

CONSULTATIONS

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS AHEAD OF THE 2019 BUDGET

*The ARC
Mobilized for the 2019 federal budget*

August 2018

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Mobilized for the recognition of collegiate research in order to maintain Canada's competitiveness, the ARC is submitting four recommendations as part of the pre-budget consultations ahead of the 2019 budget.

Recommendation 1

That the government increase the total amount available for the entire spectrum of collegiate research, from discovery to innovation, in the three generally recognized sectors – natural sciences and engineering; humanities and social sciences, arts and literature; health – and that projects be led by cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, inter-order or international teams, so that the contribution of college researchers to research and innovation and, more importantly, to Canada's competitiveness, have greater impact than it does at this present time.

Recommendation 2

That the government contribute to covering the expenses incurred in the management of college-level teaching institution research projects and to maintaining a local, regional, national or international research environment by paying indirect research costs to institutions.

Recommendation 3

That the government support the training of the next generation of scientists, since some training programs are offered solely at the college level, and that certain types of literacy, such as innovation literacy, are not only closely related to higher education, but increasingly important for individual or collective development.

Recommendation 4

That the government give greater support than at present to private, public or not-for-profit companies interested in supporting research and innovation.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the government increase the total amount available for the entire spectrum of collegiate research, from discovery to innovation, in the three generally recognized sectors – natural sciences and engineering; humanities and social sciences, arts and literature; health – and that projects be led by cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, inter-order or international teams, so that the contribution of college researchers to research and innovation and, more importantly, to Canada's competitiveness, have greater impact than it does at this present time.

By granting to college-level teaching institutions all the direct costs needed to develop their research capabilities, the government would allow them to increase their contribution to research and innovation and thus to contribute more to Canada's competitiveness. Although it is a voluntary activity, in Québec, collegiate research has existed since the creation of Cegeps, that is, for more than 50 years. Given its voluntary nature, one of the most decisive reasons that college research exists is that those who carry out that research are released from other duties. This is an essential condition for colleges to expand their research capabilities, but nor can we ignore the costs related directly to research. For example, it is important to consider new emerging requirements, such as those set out by the granting agencies pertaining to the environmental responsibility of researchers or the management of research data. The funds provided must be sufficient, regularly indexed and paid directly to the colleges – and not to the research, innovation or transfer centres – in accordance with their schedule of activities. Three principles can guide the government in terms of direct costs: maintain the voluntary nature of collegiate research activity; financially support the participation of a researcher in a project as soon as he or she is hired by an educational institution so as to support the recruitment and retention of staff; provide the necessary financial resources to carry out activities related to research at all stages of the process, from the development of a project to the transfer of knowledge resulting from it. Moreover, federal investment would benefit by realizing that many types of projects are not suited to financial partnerships with private enterprise. Too many activities cannot be carried out using this model, for example, those that are very relevant in the short term but that are situated more at the microsocial level; those that fall under the prevention category, which includes the fields of public health, the environment, poverty or social inclusion; those which could have a major long-term impact and which belong more to basic research; and those which are carried out in collaboration with partners of limited resources, such as community partners. In this regard, we recommend that the government increase the budget of the Community and College Social Innovation Fund, make this fund permanent, and, in addition, ensure that its rollout fits firmly within in the prevailing culture of the humanities and social sciences sector. This fund has enabled many communities to benefit from the capacity of college researchers to contribute to their well-being. It should be noted that in Quebec, the volume of research activities is roughly equal in this sector to that in the science and engineering sector. Finally, similarly, many very successful research and innovation initiatives within the Canadian college network suggest that the time has come for the government to support projects that fall under the purview of the health sector. College researchers are already active in that sector.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the government contribute to covering the expenses incurred in the management of college-level teaching institution research projects and to maintaining a local, regional, national or international research environment by paying indirect research costs to institutions.

Post-secondary teaching institutions need the support of the federal government to cover the operating costs that result from research activity. Recently, there has been a broad consensus on this issue within the college research community: support for college teaching institutions needs to be reviewed so that they can count on those allocations for all government-funded projects and that the costs are sufficiently covered. With respect to the College and Community Innovation Program as well as the Community and College Social Innovation Fund, those costs are currently included in the grant. As for the other programs administered by the three federal granting agencies, for the fiscal year 2018-2019, the approximate value of the subsidies awarded to 41 Quebec colleges by the Research Support Fund varies between \$768 and \$49,634. Indirect costs, necessary to develop research, are sorely lacking for all collegiate research funded by the government of Canada, and should be paid in addition to the direct costs for all projects. As a result of the current situation, college researchers suffer from certain constraints, for example, their access to scientific literature. According to calculations made by Colleges and Institutes Canada for the entire country, those costs total \$40 million.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the government support the training of the next generation of scientists, since some training programs are offered solely at the college level, and that certain types of literacy, such as innovation literacy, are not only closely related to higher education, but increasingly important for individual or collective development.

Research, no matter what type, is inherent to higher education. Higher education, according to UNESCO, plays “a vital role in stimulating critical and creative thinking and generating and disseminating knowledge for social, cultural, ecological and economic development. ... Through their research function, they ... underpin the development of analytical and creative capacities that enable solutions to be found for local and global problems in all fields of sustainable development.” This is one of the reasons why Canada-wide college research can help increase Canada's competitiveness. A given number of college students possess the cognitive and affective characteristics necessary to engage in research activities that could train them on the scientific level and, perhaps lead them to pursue a career in science, in one way or another. From this perspective, we encourage the government to support their commitment through research teams, particularly to increase the capacity of institutions to initiate students to research, in respect of labour needs in research, innovation or knowledge transferring and, more importantly, the need to train the scientific or innovative spirit of young people. This initiation can be an integral part of college training for those interested in science, whether it is to pursue a career as a researcher, as a professional or a research professional, or as a laboratory or research technician. In this regard, we applaud the recent initiative by the Mitacs, which recently granted college students eligibility to its Accelerate program. Not only would the government of Canada benefit from supporting more internships, but it could greatly contribute to improving collective well-being – and eventually reducing spending – if it could ensure that internships in humanities and social sciences or health were also accessible to young people interested in those sectors. It could also innovate by funding the implementation of work-study projects in the physical, human or artistic technical programs as part of research projects.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That the government give greater support than at present to private, public or not-for-profit companies interested in supporting research and innovation.

Private companies, public corporations, that is, those controlled by the state, and not-for-profit organizations that are market producers of goods or services, or who serve businesses, as defined by the OECD, collaborate with college teaching institutions and their research or transfer groups because they focus on education and see it as an asset to collective well-being, including their own. Partnering with an educational institution is a testament to that support for all to see. Increasing incentives to this effect would encourage businesses to collaborate in research or innovation. For example, increasing the percentage of tax credits for training and support could have a positive impact on for-profit businesses. As well, some programs could include financial resources to ensure that not-for-profit organizations receive a grant equal to the amount required to replace their staff participating in a research project, as is the case, for example, with the Community and College Social Innovation Fund. As for researchers, the funding made available to them must enable them to make themselves known to companies outside the region in which the teaching institution with which they are affiliated is located, because their expertise is related to a research area and not a geographic landmark. In the era of mobilization of knowledge, resources must be available to work with companies as much at the knowledge-production stage, from the outset of the project, as at the time of their dissemination. The scope of the measures must absolutely correspond to the scope of the expertise. Businesses in the humanities and social sciences often face enormous economic challenges, and it is essential that budgetary measures take these issues into account. For businesses in all fields, support for applied research must be seen as beneficial in the short term and would undoubtedly have the effect of increasing Canada's competitiveness.