

SOBEY RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5

DECEMBER 19TH, 2025

As we come close to the end of the year, we look forward to spending some memorable times with our loved ones. We look forward as well to reflect on the year that has passed, recognizing our success, challenges, and aspirations. This year has been eventful for our university and school: members of the new administration assuming their roles and our school completing existing initiatives and initiating new activities and engagements. Celebrating the 25th anniversary of our PhD program, obtaining EQUIS reaccreditation, adopting our new strategic plan (Lead with Purpose 2026-2030), and winning the Enactus world cup were particularly important. We have established a productive relationship with our new President and vice-Chancellor, Dr. Michael Khan, and Provost & Vice-President, Academic and Research (PVPAR), Dr. Shannon Dea, to move forward with our new strategic plan.

In this issue, we are pleased to report diverse research work of faculty on Cybersecurity, machine learning, limitations of government funding, and impact of sex preference for children. Along with securing funding from SSHRC, faculty members secured MITACS funding in collaboration with Nova Scotia Health, highlighting our faculty capacity in meaningful engagement with our industry and governmental partners. Faculty activities continue to enhance our research through postdoctoral and PhD student supervision. Finally, it is always a privilege to celebrate the success of our school, faculty and staff members. We ended the year by introducing several excellence awards in research, teaching, and service.

Thank you for your active engagement and contributions for making the first year of this newsletter successful. Your efforts and encouragement made a big difference in continuing with the initiative.

Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Research Advancement Committee

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Sobey News



Faculty, administration and staff

1. **EQUIS reaccreditation:** Sobey School of Business has been reaccredited for three years. Many thanks to all engaged alumni, administrators, faculty, student, and staff members.
2. **Sobey Strategic Plan:** The Lead with Purpose strategic plan has been adopted for 2026-2030. Several initiatives have been taken to operationalize the plan in the coming years.
3. **Excellence awards:** Several excellence awards have been introduced to celebrate the success of the Soby faculty and staff members, involving research, teaching, and service. To facilitate better engagement, separate categories of awards have been introduced for tenured and untenured faculty members. Dr. Ethan Pancer (tenured faculty track) and Dr. Xichen Zhang (untenured faculty track) were recognized for excellence in research. Dr. Mohamed Drira (tenured faculty track) and Dr. Annika Voltan (untenured faculty track) were recognized for excellence in service. Dr. Amna Chalwati (tenured faculty track) was recognized for teaching excellence. Finally, Manar Salem was recognized for her excellence in serving our school as a staff member.
4. **Engagement with the university leadership:** The decanal team has engaged with the new President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Michael Khan, and Provost & Vice-President, Academic and Research (PVPAR), Dr. Shannon Dea, to inform them about the school, its potential, and its needs. The engagement has been productive.
5. **Sobey PhD program:** Sobey PhD program celebrated its 25th anniversary in September. Over the past years, it graduated over 70 PhD students. They are serving in various academic positions in Canada and overseas. It welcomed its new PhD student cohort for 2025 in September as well.
6. **Enhancing student recruitment:** The Sobey school continues to work with the central university administration for enhancing recruitment initiatives. Faculty members from Sobey participated in multiple recruitment events organized by the university during the Fall semester. At the school level, various initiatives have been taken to improve success, involving visiting local high schools and high schools in Atlantic Canada, engaging targeted student groups using existing expertise such as AI, and engaging local students in various Sobey events. Additional initiatives are being pursued to develop new international partnership.
7. **Faculty members with top 2% research citations:** We have several faculty members from Saint Mary's University with top 2% citations this year including Dr. Tony Charles and Dr. Kevin Kelloway.



Events

1. **Hosting professional conferences:** Atlantic Provinces Tax Conference was hosted at our school on November 7, 2025, involving over 200 participants.
2. **Responsible Leadership Day:** 7th Annual Responsible Leadership Day was celebrated on Friday, November 21, 2025. Selwyn Crittendon, CEO and CSO of IKEA Canada, was the featured speaker this year. This year's celebration involved over 300 participants.
3. **EQUIS Re-accreditation and Excellence Event:** Our school celebrated its success in EQUIS reaccreditation and faculty and staff excellence in research, teaching and service during an event on December 11, 2025, in the Anne J. & Albert T. Isaacs Commons. Awards for research, teaching and service excellence were distributed to faculty members during the event.



Student success

1. **Student competitions:** The 2025 Enactus World Champion is Team Canada, represented by Saint Mary's University. They won the prestigious competition in Bangkok. Students from the IMPACT program received an award for Best Storytelling in the 2025 McGill International Portfolio Challenge. Undergraduate and graduate students also participated in different case competitions held in Boston University, McMaster University, and Concordia University.
2. **Students' participation in events and site visits:** Students from the school attended several events hosted by Halifax Chamber of Commerce and CFA Society. A group of 25 students was also invited to visit Sobey's Headquarters.

Faculty Corner



Majid Taghavi is an Associate Professor of Management Science at the Sobey School of Business. He joined Saint Mary's University in 2019 after three years as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the School of Health Administration at Dalhousie University. He completed his Ph.D. in Management Science at the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University, following a master's degree in industrial engineering and a bachelor's degree in mathematics.

Majid's primary research area is healthcare operations. His work focuses on improving patient flow, capacity planning, and resource allocation across complex health systems. He integrates predictive analytics, machine learning, and stochastic optimization to create decision-support tools that help hospitals deliver more efficient, timely, and equitable care. Several grants, including the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC Discovery Grant) and Research Nova Scotia (New Investigator Grant), have supported his research program. Majid has led multiple applied projects with Nova Scotia Health and the IWK Health Centre. In 2025, he and two other Management Science faculty members received one of the Sobey Post-Doctoral Fellowships in Emerging Disciplines, which supports research at the intersection of machine learning and health systems optimization.

Majid is actively involved in teaching across three programs at the Sobey School of Business: the Bachelor of Commerce, the MBA, and the Master of Business Analytics. Beyond his research and teaching, he contributes to the broader scholarly community through his service as an Associate Editor for Health Systems and as Secretary of the Canadian Operational Research Society (CORS).

Faculty Corner



Daphne Rixon, PhD, FCPA, FCMA

Daphne Rixon is Associate Professor of Accounting, Saint Mary's University. She has a PhD from the University of Warwick, United Kingdom and is a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) and Certified Management Accountant (CMA). Daphne has three degrees from Memorial University (BA, BCom (Hons), MBA). Prior to becoming an academic, she worked in the private and public sectors for over 20 years as Controller and Director of Finance.

Dr. Rixon has a very productive research program which has resulted in over 50 peer-reviewed publications and 100 conference presentations. She has won several research awards including the Emerald Literati Network 2018 Award for Excellence her paper co-authored with Larry Corrigan: "A dramaturgical accounting of cooperative performance indicators. It was published in *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*.

Daphne is Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Co-operative Accounting and Management*. In addition to her position of Associate Professor, she is also the Executive Director of the Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Co-operatives (CEARC). Dr. Rixon teaches managerial and cost accounting in the undergraduate program as well as Accounting and Reporting in the Masters of Management for Co-operatives and Credit Unions (MMCCU) program.

Dr. Rixon is currently focused on developing a national SDG Dashboard that will enable co-operatives to record their SDG performance. This will enable co-operatives to report on their contributions to the SDGs and will also eventually provide a benchmark for the sector. In addition to her research on co-operatives, Daphne works with various Indigenous communities in the Atlantic provinces on healthcare and business planning initiatives. She has recently received funding of \$224,000 from the Action for Health Fund to work with Eskasoni Mental Health Services to develop educational programming for health care staff on how to ensure Indigenous people feel welcome in the health care system.

PhD Students' Corner



My name is **Aparajit Sridharan (Appu)**, and I am currently a third-year PhD student in Management. I am also an SMU alum, as I completed my MBA at Sobey's back in 2021. Apart from my MBA, I also hold an MSc in Genetic Manipulation and Molecular Cell Biology from the University of Sussex, which led me to work as a scientist for seven years in the field of Bioinformatics, and two peer-reviewed publications in that field. I chose the Sobey School of Business as I have had experience with its strong reputation through my years in my MBA classes here, and felt a continuation of my academics in management with a PhD here aligned well with my own career goals.

My research interest lies in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). A study I am currently working on with Dr. Hao Lu and Dr. Xiaoyu Liu explores CSR's influence on corporate longevity. While there is an abundance of research that explores how CSR improves a firm's thriving ability, the study into how CSR may influence its longevity is still in its nascent stages. Acknowledging the underlying idiosyncratic nature of CSR, my research aims to understand the role of CSR strategies on corporate longevity.

Outside of Academia, I enjoy hiking and playing with my dogs, who can definitely be a handful (I have two Australian shepherds). Saint Mary's has provided me with a supportive and collaborative community, and I will be more than happy to reciprocate this to any new or returning student. So, let's get connected.

PhD Students' Corner



My name is Hengyurou Shu (Skye), and I am a third-year PhD student in Management at Saint Mary's University (SMU), where my research focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, and emerging green manufacturing. Under the supervision of Dr. Hao Lu and Dr. Xiaoyu Liu, my current work centers on two interconnected areas.

First, I examine the potential nonlinear relationship between corporate life cycle stages and CSR. Second, I investigate how Chinese and American firms adjust their CSR strategies amid U.S.–China trade tensions, particularly when operating under heightened uncertainty and institutional pressures. Building on this foundation, I also plan to further advance my research on the dynamic adaptation mechanisms of CSR strategies within China's emerging green manufacturing.

Beyond my scholarly work, I serve as the Embassy-appointed liaison for the Chinese student community at SMU. I am also the founder of a consulting company that facilitates business and education collaborations across China, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This cross-border professional experience provides practical insights into organizational responses to institutional environments, thereby enriching and complementing my scholarly work.

Peer Reviewed Journals

Robitaille, M.-C. (2025). The Impact of Sex Preference for Children on Birth Spacing and Differential Stopping Behaviour in Afghanistan. *Population*. 80(1), 41-65.
<https://doi.org/10.3917/popu.2501.0041>

Ji, D., Liu, M., Li, D., **Fan, H.**, & Zhan, F. (2025). Hidden Costs of Government-Guided Funds: Evidence from Executive-Employee Pay Gaps. *Finance Research Letters*, 108468.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2025.108468>

Agarwal, N., Agarwal, S., **Chalwati, A.**, Sisodia, S., & Trabelsi, S. (2025). Cybersecurity and cost management. *The British Accounting Review*, 2025, Article 101783.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bar.2025.101783>

Zhao, Q., Blake, J., **Taghavi, M.**, & Vanberkel, P. (2025). Combining simulation and machine learning in healthcare: a literature review. *Journal of Simulation*, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17477778.2025.2549092>

Sarty, J., Fitzpatrick, E., Hurley, K., Vanberkel, P., & **Taghavi, M.** (2025). Creating a guide to identify patients who may leave without being seen: A machine learning approach. *Operations Research, Data Analytics and Logistics*, 200486.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ordal.2025.200486>

Book and Book Chapters

Hervieux, C., Lu, H., McKee, M. C., Shourkaei, M., & Dunham, B. (2025). Acting responsibly: Ethical decision-making in business [Pressbooks OER]. Saint Mary's University.
<https://pressbooks.atlanticoer-relatlantique.ca/actingresponsibly/> (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Miles, K., Vanberkel, P. **Taghavi, M.**, Decker, A., (2025). A Simulation Model for Outpatient Physio- therapy Schedules Using Resource Pooling Advanced Systems Modeling and Simulation, Elsevier.

Conference Paper Presentations

Shourkaei, M. M. (2025). Building collective reflexivity in classrooms to address grand challenges. Atlantic Universities Teaching Showcase. Fredericton NB, Oct 18th.

Research-Related Awards and Honors

Daphne Rixon	Insight Development Grant \$64,770, (as co-applicant with Dr. Heidi Weigand, Dalhousie University) Project: Breaking barriers and facing backlash: Indigenous women leader's experiences in Canada
Michael Zhang	MITACS Accelate funding 2025 "Advancing Health Outcomes through Data-Driven Analytics" Partner Organization Nova Scotia Health,. \$600,000.
Majid Taghavi	Sobey Post-Doctoral Fellowships in Emerging Disciplines