OPEN SESSION

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – OCTOBER 16, 2019 (OPEN SESSION)

2. BUSINESS ARISING

3. CHAIR'S COMMENTS AND UPDATE

4. PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN EMPIRICAL SOCIAL SCIENCES (CRESS)

   3 - 19  CRESS Proposal (APPROVAL)

5. OTHER BUSINESS
October 8, 2019

TO: University Planning Committee

FROM: Dr. Jim Dunn, Acting Vice-President, Research

RE: Centre for Research on Empirical Social Sciences (CRESS)

The Committee on Research Institutes and Centres has reviewed the attached Proposal for Centre for Research on Empirical Social Sciences, as per the policies and guidelines, and has been unanimously approved.

Please include this as an agenda item for the next University Planning Committee Meeting on October 16, 2019.

JD:jt

Attach.

cc: Susan Sears-Giroux
Doug Welch
Andrea Thyret-Kidd
Jeremiah Hurley
## Proposal to create Centre for Research in Empirical Social Sciences (CRESS)

1. Objectives and activities
   1.1 Name
   1.2 Objectives
   1.2 Activities

2. Rationale

3. Participants and membership
   3.1 Affiliated labs
   3.2 Individual members

4. CRESS Business plan
   4.1 Space and research infrastructure
   4.2 Human resources
   4.3 Financial resources

5. CRESS’s organizational structure and relationships
   5.1 CRESS’s organizational structure
   5.2 CRESS’s relationships
1. Objectives and activities

1.1 Name
Centre for Research in Empirical Social Sciences (CRESS)

1.2 Objectives
Many of today’s most pressing challenges, including population health and aging, diminished confidence in core institutions of democracy, climate change, unequal economic growth, and global security, are fundamentally complex, dynamic, and inter-related. This creates both immense opportunity and real challenges for socially relevant research. Interdisciplinarity, dynamic/responsive research designs, transparency, and careful layering of methods that reveal different dimensions of a challenge are all critical to modern, leading-edge social science research.

Advances in digital technologies support modern social science research methods. These advances, and the associated computational power and proliferation of new data types and sources, both require social scientists to develop new methods for analyzing such data, and enable them to analyze old data with new methods. Taking advantages of these advances requires both new physical infrastructure—data labs and related facilities—and new research networks: the complexity of the social challenges, the data, and the methods needed to study them means that no one scientist can master all the domains needed to address them.

McMaster needs a research Centre that brings together researchers across disciplines to understand and work with new or less-familiar research methods, while teaching the software and related skills needed to conduct rigorous social science research. CRESS will support research and stimulate collaborations focused on social science topics and rooted in the social sciences, but which embrace an array of methods and complementary research agendas. CRESS aims to serve as both a beacon and bridge to the future of social science research and become an international leader in empirical social science addressing pressing social challenges.

CRESS’s mission is to support the production of leading-edge empirical social science research, to advance methodological innovation, and to foster research collaborations, networks, and partnerships within and beyond McMaster University.

To these ends, CRESS’s activities will fall into three broad areas: facilities, programs, and networks.

1. Research Facilities. CRESS will work with individual research labs to coordinate policies, share resources as appropriate, and promote the labs to users internal and external to McMaster. The objective is to create sustainable models for these facilities that will ensure they are available to support leading-edge social science research.

2. Research and Training Programming. CRESS will develop programming to enhance social science research expertise and capacity, including training opportunities for trainees, research staff and faculty; a research consultations desk; and related initiatives.
3. Research Networks. CRESS will develop and sustain networks and partnerships with both academic (internal and external to McMaster) and external communities (e.g., governments and municipalities, non-profits and social services, NGO’s, industry).

With sufficient focus and investment, CRESS aims to achieve clear national leadership and international profile. This will require strategic, multi-stage investment in personnel and facilities, and a strong business plan for sustaining infrastructure and recovering costs. CRESS will operate in coordination with the broader university initiative regarding research platforms.

1.2 Activities
In order to achieve its strategic goals outlined above, CRESS will engage in several key activities under the guidance of its advisory and governance committees, and in coordination with other research and IT Support teams and University Centres and Institutes.

CRESS will be a shared institutional resource comprising both physical and human infrastructure. CRESS will include a number of affiliated labs. CRESS will have a particular focus on social science research facilities concentrated on the 5th floor of Wilson Hall—home to confidential data labs, an experimental decision-making lab, a new digital democracy data lab, a classroom for teaching research methods, trainee space, and administrative office space, and three meeting rooms—but that focus is not exclusive. Social science labs located elsewhere on and off (e.g., MIP) the main campus will participate in CRESS.

CRESS will respond to faculty researchers’ needs for support in research, methods and software training, and collaboration. CRESS will not have a specific subject or sector focus. Rather, its orientation to advanced empirical methods makes it useable, and useful, to a broad cross-section of McMaster researchers (e.g., Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Science, Business) applying social science methods.

Support the development and sustainability of social science research platforms.
- Support the development of standardized policies (e.g., cost-recovery fee policies, data sharing policies, etc.) as appropriate
- Support cross-lab learning
- Support the coordination and sharing of staffing, software and hardware to reduce duplication
- Support the promotion of the platforms and the development of user communities
- Collaborate in the development of, and provide relevant research support services and/or training to, the Community Research Platform currently being developed through a strategic grant from the Provost’s office to the Faculty of Social Sciences
- Assist in building and innovating information technology (IT) infrastructure and tools

Develop programs to enhance expertise and build capacity to conduct leading-edge social science research.
- Sponsor events and programming to build an intellectual community of social science researchers
Develop a consultations desk to advise researchers on data, methods and research design, including when appropriate connecting them with others on campus who have the requisite expertise.

Offer training opportunities in relevant research methods, software, tools, from the beginner level through advanced training.

Support or coordinate extra-curricular or curricular (in coordination with departments) programs that provide trainees opportunities to acquire and demonstrate competence in applied research methodologies.

Develop and sustain networks and partnerships with both academic and external communities.

Engage with other empirical social science research centres and platforms, either directly or through networks such as the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

Liaise with government agencies, not-for-profit, and community groups engaged in social science research or economic and social policy.

Build relationships with relevant Centres, Institutes, and data facilities at McMaster (e.g., MacData, Library, ICES, CEN) to facilitate the sharing of expertise and infrastructure and to collaborate on programming and related activities as appropriate.

Facilitate international contacts for visiting research placements, etc.

1.2.1 Pilot Activities to Date

Approximately three years ago the Dean asked Michelle Dion, a faculty member in Social Sciences, to take the lead in developing CRESS. In that role, and informally under the label “CRESS,” she has undertaken activities on a limited basis to gauge interest in and gain experience with some of the kinds of activities envisioned for CRESS.

- In Winter 2018, CRESS organized a weekly series of lunchtime talks on topics such as Research Dataset Collections, Limesurvey, MacDrive, Research Ethics for Community-Based Research, Research Data Management, Media Relations 101, by representatives from Mills Library Data Service, Faculty of Social Sciences, RHPCS, MREB, and Public Relations. Attendees included graduate students, faculty, and research support staff from Social Sciences, Health Sciences, and Business.
- CRESS piloted a graduate research fellows program that provided space for selected graduate student fellows with the aim in encouraging interaction among students from different programs.
- Working with the Associate Dean Academic, CRESS developed an undergraduate Concurrent Certificate in Applied Social Sciences Research, which has been approved by Undergraduate Council and Senate.
- For 2019-20, CRESS is holding a monthly speaker series entitled, “Transparent Research” with leaders in research reproducibility and transparency from around the world leading day-long workshops, including developing reproducible workflows in R, Python and Stata, and discussing transparency and collaboration, and Indigenous data sovereignty.
Dr. Dion completed a background and business case analysis for extra-curricular training in the use of popular social science or statistics research tools for internal (e.g., research assistants, research coordinators, students) and external community members (community-partners, local workforce) working in (or aspiring to work in) applied social research fields. The Faculty appointed a full-time, permanent Executive Director of CRESS on July 1, 2019, a significant step toward consolidating the capacity of CRESS to develop the requisite policies and programming to meet its objectives.

2. Rationale

The development of CRESS responds to at least two needs of the Faculty of Social Sciences and its researchers.

First, social science research designs and methodologies have become increasingly specialized and technical, whether qualitative, quantitative, or text-based. New and exciting types of data relevant to social science research are becoming available at a startling rate, and these new data are already shaping the future of social science. Meanwhile, two of the main barriers to advancement in research in social statistics identified by a SSHRC/Statistics Canada working group in 2002 remain: “sheer lack of trained researchers” outside of economics prepared to analyze multilevel and complex datasets; and “very weak links between the work of social scientists and the potential users of the knowledge they generate” (Bernard et al. 2002, np). CRESS will respond to these gaps by creating training opportunities for trainees, research staff and faculty, and by developing and supporting networks of researchers and those interested in social science research, including potential users.

Second, the Faculty of Social Sciences is home to several CFI-funded and other research labs. To be sustainable in the long-run, this research infrastructure needs to attract and support empirical research projects by a diverse and broad group of users (trainees students, faculty, and external partners) that use a range of research methodologies. By helping to coordinate services and promote use of the labs, CRESS will expand access, use, and sustainability of this research infrastructure.

CRESS directly addresses those barriers and responds to the articulated interests and needs of McMaster University social science faculty members. It will support the development of research expertise in leading edge methodologies, particular for methods that depend on specialized research infrastructure.

This proposal for the formal establishment of CRESS reflects extensive consultations with Faculty stakeholders, including the Dean, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, research and IT staff members of the Faculty, and Academic Directors and/or staff of data collection and/or analysis labs supported by the Faculty, and faculty.
3. Participants and membership

3.1 Affiliated labs

The Faculty is home to and/or provides support to several research labs that are directly relevant to the goals of CRESS. These include:

- Secure Empirical Analysis Lab (SEAL; formerly PEDAL). SEAL is a high security data lab to host diverse third-party data that must be placed in a secure facility, with the ability to also host medium and lower security data as needed. SEAL is located on the 5th floor of Wilson Hall and includes workstations as well as infrastructure to support remote secure data access.

- McMaster Decision Science Laboratory (McDSL; formally the McMaster Experimental Economics Laboratory). McDSL includes a suite of experimental and qualitative data collection facilities, including an experimental lab equipped with virtual reality capabilities, two interview rooms, and a focus group interview suite with digital video recording capacity. It is located on the 5th floor of Wilson Hall.

- Collaboratory for Research on Urban Neighbourhoods, Community Health and Housing (CRUNCH). CRUNCH has facilities for 360-degree digital mobile video recording and 360-degree viewing room. CRUNCH is located on the 3rd floor of Wilson Hall.

- Digital Democracy Lab. This new lab leverages AI and machine learning tools to enhance democratic engagement. It is located on the 5th floor of Wilson Hall, housed alongside the social enterprise, VoxPop Labs.

- Sustainable Archaeology Lab. This lab is a collaborative effort with University of Western Ontario. The McMaster lab includes a large state-of-the-art storage area with research focused on materials analysis, including chemical and histological studies of Indigenous artefacts. It is located in the McMaster Innovation Park.

- Sensory Ethnography Research Lab at McMaster Innovation Park. This research lab has state-of-the-art digital film equipment and accessories for making professional quality documentaries or other research creation products. It is located in the McMaster Innovation Park.

3.2 Individual members

CRESS will not have formal membership for individual researchers. CRESS is designed to be available to all researchers at McMaster whose research can be advanced by use of affiliated labs or participation in CRESS-sponsored activities. Users of the facilities will be expected to pay cost-recovery fees, and some program activities (e.g., training workshops) may also charge fees, but the goal is to be broadly accessible to McMaster trainees (students, post-doctoral fellows),

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1 Although it formally reports to the VPR and therefore not included below, the McMaster’s Statistics Canada Research Data Centre is located on the 5th floor of Wilson Hall so as to foster collaboration with other social science labs to take advantage of shared infrastructure (e.g., secure data-conferencing capabilities). This RDC is partially funded by the Statistics Canada Research Data Centre Network, which is also hosted at McMaster University. The Vice-President Research provides cash support, while FSS staff members provide some in-kind administrative and space support. CRESS will further support collaboration between the RDC and other social science lab, and help promote the RDC to users as appropriate.
research staff, faculty and, as appropriate, members of government and private and non-profit organizations.

**Research Faculty.** Some of the faculty members who have participated in pilot programming for CRESS or provided input on the design of CRESS include the following:

- Stephanie Baker Collins, Social Work
- Karen Bird, Political Science
- Aubrey Cannon, Anthropology
- Phillipa Chong, Sociology
- Michelle Dion, Political Science
- James Dunn, Health, Aging & Society
- Tina Fetner, Sociology
- Ann Fudge Schormans, Social Work
- Judy Fudge, Labour Studies
- Chelsea Gabel, Health, Aging & Society
- Amanda Grenier, Health, Aging & Society
- Melanie Heath, Sociology
- Gregory Hooks, Sociology
- Jeremiah Hurley, Economics/Dean
- Lisa Kaida, Sociology
- Suzanne Mills, Labour Studies
- Tony Porter, Political Science
- Jeffrey Racine, Economics
- Petra Rethmann, Anthropology
- Stephanie Ross, Labour Studies
- Bradley Ruffle, Economics
- Arthur Sweetman, Economics
- Netina Tan, Political Science
- Cliff van der Linden, Political Science
- Mike Veall, Economics
- Marisa Young, Sociology

**Visiting Fellows.** Researchers from external organizations, including other post-secondary institutions and government, non-profit or corporate organizations, may become Visiting Fellows of CRESS if they are using affiliated lab facilities or are sponsored by Research Faculty due to their participation in research programs at CRESS.

**Doctoral and Post-doctoral Research Fellows.** Building on the pilot program, CRESS will explore options for Fellow programs targeted at doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows that will support their development as scholars and researchers.
4. CRESS Business plan

4.1 Space and research infrastructure
CRESS will be located on the 5th floor of Wilson Hall, which also houses many of the research labs that will be affiliated with CRESS. The CRESS space includes offices for the Executive Director and staff, and an open, multi-use space for events and for affiliated trainees, staff, and faculty. The 5th floor of Wilson Hall also includes a teaching computer lab, seminar room, and three meeting rooms that CRESS will share with other users.

4.2. Human resources
A full-time permanent Executive Director was hired on July 1, 2019. The Executive Director will be the primary staff member to develop and oversee the activities of CRESS. The Executive Director will bring on additional staff and work with the lab managers of affiliated labs and Faculty of Social Sciences research support and information technology staff as need to carry out the CRESS mandate.

4.3. Financial resources
The Faculty of Social Sciences will support the costs of the Executive Director for the near term, in part through support from a strategic grant from the Provost's office, until CRESS can become financially sustainable through user fees and other sources of revenue. Anticipated sources of sustainable revenue include the development of training programs on research methodologies methodological consulting to internal and external users, and a portion of the cost recovery from fee-for-service use of lab spaces, technologies, and expertise. See Table 1 for details.

5. CRESS’s organizational structure and relationships

5.1. CRESS’s organizational structure
As a research centre affiliated primarily with a single Faculty, CRESS will report directly to the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science. Its governance structure will comply with the requirements of the McMaster Guidelines for the Governance and Review of Research Institutes, Centres and Groups. The governance will also reflect the objective of fostering collaboration and coordination among existing research laboratories and facilities within the Faculty, and in collaboration with other units at McMaster as appropriate.

Academic Director. The Academic Director (AD) shall be a tenured faculty member of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The AD will report directly to the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and will be appointed for a five-year (once renewable) appointment, and will work in collaboration with the Associate Dean Graduate Studies and Research for the Faculty. The selection and appointment of the AD will follow University policies and procedures for the appointment of administrative directors, including recommendation of the Academic Director by a selection committee appointed by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Academic Director will report annually to the Governing Board, and the Dean (who normally chairs the Governing Board), will provide relevant information to the Vice-President (Research).
Michelle Dion, who has led all of CRESS’s pilot activities, has been identified as the inaugural Academic Director of CRESS. Dr. Dion is Associate Professor of Political Science at McMaster University. She specializes in comparative political economy, comparative political behaviour, and research design and methodology. Dr. Dion was a member of a working group that first set out the vision for CRESS. She has been functioning as the Academic Director the efforts to implement that vision by pilot testing aspects of the program, building support within the Faculty, leasing the hire of the Executive Director, and related activities. Dr. Dion is an exceptional methodologist who uses quantitative and qualitative methods in her own research, is well integrated within social science research networks of Centres akin to CRESS. Her expertise was recently recognized by her appointment to the editorial board of the American Political Science Review, the leading journal internationally in political science, with a specific mandate for methodological aspects of the peer-review process.

Executive Director. This full-time staff position will report to CRESS’s Academic Director and work closely with the Directors and staff of affiliated research labs and the Faculty’s research and IT support teams to develop and implement training, promotional, consultation, and technology development activities, and develop sustainable programming and funding streams to support CRESS and its affiliated laboratories.

Advisory Committee: The Advisory Committee will provide input regarding CRESS’s scientific and scholarly priorities and strategic directions. The Advisory Committee will comprise a mix of internal members and external international leaders in relevant areas of social science research. Members are nominated by the Academic Director and approved by the Steering Committee. The Advisory Board must be formally consulted at least every two years.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee is an internal governance committee that will advise on priorities and programming for the coming year and review the preliminary report of Centre activities and budget before submission to the Governing Board. Members of the Steering Committee may also be consulted more frequently as needed to execute Centre programming and activities. It will meet at least once a year. The Steering Committee will include the Academic Director, Executive Director, normally include the Directors of Centre-affiliated research labs plus two additional full-time faculty members from the Faculty of Social Sciences. The members of the Steering Committee will be appointed by the Academic Director in consultation with the Dean of Social Sciences.

Governing Board. As required by University policy, the CRESS’s Academic Director will provide an annual report of its financial and programmatic activities to CRESS’s Governing Board. The Governing Board will also appoint the External Review Board to review the Centre’s progress. The Governing Board will include the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences; the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies and Research), Faculty of Social Sciences; and Chairs of up to two departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

External Review Board. The External Review Board (ERB) will be appointed by the Governing Board every five years (or sooner as appropriate) to review the Centre’s activities. Normally, the
ERB will include 3 high-caliber scholars with an international perspective who are arm’s length from the Centre. The ERB will use measures of performance such as knowledge production and impact to assess the Centre’s performance. The ERB will be provided with the University’s Guidelines for the Governance and Review of Research Institutes, Centres and Groups and copies of previous reviews (if applicable).
5.2 CRESS’s relationships

Although CRESS will be an interdisciplinary research Centre of the Faculty of Social Sciences, it will be essential that it develop strong relationships with a range of other units at McMaster and with external partners, including those identified below.

5.2.1 Faculty context

- **Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and the FSS Research Support Team.** The FSS Research Support team supports the development and review of grant applications and budgets, event organization, and related knowledge mobilization activities. The Research Support team will continue to lead in providing support in the development of external funding applications in the Faculty. CRESS will work with the Research Support Team by providing advice and expertise, as appropriate, regarding research design, data, data analysis methodologies, and related issues that require specialized research expertise.

- **FSS Information Technology (IT) Support Team.** The FSS IT support team provides advice and technical support regarding IT, including research IT and instructional IT. CRESS will work with IT support to coordinate the IT needs of CRESS-affiliated research labs.

- **FSS Communications.** The FSS communications provides communications support for social media, research websites, and related communication strategies. CRESS will work with the Communications team to further the promotion and development of CRESS and its affiliated research labs.

5.2.2 University context

- **University Library.** The Maps/Data/GIS unit of Mills Library offers four main types of empirical social science research support: subscriptions and research consultations for quantitative datasets and collections; DASH, a support service for undergraduate students using statistical software for their coursework; instructional support for some social science undergraduate courses; and Research Data Management resources, advice, and open-source (non-secure) data hosting services. CRESS will coordinate its activities with the Library and promote awareness of these research and teaching supports.

- **MacDATA.** MacDATA is a University-wide Institute to coordinate data-driven research and training at McMaster. MacData offers graduate student fellowships for data-driven research and a data science certificate offered by Centre for Continuing Education. CRESS will coordinate its activities with MacDATA, and ensure that the FSS is positioned to be an effective MacDATA partner.

- **Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship.** The Sherman Centre is supported by the University Library and Faculty of Humanities. Though its current strengths are in digital humanities and media studies, it offers graduate fellowships to students from multiple faculties and many workshops and projects intersect with those in the Faculty of Social Science. CRESS will collaborate with the Sherman Centre where mutually beneficial.

- **Research and High Performance Computing Support (RHPCS).** A number of FSS-based research labs contract with RHPCS for technical support. CRESS will work with the labs, the FSS, and RHPCS to ensure optimal use is made of such support and to collaborate with RHPCS on projects as appropriate.
• Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES) ICES is a university-wide high-security data and research lab (located in FHS) providing access to secure health data other administrative data from the Government of Ontario. CRESS will work with ICES as appropriate on matters of mutual interest.

• Community Engagement Network. The office for Community Engagement is an important partner for developing programming that supports community-engaged research and the methodological needs of our community-based research partners.

5.2.3 Regional and national context
Southwestern Ontario has a high concentration of post-secondary educational institutions as well as public, private, and non-profit sector organizations, many of which are engaged in social or policy research. CRESS aims to become a central node in a network that will connect some of these research organizations to expand and multiply research capacity and methodological innovation in the social sciences.
Figure 1: CRESS Organizational Chart

VP Research

Dean FSS

Governing Board (GB)

External Review Board (ERB)

Academic Director

Advisory Committee (AC)

Steering Committee (SC)

Executive Director
## Table 1 - CRESS Five Year Financial Projection

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<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$ Secured</th>
<th>$ Anticipated</th>
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<td>$ -</td>
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**REVENUE** - indicate whether secured or anticipated

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<th>Insert year</th>
<th>Insert year</th>
<th>Insert year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$ Secured</th>
<th>$ Anticipated</th>
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<td>Non-FSS Revenue:</td>
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<td>FSS Contribution</td>
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<td>Cash</td>
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**EXPENSES**

**Administrative Expenses:** (add rows as required)

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<th>$ Anticipated</th>
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<td>Travel:</td>
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<td>Website Development/Maintenance</td>
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<td>Ongoing costs for space (3 offices)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Administrative Expenses</td>
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<td>$264,735</td>
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## Research Expenses: (add rows as required)

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>FB</th>
<th>FTE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Personnel: Salary FB FTE</td>
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<td>Part-time Lab Manager Secondment:</td>
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<td>82000 McDSL</td>
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<td>Work-study Students</td>
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<td>Academic Director Stipend/Research Allowance</td>
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<td>Research Supplies</td>
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<td>Total Research Expenses</td>
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<td>TOTAL EXPENSES</td>
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