Annual Research Report

Research Inspiring Education

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photos by Lisa Sakulensky, layout and design by Christine Boyer
I am very pleased to say that it has been another excellent year for all of us at OISE, Canada’s leading faculty of education. Mindful of our priorities, innovative and influential work has been continuing in a diverse range of fields. All of these have the potential to deeply impact how education is viewed and delivered far into the future, and you will find examples of our research proudly showcased in this report.

We feel strongly that the work taking place here deepens our understanding of the many facets of education. We are contributing towards creating a sense of community, paying attention to issues of equity and diversity, while also strengthening areas of inquiry such as public policy, adult learning, special education and teacher education.

As our society becomes more complex, our exploration serves to address issues that are faced both within traditional classrooms and the diverse contexts of life-long learning. Our goal is to improve the quality of education for all. Why? Because the natural consequence of this is an improvement in the quality of society and people’s capacity to engage and participate in it.

We also place a high priority upon preparing the next generation of researchers, who will have the task of probing the social issues of the future. We provide our graduate students with the opportunities to work within the fabric of the research community during their time with us.

More and more, we aim to learn from our own continued success. Our work increasingly demonstrates the need for connectivity. Building bridges across campus, between different disciplines and academic communities, will enable us to broaden our fields of inquiry.

While our work is rooted in local contexts, it also adds value universally to academic communities elsewhere.

Forging long-term partnerships with public administrations will both enable recognition of the importance of our culture of inquiry, and enable our research to have a tangible impact in improving education in real terms.

Finally, we must continually seek to diversify our funding base and connect with new funding agencies and foundations. These partners will mean we have the external resources to match our own substantial financial commitments.

Together, we look forward to further enriching our knowledge and continuing to support our own faculty and graduate students, upon whom our future of excellence in education depends.
Research Revenue

Research Revenue
Research funding awarded in 2006-07 totaled $9.3 million, an increase of $1.2 million over last year’s figures and the highest level in more than ten years.

Much of this increase can be attributed to the Canada Research Chair program and research infrastructure grants which totaled over $2.7 million this year; an increase of over $1 million from last year. However, it should be noted that the increase in this program offset a significant decrease in revenues received from the three Federal Granting Councils. The total under the council program dropped almost $2 million from last year’s revenue total, to $3.1 million, the lowest in more than five years.

Fortunately, provincial government and foundation funding contributed significantly to research initiatives which helped to offset the loss from federal funding sources.

Dr. Katreena Scott, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, and Colin King, PhD student in the School and Clinical Child Psychology program
Distribution of Council Funding
The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) provides a significant source of revenue to support research at OISE. This revenue directly contributes to faculty research initiatives as well as providing an important source of support to graduate students. This year’s SSHRC funding represented 31 per cent of total research revenue for OISE, a significant reduction from last year’s 55 per cent. Part of this can be explained by the completion of two major projects which were funded by SSHRC’s Initiative on the New Economy (INE); however, the other critical factor is the result of this year’s Standard Research Grant program (SRG). While the SRG continues to be a stable and consistent source of income for our faculty, this year’s success rate of 34 per cent was well below last year’s rate of 66 per cent along with as much as a 50 per cent reduction to proposal budgets. This also resulted in a significant reduction to the total dollar value awarded under the SRG of $1.1 million; a decrease of $1.2 million from last year’s amount of $2.3 million. While this is of concern, particularly in light of operating budget conditions at OISE, the overall trend under the SRG program has historically seen positive results in one year with alternating results in the subsequent year. We would expect to see these numbers improve in the 2007-08 round of competition under the SRG. Nonetheless, a reduction in the SRG program will have significant impact on the capacity for the research revenues to contribute to various activities, including student support.
Stephen Anderson
Theory and Policy Studies

How do schools, school districts, and governments work together to guide change? How is such change supported and sustained? How do leadership roles and actions affect outcome? And how can teacher expertise best be assessed and developed to make a difference in student learning?

As a teacher, researcher, and consultant, Professor Stephen Anderson has focused his career on these questions; trying to understand the process of educational change and how it relates to student learning and achievement.

His work highlights the importance of seeing how change strategies work, not in isolation, but in relation to each other. Stephen has identified strategies that contribute to successful, positive, district-wide change, and stresses, “It’s not so much the sequence of interventions that yields the effects. It’s all about synergy – strategies working with and contributing to each other.”

Clare Brett
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Have you ever undertaken study by distance? How do you deal with the relative isolation of working on-line? What are the social implications of technology use? How is technology influencing education?

There can be no doubt that as technology widens our horizons and opens up opportunities, increasingly it plays a pivotal role in all our lives; at home, at work, and in the classroom. But it also brings its own challenges. As the ability to connect with people outside our immediate geographical area grows, so does the need to develop, support, and sustain on-line academic communities.

Clare Brett is among the first to pursue research on the effectiveness of Distance Learning on graduate teaching and learning. Dr. Brett’s work will advance scholars’ ability to connect across campuses, countries, and international borders. By creating academic communities and engaging graduate students more effectively in research, our ability to foster connections with other educators will increase, as will the quality and strength of our educational practice.
What does it mean to be an artist? What is his or her role in society? How does the social context of schooling shape these ideas? These questions are central to Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez’s research.

Currently, in the initial stages of a comparative study of GTA “arts high schools”, which run specialised programmes focused on the visual, dramatic, and graphic arts, Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez investigates how young artists involved in “pre-professional” training in various arts disciplines understand their roles in society.

Toronto high schools that offer specialised arts programs have not yet taken an explicit position on the social responsibility of the artist, leaving the process of identification among artist-students theirs to claim, and Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez with rich and fertile ground for the study of claims about cultural production in school contexts.

Ruben is also studying the role of community arts organizations in urban centres and asks: what role do emerging cultural forms and social capital play in political organizations?

Kang Lee
Human Development and Applied Psychology
Institute of Child Study

Can you tell when someone is lying? How do you know? Facial expressions? Body language? Tone of voice? Is a child’s lying at a young age a sign of later dishonesty?

Professor Kang Lee has been studying children for more than ten years and emphasizes the holistic, active nature of childhood. Not only is Kang Lee’s work important to parents and educators, it has become particularly valuable to the court systems. When children are summoned as victims or witnesses, they used to be required to know the difference between the truth and a lie before being admitted to testify in the criminal court. Kang Lee has found that knowing the difference does not necessarily predict children’s behaviour, but asking them to promise to tell the truth will make them less likely to lie.

This work by his psycho-legal research team led to a major change in a Canadian law concerning child witnesses in 2005 and is now fully implemented in the Canadian criminal court.

Kang’s research, recognizing childhood as a critical period of growth and possibility, is also enabling teachers and researchers to work together to explore and develop educational techniques for young children.
How has the school experience changed since you were a student? How do children engage successfully into the school environment? Can students shape their own learning opportunities? How can teachers improve what happens within the classroom?

Dennis Thiessen, from his early days as an elementary school teacher to his work as a well-respected OISE researcher, is well aware of the challenges of the classroom; particularly, as our schools increasingly reflect the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Ontario.

Dennis has studied the school histories of students with learning disabilities, the transition of students from elementary school to secondary school, and the classroom lives of primary students.

In his current research, Dennis is developing portraits of the changing experiences of students who attended Toronto elementary and secondary schools between the years of 1968 and 1996. He is the lead editor on the first major handbook in the study of student experience.

Dennis’s research both analyses how the perspectives and voices of students can inform school improvement and educational policies. His work also supports teacher education, equipping practicing teachers with the sufficient knowledge and education to enable all students to thrive.
What does ‘disability’ mean to you? Look in any dictionary and you will see terms such as ‘lack of power’, ‘disadvantage’, or ‘incapacity’. What do our shared definitions reveal about our own society and ourselves? Can disabled people seem as anything other than problems in need of solutions? Are our own attitudes disabling?

From her unique perspective as a dyslexic, Tanya Titchkosky is working at the forefront of the emerging discipline of disability studies. She urges a move away from the medical model toward an examination of social responses to disability. As our educational institutions become more diverse, her work informs us as to how we can best move towards equity, and ensure that each individual is able to reach his/her full potential.

With a network of University of Toronto researchers and an advisory board of disabled students and activists, Tanya seeks to understand how disability is both excluded and included in everyday campus life, including within curriculum, policy, and recreation. Her work poses questions such as: how does campus culture produce images of disability? Do we confirm, remake or resist these images?

By investigating such questions, Daniel Schugurensky’s work focuses on the connections between learning and democracy. He explores democratic disengagement and how people can become involved in their own communities, and work together to find solutions to their self-defined issues and social problems.

Dr. Schugurensky notes, “There are few opportunities for people to participate in democratic processes apart from elections. Politics has become a spectator sport.” He feels it is very important that people can begin incorporating the practice of democracy into their daily lives, and to learn democracy by doing. In short, to enable people to participate in the decision-making processes that will shape their own lives.
Awards and Honours

A sample of OISE faculty achievements

Awards and Honours

American Association of Teaching and Curriculum (AATC) Career Research Contributions - Michael Connelly

Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Recreation and Dance, North American Society Fellowship Award (NASFA) - Andy Anderson†

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) Robert Roy Award - Sharon Lapkin

Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD) Inaugural (2006) Research Award - Marilyn Laiken

Education Award of the World Technology Network - James Slotta

Governor General of Canada Meritorious Service Award - Conchita Tan-Wilman

Government of Ontario Early Researcher Award - Katreena Scott

National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA), Award for Research Excellence in Eating Disorders Prevention and Awareness - Niva Piran

Networks of Centres of Excellence 2006 Chair’s Award - Janette Pelletier

Ontario Research and Innovation - IKIT (Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter)

Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie Ordre de la Pléiade - Normand Labrie

Planet Africa Renaissance Award - George Dei

World Cultural Council, Jose Vasconcelos World Award of Education 2006 - Marlene Scardamalia

Canada Research Chairs

Charles Chen
  *Life Career Development*

James P. Cummins
  *Language Learning and Literacy Development in Multilingual Contexts*

Kathleen M. Gallagher
  *Urban School Research in Pedagogy and Policy*

Benjamin Levin
  *Leadership and Educational Change*

David Livingstone
  *Lifelong Learning and Work*

Karen E. Mundy
  *Global Governance and Comparative Educational Change*

James D. Slotta
  *Education and Technology*

Rosemary Tannock
  *Special Education and Adaptive Technology*

Rinaldo Walcott
  *Social Justice and Cultural Studies*

Endowed Chairs

Carl Corter
  *Atkinson Charitable Foundation Chair in Early Child Development & Education*

Michael Skolnik
  *William G. Davis Chair in Community College Leadership*

Marlene Scardamalia
  *President’s Chair in Education & Knowledge Technologies*

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Dr. Benjamin Levin, Canada Research Chair in Education Leadership and Policy, and a professor in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies.
Research Centres

Research Centres provide an excellent space for faculty, research officers, students, and partners to collaborate in a range of research activities that transcend organizational boundaries.

Our research centres are communities of interest that play an important role in building OISE’s reputation within our immediate community, outside the University, and abroad.

Centres also offer a home to visiting scholars and attract top students to our graduate programs (especially international).

By building these connections, centres add considerably to our community resources and provide a focal point for OISE faculty and students to communicate and relate to others across the University and in the world. They generate opportunities for breakthrough research in education and maintain a substantial portion of external research funding.

OISE Research Centres continue to be a tremendous source of energy and enthusiasm within our community.

Brian Gopaul, MEd student in the Higher Education program in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies

Dr. Tony Chambers; director of the Centre for the Study of Students in Postsecondary Education; associate vice-provost, students, University of Toronto; and assistant professor in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies
Research Infrastructure

Space and research facilities

Research infrastructure has become an important ingredient to the success of all kinds of research activity here at OISE. Spaces such as the Knowledge Innovation and Technology Lab (KITL) are concrete examples of ways that researchers can communicate and investigate learning through multi-media. As well, such spaces have become central to the development of new and exciting research initiatives that may not otherwise be possible.

OISE Infrastructure Projects

- Life career development lab
- Centre for the study of global governance and comparative educational change
- Volunteers count infrastructure grant
- Bringing research apprenticeship online: reconceptualizing graduate distance education
- Designing learning environments for literacy development and knowledge generation in a diverse society
- Youth and urban school performances
- Cognitively informed technologies for education (CITE)
- A laboratory network for innovation and technology in education
- Laboratory for the investigation of the development of social understanding and personal identity in infants and preschool aged children
- Developing social brains
- Clinically-based observation laboratory for the study of assessment and intervention with abusive, neglectful, and at-risk fathers
- Using technology to bridge neuroscience, children's mental health, and educational practice
- The learning and work database: resource materials for teaching, research and policymaking
- The other Canadians database: culture re-making the nation
- Supporting educational success through evidence informed policy and practice

*Dr. Clare Brett and OISE students participate in a video conference in the KITL.*
Data Notes

A brief statement on the data compiled for this report

The data used for this report came from the Cognos research applications and awards data model, and is accurate as of June 27, 2007. All dollar figures represent the pro-rated research revenue as reported in the University of Toronto Research Information System.

Councils
Data reported under the ‘Councils’ label includes all research funding and awards from Canada’s three granting councils: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This category includes small-scale research funding from the SSHRC Institutional Grant program.

GRIP
The ‘GRIP’ category includes both project- and infrastructure-funding from programs overseen by the University of Toronto Government Research Infrastructure Programs office, including revenue from the Canada Research Chair program, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Ontario Research Fund, and the Premier’s Research Excellence Awards.

Internal
The University of Toronto offers research funding to faculty through the Connaught programs, such as the Start-Up and New Staff Matching programs, and other miscellaneous internal sources.

Other
Awards classified as ‘Other’ in this report include those from government, corporate, and non-profit research funding sources. Government sources include; the National Centres of Excellence, Ontario Centres of Excellence, Health Canada, Public Works & Government Services, and the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Corporate sources include; all industrial research revenue, and non-profit sources include foundations, associations, institutes, and sub-grants of council-based funding from other research institutions and universities.

Dr. Kenneth Leithwood, professor in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies, and Jingping Sun, PhD candidate in the Educational Administration program.