

Research Support Fund

What are indirect costs of research?

The cost of conducting research includes not only the direct costs of the project (i.e. research materials, supplies, graduate student stipends, etc.) but also a range of indirect costs. These indirect costs include expenditures that are frequently taken for granted, but they are real costs incurred by the University to supply the infrastructure required to allow a sponsored research project to proceed. Indirect costs include support for libraries, the provision and maintenance of space (e.g., utilities, custodial, security, etc.), computing and networking support, accounting and other administrative services, the creation and maintenance of regulatory bodies such as the Human Research Ethics Board, Animal Care Committee, etc. Unless the indirect costs of research are recovered in the form of overhead charges to the sponsors of research, they are expensed within the operating budgets of the University.

Research Support Fund

The Government of Canada introduced the Indirect Costs Program (ICP) in 2003. Renamed the Research Support Fund in 2016, the program provides Canadian universities and colleges with an annual grant to help pay for a portion of their indirect costs of research. By alleviating the financial burden of expenses, such as lighting and heating and required personnel to administer research activities of faculty, the program ultimately helps researchers concentrate on cutting-edge discoveries and scholarship excellence.

RSF Impact at Saint Mary's University

Saint Mary's has undergone a significant transformation over the past two decades in its research enterprise. We have moved from a primarily undergraduate teaching institution to one with a healthy mix of undergraduate, graduate (including 22 Masters level programs, 5 PhD programs – with the Business Administration program now having 3 disciplinary streams – and 1 Executive Doctorate program launched in 2023) and research programs. Research funding and activity has been increasing steadily. For example, in 2002, Saint Mary's was not even ranked in Research Info Source's top 50 Research Universities in Canada

https://www.researchinfosource.com/top50_univ.php). In the latest ranking (2025 fiscal year), Saint Mary's was listed 46th (having stayed in the top 50 consistently since 2002). Given that virtually all Canadian Universities have increased their research activity over this time period, for Saint Mary's to achieve, and maintain, this ranking is remarkable. Even more impressive is Saint Mary's performance in Research Info Source's "Research University of the Year" (RUY) ranking, which measures not only input of external funding to support research, but also the intensity and impact metrics. In the RUY ranking, Saint Mary's is ranked 17th in the Undergraduate University tier in the 2023 result – and has been as high as 35th overall (in 2015). In 2014, Research Info Source also ranked Canadian universities for International Research Collaborations as measured by the proportion of total publications co-authored by researchers outside of Canada for the period 2008-12. Saint Mary's University was ranked the highest in Canada, with 54% of its publications including overseas researchers.

These objective measures, plus the "on the ground" evidence of the increases in research infrastructure, support and activity, is aiding the University in being able to attract high quality professors, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Also, the excitement generated in the research arena at Saint Mary's is helping in the retention of our researchers. The RSF plays a vital role in the achievement these successes by providing the support in the form of human, library and facilities resources to fuel our research activities.

Saint Mary's started receiving funding from the Research Support Fund (formerly Indirect Costs Program) in 2001-02. Since that time, the level of externally sponsored research funding has increased more than quadrupled from under \$2M annually to averaging \$14.7M per year over the last 3 fiscal years (2023/24/25). While there are many factors which have contributed to this remarkable increase in research funding, the RSF grant has been instrumental and necessary in enabling the University to support the increase in research activity which has accompanied the increase in funding.

In 2025-26 Saint Mary's received an RSF grant totaling \$1,374,799, with an additional \$14,415 targeted toward support for Research Security initiatives.

(this page to be completed when 2025-26 RSF Outcomes Report is filed in Aug 2026)