

**University Delegates Meeting**  
**March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 12:30 – 1:30pm EDT**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Chair: Adrian Mota, Associate Vice-President, Research Programs (Operations)

**1. CIHR UPDATES**

***CIHR welcomes new UD members, Dr. Josephine Wong and Dr. Liisa Galea***

The University Delegates (UD) network welcomed Dr. Josephine Wong, Professor from The Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing at Ryerson University, and Dr. Liisa Galea, Professor in Psychology from the University of British Columbia, as CIHR's newest University Delegates.

***UDEC Appointment Process***

UD members were reminded that the deadline to submit their vote for the University Delegates Executive Committee (UDEC) vacancy is Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. The vote is only open to UD members.

***UD Roles and Responsibilities***

With the UD network constantly evolving, it is important to outline the roles and responsibilities of a UD member. UDs are responsible for supporting CIHR by keeping the health research community, within the university and its affiliated institutions, informed of CIHR direction, initiatives and decisions while actively participating and raising awareness on important topics facing the health research community. CIHR asked that the members continue providing their respective institutions with up-to-date information on CIHR initiatives. CIHR values the UD Network and thanked members for their ongoing collaboration and support.

***Institute Advisory Boards***

CIHR has opened [recruitment for our IABs](#) and is accepting applications, via ResearchNet, until April 12, 2021. CIHR will be sending the UD Network more information on IAB recruitment, including instructions on how to apply. UD members were asked to share this information within their communities and social media channels. The focus will be on ensuring IABs reflect the diversity of Canada and the health research ecosystem at large, and CIHR encouraged underrepresented groups to apply.

***Equity, diversity and inclusion***

CIHR's [online discussion](#) on systemic racism in Canada's health research funding system launched on February 4, 2021 and will be open until April 9, 2021. The purpose of the online discussion is ultimately to identify specific measures that CIHR can implement to address barriers faced by racialized and Indigenous communities. We specifically invite the engagement of racialized and Indigenous communities with lived experience of systemic racism in the health research sector, although the online discussion is open to all. Members were asked to share information about the online discussion with their networks. Following the online discussion, CIHR will host virtual small group listening sessions with racialized communities, including dedicated engagement activities with Indigenous communities. More details will be shared about these engagements in the near future. The engagement activities will inform the development and implementation of an action plan, or plans, to address systemic racism in the health research funding system.

***CIHR's Strategic Plan***

On Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, CIHR launched a new [Strategic Plan](#) to guide our operations and investments from 2021 to 2031. The Strategic Plan was accompanied by the [Action Plan for Year 1 \(2021-22\)](#). It is the first installment of a series of annual action plans that will outline key activities to be undertaken on a yearly basis to support implementation. The first Action Plan reflects a transitional phase as CIHR continues to play a leadership role in the Government of Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each action plan will build upon the previous year's, and will include a milestone

report (starting with year 2022-23) that will allow us to demonstrate accountability in achieving our goals and commitments as laid out in the Action Plan. Achieving the vision of CIHR's Strategic Plan will require coordination and collaboration across the entire health research landscape. CIHR will continue to engage the health research community throughout implementation, and will provide implementation-related updates to UD members as work progresses.

## **2. Health Research Training Platform (H RTP) Pilot**

In early January, CIHR launched the [Health Research Training Platform \(H RTP\) Pilot funding opportunity](#) to fill a gap in the career development opportunities available to trainees and Early Career Researchers (ECRs). Through the H RTP Pilot, trainees and ECRs will be embedded in collaborative programs of research that span multiple institutions, disciplines, jurisdictions and sectors. The intent is to enable programmatic approaches to capacity development, including access to high-caliber mentors and the development of skills for academic and non-academic careers. Funds will be available to establish up to 12 platforms within the scope of the identified research training areas. The research areas for this pilot were selected by those contributing funds - 9 CIHR Institutes, 1 CIHR Initiative, and 3 external partners. This is a priority-driven funding opportunity, meaning that no funds were taken from the Project Grants budget.

The H RTP Pilot competition was informed by CIHR's Strategic Action Plan on Training, evaluation of the CIHR STIHR program, the design of other CIHR training platforms, capacity development literature, international examples, and feedback from the community. CIHR will take stock of lessons learned from the H RTP Pilot funding opportunity to continue to improve its career development and training support offerings to the health research community.

### **Summary of H RTP Discussion**

CIHR modified the program design based on feedback from the Association of Canadian Early Career Health Researchers (ACECHR) as it relates to ECRs and their involvement in the research teams. The CIHR response letter to ACECHR will be published on the H RTP webpage in the near future.

It was mentioned on the call that while the H RTP model and the Healthy Cities model share some design similarities, the latter is broader in scope.

The PowerPoint slides used for the H RTP webinar that occurred on March 4<sup>th</sup> can be requested from the [Contact Centre](#).

## **3. Funding Opportunities**

### ***Project Grant Competitions***

Notices of Decision for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition were released on March 3. As discussed in a series of [Ask Me Anything](#) sessions, changes to the Spring 2021 Project Grant competition include the addition of a Summary of Progress and the Applicant profile CV, the removal of weighted scores in the evaluation criteria, and the greater integration into the assessment and score of Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis considerations. The [Project Grant Competition frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) were recently updated to include information about these new components. To support applicants with the requirements of the Spring 2021 Project Grant competition, there will be two final [webinars](#) on March 10<sup>th</sup> (one in English and one in French). Webinars for reviewers will be held in May. The registration deadline for the Spring 2021 Competition is **Thursday March 4, 2021** and the Notice of Recommendation date has been changed to July 15, 2021.

### ***Strategic Funding Opportunities***

A list of the current funding opportunities with deadlines was provided in the slide deck. The recommendations for the Institute Community Support (ICS) program are currently being reviewed by the VP Research and will be communicated shortly. There are no updates to provide on the Collaborative Health Research Projects (CHRP) program as discussions continue between CIHR and NSERC.

#### **4. COVID-19 Funding**

This agenda item was deferred to the April 1, 2021 meeting due to lack of time.

#### **5. Questions and Answers Discussion**

##### **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

Equity, diversity and inclusion underpin CHIR's Strategic Plan. CIHR reflected that throughout the previous COVID-19 competitions that have been held, some applications have required a specific page on EDI-related plans, requesting information on how researchers are meaningfully considering in relation to their research teams and research designs. CIHR does hope to incorporate this approach for the Project Grant program with time. CIHR intends to raise the bar regarding how EDI is incorporated within the application and the peer review processes.

##### **Summary of Progress**

The feedback received from the network regarding the addition of the Summary of Progress page was positive. It had been noted that the Summary of Progress is a great opportunity to put grants in context for Foundation Grant holders and it was further noted that applicants are pleased with the Summary of Progress format.

##### **Across-the-board Budget Cuts**

A previous [communication](#) to the community stated that CIHR has committed to getting rid of the across-the-board cuts for all funded applications starting with the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition. This change is intended to provide greater discretion to peer review committees on budget allocations. The removal of the across-the-board cut will be a gradual process and the Summary of Progress page is one element supporting this transition. To get rid of the cut, CIHR needs to ensure that the review panels have appropriate information to do a comprehensive review of the budget, as this will increase pressure on the panels.

No further decisions have been made for how the across-the-board budget cuts would be implemented; however, robust discussions are continuing on this topic among Scientific Directors and CIHR staff. The UD Network shared comments and ideas for several approaches, including modular budgets and small budget envelopes. CIHR continues to take into consideration the UD network's perspectives and will report back as discussions proceed.

#### **6. Adjournment**

The March 4, 2021 University Delegates meeting concluded at 1:35pm EDT. The Chair thanked the network for their participation. The next University Delegates meeting will take place on April 1, 2021.