New report finds Canada competes well in research on international level

According to a new report by the Council of Canadian Academies (CCA), done at the request of Industry Canada, Canada is well-positioned globally in both the output and impact of its science and technology (S&T). Canada performs especially well in 6 fields: clinical medicine, historical studies, information and communication technologies, physics and astronomy, psychology and cognitive science, and visual and performing arts. Fields of specialization were also identified in specific provinces, with Manitoba noted for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The report observes that with less than 0.5% of the world's population, Canada produces 4.1% of the world's research papers and close to 5% of the world's most frequently cited papers. Ontario, Quebec, BC, and Alberta are the powerhouses of Canadian S&T, together accounting for 97% of total national output in terms of research papers. These provinces also have the best performance in patent-related measures and the highest per capita numbers of PhD students, accounting for more than 90 per cent of doctoral graduates in the country in 2009.

The report also concludes that Canada is part of a network of international science and technology collaboration that includes the most scientifically advanced countries in the world. This has helped Canada attract high-quality researchers from abroad, with net migration of researchers to Canada occurring over the past decade. In a survey of over 5,000 leading international scientists, Canada's scientific research enterprise was ranked fourth highest in the world, after the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany.

Federal S&T investment set to decline

Federal spending on science and technology is set to decline for the second year in a row according to data from Statistics Canada. A 5.9% forecast drop in 2012-2013 to $10.9B is expected, making it the lowest investment in the last 5 years. Related scientific activities will fall 8.6% while research and development was down 4.3%.

Research Money credits the end of stimulus funding and government actions to eliminate the annual deficit as major reasons for the decline. When added to the previous year's drop funding is now 8.9% lower than the historic high of $12B in 2010-2011.

14 out of 16 major federal departments and agencies experienced declines with only the Canada Foundation for Innovation and Health Canada receiving increases. Statistics Canada experienced the sharpest cut, with a 30% year-over-year decline. Significant cuts were also made to the Canadian Space Agency (15%) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (14.6%) as well as Industry Canada (12.7%) and National Defense (10.7%).

AUCC Day on the Hill

University Presidents from across Canada descended on Parliament Hill on October 23 for the AUCC Day on the Hill. This year's message focused on university and private sector partnerships and how they drive innovation, foster global linkages and contribute to a stronger Canada.
R&D spending up at Canadian Universities

According to Statistics Canada spending on research and development (R&D) was up 5.6% to $11.4 billion in 2010/2011 from the previous year in Canada's higher education institutions. The sector comprises universities and affiliated research hospitals, experimental stations and clinics.

Since 2000, spending on R&D by these institutions has almost doubled. R&D spending in the natural sciences and engineering field was up 5.4% to $9.1 billion in 2010/2011 from 2009/2010. This field has accounted for about 80% of total R&D spending in higher education over the past decade. In the social sciences and humanities field, R&D spending increased 6.6% to $2.3 billion. In terms of funding, the higher education sector itself contributed $5.1 billion toward R&D, or 45% of the total. The federal government and provincial governments combined contributed $4.3 billion, or 37%.

Provincially, R&D spending in the higher education sector increased in every province in 2010/2011 except New Brunswick. Quebec and Ontario combined accounted for almost two-thirds of R&D spending in the higher education sector. These two provinces have the highest concentration of universities, research hospitals, experimental stations and clinics in Canada.

In Manitoba, spending in 2010/2011 is up 7.4 to $350.9M over the previous year and up significantly from the 2000/2001 total of $189.6M.

Federal Budget 2013

In its pre-budget submission to the federal government, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) recommends that the government adopt a 3-pronged approach to investments and policies (research, international education, and Aboriginal higher education) that will continue to build upon Canadian universities' competitive advantage. Recommendations include enhancing support for the tri-councils and the Canada Foundation for Innovation, including the institutional costs of research, and investing in initiatives to enhance marketing and branding efforts to attract foreign students to Canada and leverage existing investments. AUCC says a program to improve PSE outcomes for Aboriginal people should include the following elements: university "reach-back" mechanisms; mentoring programs; and support and student services programs.

The University had the opportunity to make a presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance on October 16 to share its views on priorities for the next federal budget. The presentation focused on three main areas: investments in research, investments in international education, and investments in Aboriginal higher education.

Manitoba Legislature set to resume

The Manitoba Legislature will be returning on November 19th for the 2nd session of the 40th Legislature. The new session will start with a Speech from the Throne.
Update on Government Engagement

The University has been busy over the last couple of months with a number of visits and meetings with government. Highlights include:

- Hosting Premier Greg Selinger, Mayor Sam Katz and Minister of State (Transport) Steven Fletcher for the groundbreaking of the new Active Living Centre
- Touring a group of 6 Provincial Ministers and MLAs at the National Centre for Livestock and the Environment
- Highlighting the innovative infrastructure research at the University for Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation Steve Ashton
- Showcasing industry partnerships for the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade Peter Bjornson
- Sharing the University's role as a cultural centre in our province, as well as our community engagement work in the inner city, with Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and local MLA for the Bannatyne campus Flor Marcelino
- Positioning the University on the national stage by meeting with key federal Ministers and MPs, including Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty
- Meeting with a number of federal and provincial deputy ministers and senior government staff

Active Living Centre Announcement

The University of Manitoba broke ground, or better yet asphalt, on its new Active Living Centre on October 11th. Premier Greg Selinger, Minister of State (Transport) Steven Fletcher and Mayor Sam Katz were on hand, along with President Barnard, Dean of Kinesiology and Recreation Management Jane Watkinson, UMSU President Bilan Arte and former U of M Bison Israel Idonije. Also participating in the event were David and Ruth Asper.

The new four-storey, open-concept facility will house a high-performance training facility for elite athletes, a state-of-the-art indoor running track, a 12-meter climbing wall, an Applied Research Centre, a gathering area for students, strength and conditioning facilities, and three group workout studios. The 100,000-square-foot facility will support an active lifestyle for students, staff, and the community alike. When completed in 2015, the modern, eco-friendly building will accommodate upwards of 2,000 patrons per day, making it the largest active living facility in Manitoba.

The Federal Government is contributing $15M to the project, the Province $5M and the City of Winnipeg is contributing $2M.
Visionary Conversations

Following an award-winning first year, Visionary Conversations is back for another round of thought-provoking discussions. Join our panelists in a discussion of the issues that impact Canada’s North: resource development, climate change and sovereignty, as well as the interests and effects on Indigenous populations.

The True North: Canada’s Final Frontier
Wednesday, November 21, 2012
Robert B. Schultz Theatre, St. John’s College, Fort Garry Campus
Reception in Galleria - 6:30PM-7:00PM
Panel Discussion – 7:00PM-8:30PM

Our full season of topics and speakers is available here.

RSVP for the event to: Visionary_Conversations@umanitoba.ca. You can also interact with the University of Manitoba on Twitter (#umvisionary) and Facebook.