SSHRC LEADERS Meeting Summary
Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Ryerson University
May 30, 2017

The semi-annual SSHRC Leaders meeting, held during Congress in Toronto, provided the opportunity for an update to Leaders on recent program results and policy changes, as well as two roundtable brief discussions on multi-disciplinary research and international collaboration respectively. Meeting participants included 36 SSHRC Leaders and 16 SSHRC team members. All final meeting materials are available on the SSHRC Leaders secure extranet site.

Opening

Ursula Gobel, Associate Vice-President, Future Challenges welcomed the SSHRC Leaders and gave an overview of the meeting agenda. Gobel introduced SSHRC President, Ted Hewitt who provided opening remarks.

Remarks from the President

Dr. Ted Hewitt provided an update on Budget 2017 and the Naylor’s Report and highlighted their implications for SSHRC and the research community. The President also mentioned some of the key accomplishments related to program, policy and corporate initiatives. The President underlined the importance of continuing to make the case for social sciences and humanities research. He also noted the importance of sustaining the good tri-agency collaboration that currently exists between NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC. Dr. Hewitt invited Guy Laforest, the new President from the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (FSSH), to provide a few remarks.

Remarks from the Federation

Guy Laforest, President, FSSH, spoke of his 730-day challenge, making note of key priorities for the Federation, such as reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and also introduced the Federation’s new Executive Director, Gabriel Miller. Laforest highlighted the Federation’s Awards to Scholarly Publication Program (ASPP) and encouraged others to promote this funding opportunity. In 2020, Canada will be a guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, which represents a prime opportunity to showcase our country’s literary talent in many disciplines.

Update on Tri-Agency Data Management Policy Development

Brent Herbert-Copley, Executive Vice-President, introduced the SSHRC-led initiative to develop a tri-agency policy on research data management. He explained that this policy stems from the Tri-Agency Statement of Principles for Digital Data Management, published in 2016, which outlines the principles that should guide data management and the roles of institutions, disciplinary associations, researchers, and funding agencies. Over the past year, SSHRC has collaborated with the Canadian Association of Research Libraries and the related Portage Network on a number of data management initiatives, including a pilot project in which SSHRC-funded researchers used the Portage Network’s online data management plan (DMP) assistant to create DMPs and then participated in a workshop to discuss their experiences. While engagement with stakeholders about the new policy is ongoing, a formal online consultation will likely be launched in the Fall. Herbert-Copley noted that the social science and humanities research community’s feedback is essential to inform data management policy development and implementation.
Matthew Lucas, Executive Director, Corporate Strategy and Performance explained that a number of international funding agencies have data management requirements in place and that given the growing role of data in research, effective data management is a necessary component of good research. Furthermore, he noted that data management supports the responsible conduct of research. Lucas described the three potential requirements of a future policy: institutional strategies describing how institutions would support data management through services and infrastructure; data management plans from agency supported researchers describing how they would manage their data; and the deposit of data and code directly linked to published articles. Lucas explained that the agencies envisioned a phased in implementation of these requirements. Lucas further explained that the agencies recognized that there were legitimate reasons for not depositing and sharing data, including concerns over commercial, privacy, indigenous rights, and other considerations, and that the policy would allow for these exceptions.

Comments from the SSHRC Leaders included the need to consult with libraries; ethics review boards; and indigenous representatives in the further development of the policy.

**Update and Discussion on SSHRC Programs and Developments**

Dominique Bérubé, Vice-President, Research Programs, spoke about the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat’s (TIPS) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, launched with the support of the Minister of Science, Kirsty Duncan. All institutions that accept agency funding are expected to make concerted efforts to meet their equity and diversity targets, and to provide a supportive and inclusive workplace. Bérubé also touched upon the Naylor Report’s finding that there is a need to harmonize the efforts of the granting Councils. Information technology legacy systems and the proposed solution re-designing the Research Portal were also mentioned.

Valérie Laflamme, Director, Research Training Portfolio reviewed the past year’s statistics for scholarships and fellowships. There was a slight decrease observed in the success rates for both SSHRC doctoral and postdoctoral awards; however, the success rates are expected to stabilize in the coming years, assuming there are no changes related to budget. Recommendations from the evaluation of the Impact Awards were shared, as well as plans to hold the awards ceremony in September at Rideau Hall. Laflamme highlighted some of the collaborative initiatives, such as the Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Advanced Scholars Program, which will provide funding for winning projects from 23 Canadian universities, thanks in part to SSHRC’s $2.5 million contribution. The program will expand its reach to more low- and middle-income countries, and fund researchers at multiple stages of their careers to become the next generation of innovative leaders and community builders. She concluded with clarifications about the CGS Masters’ new calculation of the distribution of allocations which are deferred until 2018; allocations to institutions will remain at the same level until then.

Tim Wilson, Executive Director, Research Grants and Partnerships provided an overview of the Insight Grants program, stating that recent program changes, in addition to a decline in applications, have led to an increase in the success rate in 2017. He also provided an update on the merged SSHRC Institutional Grant funding opportunity, which will allow universities to disseminate funding under the newly-branded SSHRC Exchange and SSHRC Explore Grants. Wilson provided an update on the new Partnership Engage Grants funding opportunity, the deadline being in September 2017. SSHRC Leaders were reminded of the changes being made to SSHRC’s subject-matter eligibility for health-related research. Finally, SSHRC Leaders were also encouraged to promote the Mitacs internship program.

Questions from the SSHRC Leaders were addressed regarding the Research Portal, CCV and the Partnerships Grant evaluation currently underway.
Imagining Canada’s Future and Canada 150

Ursula Gobel, Associate Vice-President, Future Challenges provided an overview of activities related to the Imagining Canada’s Future (ICF) initiative and its renewal in 2018 for ICF 2.0. SSHRC has now completed knowledge synthesis grants competitions to address all six future challenge areas, and 123 KSG grants have been awarded. In additional to the individual KSG reports, two summary reports have been published by SSHRC and the next report on the topic of emerging technologies will be released by September 2017. Two major forums are scheduled to take place in the Fall: the first in September to address the Knowledge Systems, Experiences and Aspirations of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and the second in November, to address the Impacts of an Evolving Globalized society. Current partners and collaborators for these two major events include: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, the Norwegian Research Council, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Ottawa; Global Affairs Canada, the Museum of History and the Canadian War Museum.

SSHRC has several program initiatives and partnerships underway to mark Canada’s 150th anniversary, including support for 52 Connection grants, 11 presentations by emerging scholars during the Walrus Talks 150 13 week national tour, and a special Canada 150 podcast with SSHRC scholars, being produced by Library and Archives Canada. Mention was made of the University of Waterloo’s recent Arts Research Collision Day event, with special thanks expressed to SSHRC Leader, Tim Kenyon. The event provided an excellent opportunity to facilitate new connections between arts and humanities faculty with local industry, as a follow up to the Building a Creative and Entrepreneurial Canada initiative organized by SSHRC, Startup Canada and Google last Fall.

Gobel also shared preliminary findings from a survey on the first phase of the ICF initiative. Early feedback from key stakeholders highlighted the value of SSHRC’s support for knowledge mobilisation activities, including our role as a convenor to facilitate connections between researchers and cross-sectoral stakeholders. SSHRC Council endorsed the next framework for ICF in November 2016. The associated implementation plan is currently under development and will be presented at the SSHRC Leaders meeting in December 2017, following its approval by Governing Council in November 2017.

SSHRC Leaders Small Group Discussions

The SSHRC Leaders formed small discussion groups on two main topics related to either multidisciplinary/ interdisciplinary research or international collaboration. The following sets of questions framed their discussions:

**Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Research**

1. What innovations are taking place in academia to facilitate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, and how are such innovations supported? How should SSHRC adapt to such initiatives?
2. How can SSHRC and its sister agencies CIHR and NSERC, better support graduate students and postdoctoral trainees who wish to pursue interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and studies?
3. What additional concrete mechanisms could SSHRC establish to best support merit review of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, especially when such research spans the mandates of two or more agencies? For instance, would a mixed peer review committee for Insight Grants and Discovery Grants be desirable?
International Collaboration

1. Understanding the evolving context for international collaboration in research:
   a. Have the conditions for international collaboration in social sciences and humanities research changed over the last decade? What will the conditions likely be in 5 to 10 years?
   b. What are the main factors that are changing the context for international collaboration?

2. Who are the actors in international research collaboration?
   a. Who are the main actors that influence international research collaboration: researchers, research institutions, granting agencies, existing international networks, others?
   b. What are the motivations and the opportunities for each of these to promote and develop international collaborations?

3. Strengthening Canadian international research collaboration:
   a. What more can post-secondary institutions do in terms of international collaborative research?
   b. What more can post-secondary institutions do in terms of international collaborative research?

Plenary - Q&A Session

SSHRC Leaders from Nipissing University (Pavlina Radia) and Dalhousie University (Howard Ramos) moderated the discussions and reported back during the plenary session. The main points are summarized below:

Multiprofessional/Interdisciplinary Research:

- Major funding agencies have acknowledged the importance of “new thinking”, highlighting collaboration and interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary research as key elements to Canada's successful future, including SSHRC in its current Strategic Plan.
- Most SSHRC funding opportunities currently have multidisciplinary committees and these committees include peer reviewers from multiple disciplines; however, what is needed are more reviewers who conduct interdisciplinary research, engaging with multidisciplinary methodologies.
- A hypothetical, mixed SSHRC-NSERC committee would be merely an extension of the present system, including representatives from multiple disciplines but who do not necessarily conduct inter- or multidisciplinary research.
- The Naylor Report, as well as participants, identified several enduring issues relative to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and funding such as: the limits of traditional merit review models, cross-council funding challenges and undervaluing or lack of understanding of the particularities of this type of research.
- New ways of thinking require new ways of quantifying and qualifying research outputs as they inevitably challenge current research codes, disciplinary divisions, evaluation criteria and their weight, and standard publishing outputs.
- Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who engage in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary innovation in research should be celebrated, and mentorship programs created or strengthened to support them.
- Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary pedagogy are an important aspect of research training.
- Dedicated funding for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research should be considered.
International Collaboration:

- Students are key drivers for international collaboration. Graduate students may travel and seed connections to new sites and spark potential partnerships with universities and institutions in other communities, as well as research collaborations.
- Technology plays a role in international collaborations and through the Internet with Skype, for example. These tools have made it easier to communicate, but there is a need for a more stable communication platform than Skype.
- Institutions play a key role in naming internationalization as a key priority.
- The government also plays a role in naming internationalization as a key priority or mandate, as it should incorporate social sciences and humanities into international delegations, such as trade, to move from STEM to STEAM delegations.
- Ontario and Québec have been provincial leaders in terms of funding international students and international research through their provincial granting programs. These could serve as possible templates to consider.
- Embassies play an important role in linking researchers to opportunities that exist in other countries.
- There is recognition that the European Union and Asia are important partners and in particular, China. Other promising emerging partners such as the high performing economies in Africa and Nigeria were noted.
- Disciplines and their national organizations can also play a role in internationalization by offering mandates, policy and normative briefs on how to conduct international collaboration.
- Connections, Partnerships, and Insight Development Grants all allow for international co-applicants. In addition, there is interest in considering this for Insight Grants as well, but this would not extend to having any international principal investigators.
- Opportunities to tap into existing networks (e.g., Francophonie, Commonwealth) should be pursued in order to tap into academic networks.

Adjournment

Ursula Gobel thanked the SSHRC Leaders for their engagement during the meeting and extended a special thanks to Jean-Paul Boudreau, the SSHRC Leader for Ryerson University, for hosting the 2017 SSHRC Leaders Congress meeting. She mentioned that the presentation materials from the meeting would be posted on the Leaders Extranet site by June 2nd and that a summary report would follow within the next few weeks. SSHRC Leaders were asked to complete the meeting evaluation form. The dates and location for the Leaders annual general meeting were also shared: December 7-8th, at the Library and Archives Canada. Lastly, a call for volunteers was made to establish an advisory group that will assist with the development of the agenda for the upcoming meeting in Ottawa.