CFI awards $5 million to researchers

BY FRANK NOLAN
Research Promotion

On November 27, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) announced $5 million in new funding to support two major research programs at the University of Manitoba. One project brings together researchers from across Canada as part of an advanced social sciences research network, while the other involves the use of state-of-the-art analysis tools to understand chemical processes important to a wide range of environmental issues, including the safe disposal of nuclear waste.

“The CFI’s support of cutting-edge research infrastructure has transformed Canada’s research landscape and increased the country’s international competitiveness,” said Eliot Phillipson, President and CEO of the CFI. “Investments like these have allowed the University of Manitoba to become a destination of choice for some of the world’s top research talent.”

Dean Emeritus Raymond Currie, a senior scholar in the department of sociology, leads the National Research Data Centre (NRDC) Network, which has received $4 million in new funding. Originally established in 2000, the network has grown to involve close to 40 universities across Canada. The network gives social science researchers access to comprehensive Statistics Canada data sets, provides training in the analysis of complex longitudinal data, and works to strengthen the links between social scientists and the potential users of the knowledge they generate, including governments and policy makers. Research projects are organized around a number of major themes, including the social determinants of health, early child development, and a variety of economic issues.

The new funding will provide for upgrades to secure data transfer infrastructure, as well as supporting the Data Documentation Initiative, which aims to standardize the way data sets are maintained so that they can be more directly compared with findings from other countries.

CFI also awarded $1 million to Frank Hawthorne, Canada Research Chair in crystallography and mineralogy, to support advanced studies of Earth materials. The funding will provide for state-of-the-art X-ray diffraction and spectroscopy equipment that will allow researchers to examine the structure of minerals and complex chemical reactions at a molecular level.

Hawthorne is one of the world’s leading mineralogists. The infrastructure will support his work in characterizing the crystal structures in complex rock-forming minerals, and the chemical reactions involved in a wide range of processes that have a significant impact on the environment, including the disposal of nuclear waste, and acid mine drainage.

“I am very pleased that CFI has selected these projects for support, since both of them have the potential to produce very real benefits for the people of Canada and for the health of our environment,” said Joanne Keselman, Vice-President (Research) at the University of Manitoba.

Nursing research at St. Amant

BY SUSAN PARKER
Communications Coordinator

In the Faculty of Nursing, research associate Bev Temple holds an innovative position jointly funded by the University of Manitoba and St. Amant. The pilot position is a three-year term, with the possibility of extension, and it provides a valuable opportunity for Temple’s students to participate in her research activities at St. Amant.

The goal of Temple’s program is to increase the amount of nursing research around individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) with the hopes of improving their quality of life, which is the central theme of the research centre at St. Amant.

“A new initiative increases the amount of research we can do and also trains new professionals,” Temple said.

Temple’s team includes St. Amant’s director of research Dickie Yu, psychology, Shahin Shooshtari, family and social sciences, and St. for an program manager Toby Martin.

To demonstrate this commitment to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, St. Amant recently changed its name from the “St. Amant Centre” to better represent the wide range of community services it provides. St. Amant is a comprehensive resource for Manitobans with developmental disabilities and their families. Services include a large main residence, 54 community sites and homes, a research centre, a school and a daycare. St. Amant also offers an effective program for children with autism and another for families who care for a developmentally disabled individual at home.

Currently working with Nursing instructor Elaine Mordoch, the team is studying student nurses and their attitudes toward individuals with intellectual disabilities. Temple’s research is based on the idea that nursing students may not recognize their interaction with these individuals as part of their nursing role.

“I hope my research will reveal ways to influence the curriculum and educate nurses to better understand and have positive attitudes towards individuals with intellectual disabilities,” Temple said. “We can improve the care that these individuals receive when they reach the health care system by starting with the new nurses entering the profession.”

On January 5, 2007, Temple and her team will be describing this project and others at a research promotion as part of the Faculty of Nursing Research Seminar Series. Their presentation, Research Opportunities/Collaboration at St. Amant, will take place from noon until 1:00 in Room 344 of the Helen Glass Centre for Nursing, and everyone is invited to attend.

For more information, please call Susan Parker at 474-7021 or by email at susan_parker@umanitoba.ca