated with computing. It focuses on the following kinds of research tasks: electronic publishing and re-purposing of materials previously stored in traditional archival forms; use of automated means to represent print-, visual-, and audio-based material in tagged and searchable electronic textual form; and sophisticated textual analysis processes that, originating in the humanities, have much broader application.

The CDHI is closely aligned with the humanities computing scholarly community, and has partnered with the University of Victoria in its successful summer seminars. In 2003, the CDHI sponsored “ReFrame: Video at the Crossroads,” a symposium of eighteen specialists in new media technology. As a research support, the CDHI has close links to other institutional facilities linking research and technology, including the Music MIDI Lab (which assists students and faculty in basic aspects of the study of music, such as ear-training, as well as more complex research involving composition and scor-

ing), and the Graphics and ITAS Labs (state-of-the-art facilities dedicated to the knowledge and production of graphic design materials and digital mediated technologies).

C. The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC)

The Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), Malaspina's most recent strategic research infrastructure creation, awaits its new home in the renovated Library, where it will join a nexus of services integrating research and scholarship, and teaching and learning. Three priorities define TLC directions: supporting excellence in teaching and learning; facilitating professional and scholarly networks; and fostering the scholarship of teaching and learning. While all of these priorities are important, the third is most relevant to our research strategy.

The TLC already plays an active role in the dissemination of research information, and it maintains close links with institutional orientation services. The TLC has coordinated a wide range of collaborative opportunities, notably with regard to clustered activities for instructional and service departments. We look forward to an institutional culture of inquiry, promoted by the TLC, which will support all forms of research and scholarship.

Inter-Institutional and Inter-Sectoral Collaborations

Malaspina has pursued partnerships with regional, national and international, academic, government, and private organizations. We have developed affiliations with First Nations, such as the Nis'ga, Snuneymux, and Quw'uts'un Tribes; provincial and federal governments, such as the grant agencies, HRDC, Heritage Canada, and smaller agencies such as the Pacific Biological Research Station (Nanaimo); universities, such as the consortium responsible for the Bamfield Marine Research Station, our humanities computing affiliation with the University of Victoria and the TAPOR project, our association with the Synergies project through Simon Fraser University, our numerous environmental and resource management partnerships with universities in Canada and abroad, our partnership with the University of Portland through the Carnegie Academies, and fisheries and aquaculture related partnerships with the University of British Columbia and Oregon State University, and with the National Research Council's Institute of Marine Bioscience. We have created a mutual-interest-based consortium with Camosun and North Island Colleges (CMN Consortium). We have had particular success in partnering with private resource-based industries on Vancouver Island, and these partnerships have contributed to the creation of research facilities, the production of research useful for health, industrial and other purposes, industry training, and the shared use of resources.

Assessment of Success in Meeting Research Objectives

The Vice-President, Instruction and Research 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 ac-

tivity-based objectives for each research theme. Activities will be routinely assessed for their status (e.g., initiated, in progress, completed; and with what measurable results?), and their place in the strategic research plan will be assessed through standard institutional processes.

The strategic research plan forms a part of Malaspina's routine annual strategic planning process, which culminates in an annual revision of the education plan. This plan drives a number of 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 the fullest internal scrutiny at the faculty and department level, in senior administration (Management and Executive Committees), and in institutional governance bodies (Board, Education Council and its standing committees, notably the Planning and Resources Committee). Thus, the institution's performance is measured annually against the strategic research plan and the education plan.

Planning and Approval Process

The planning and approval process reflects the interests and expertise of faculty as well as the availability of infrastructure needed to support their research. Faculty enjoy academic freedom with respect to the nature and subject of their research, within the bounds of the research policies referred to above. Protocols have been established to review and approve research in accordance with policy. Departmental planning ensures that support is available to equip students with research skills appropriate to the programs offered. Deans vet and approve the use of research space and equipment, and the expense of faculty time. Major strategic and institutional research plans are approved by senior administration (Management and Executive Committees). The institutional Finance Office approves financial obligations for research on the recommendation of the Vice-President, Instruction and Research. The Executive Committee, in consultation with the Management Committee, provides approval for major capital costs.

Planning for Canada Research Chairs is overseen by a committee, which includes deans, the Vice-President, Instruction and Research, the Director of Research Services, and faculty. Nominations and suggestions for potential research themes are solicited from faculty within the context of the institutional strategic research plan.

Canada-Research-Chairs-Specific Priorities

In the first instance, Malaspina will emphasize a retention strategy in its allocation of Canada Research Chairs. We have lost some faculty to recruitment from other institutions, and we intend to use the allocation process to consolidate, and to free up space within the institutional complement for the development of strong academic faculty early in their careers. Tier 2 Chairs are in keeping with Malaspina's present undergraduate profile, and we will focus on a strategy of filling Tier 2 Chairs, largely internally, but also with an eye to external recruitment.

Malaspina will ensure that its nominated candidates for the Canada Research Chairs reflect thorough consideration of the requirements for "gender representation," and, with that in mind, we have set an institutional benchmark of 50% or greater.



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