

## PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

# York University Intensifies Research, Highlights ROI

## Q&A with the Vice-President Research & Innovation, York University



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### **York University is engaged in a plan of research intensification. How is the University working to accomplish this?**

Over the past decade, research at York has flourished with a high rate of growth in the intensity of publication of research and scholarship in Canada. This is the result of strong community engagement supporting thoughtful long-term planning.

Over the past 18 months, York has developed a collegial Plan for the Intensification & Enhancement of Research through extensive consultations with faculty, staff and students. The plan, now being implemented, contains 21 recommendations, clustered into five areas, to realize York's ambition as a leading research-intensive university: (1) Growing a culture of scholarly inquiry; (2) investing in and promoting people; (3) supporting research growth and development; (4) leadership in research and research advocacy; and (5) building research for the future.

### **What kind of examples – measures of the success of research intensification at York – stand out for you?**

There are many success stories. A prime example is vision research. The Vision: Science to Applications

(VISTA) program was recently recognized by the government of Canada with the nation's most prestigious research grant: A \$33.3 million Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) grant. This will propel York to a position of international leadership to advance discovery and application of biological and computational vision technologies to improve human health and societal wellbeing and promote economic development.

With a total project envelop of \$120 million, VISTA will enhance the research efforts of over 25 existing core research teams and support the recruitment of 13 new faculty members.

### **Partnerships with industry are increasingly important in today's research landscape. How does York research keep partnerships central in the mix?**

York truly nurtures a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment. While developing their work, our researchers are outwardly looking with partnerships top of mind. Community partners, donors and industry are increasingly essential in today's research enterprise.

In developing these partnerships, our researchers are supported through Innovation York (IY), the innovation office. It provides a suite of services to facilitate and maximize the commercial, economic and social impacts of research and innovation, and to create a culture of engaged scholarship and experiential learning. If an idea or intellectual asset looks like a good commercialization opportunity, IY will provide support through its commercialization unit; its entrepreneurship program, LaunchYU; and/or one of its accelerator spaces.

IY had many successes in 2016: It created the LaunchYU Best Hub

entrepreneurship centre, engaged with 1,300+ potential entrepreneurs, hosted 38 events and worked with over 100 companies. It also approved 500 Agreements valued at nearly \$30 million, and supported the launch of five start-up companies.

### **Federal and provincial granting systems, and external partners working in complement, are necessary to advance research in Canada. What kind of return on investment, or ROI, can you show to these key stakeholders?**

The importance of the granting systems cannot be understated. Our external industrial and community-based partners and generous donors are also indispensable to the success of our research.

The return on these investments is, in many ways, immeasurable. But I understand essence of the question. York researchers and scholars have played key roles in many of the most important scholarship and discoveries of the past half Century. A few accomplishments can serve as a proxy for ROI. These include York's contributions to discovering the Higgs boson and exploring Mars; changing the way we think about bullying; developing novel approaches to healthcare delivery; exploring the global plight of refugees; generating new insights into brain development in children with autism; encouraging civic dialogue through performance and public art; and mapping the spread of infectious diseases.

You can see how York researchers and scholars are undertaking visionary research that has local, national and international significance. Through this research, we aspire to better understand the human condition and the world around us, and to employ the knowledge we gain in the service of society.