



RESEARCH NEWS

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Co-op Studies Team Awarded Largest-Ever U of S SSHRC Grant to Study Social Economy

A University of Saskatchewan research team has been awarded \$1.75 million from the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to study social enterprises – the largest such grant to the university to date.

The team, led by Lou Hammond Ketilson, director of the U of S Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, will investigate how social economy enterprises help build more respectful relationships within communities, with the environment, and among stakeholders. Such enterprises include not-for-profits, co-operatives, community economic development organizations, community-based organizations, and other voluntary-sector initiatives.

“This grant is a strong endorsement of our unique capabilities in social sciences and humanities research,” said U of S President Peter MacKinnon. “In Saskatchewan, the ‘social economy’ is part of our sense of place, our history of working together for the common good through co-operatives, volunteerism, and other community initiatives.”

The project is part of a five-year national study of social economy enterprises. Participating universities, co-operatives, and other partners have committed in-kind contributions of \$4.7 million, for a project total of \$6.45 million.

The project includes almost \$1 million in student funding, topped up by \$100,000 from the U of S. Over the course of the project, this will support 13 graduate and 15 undergraduate students, as well as provide funds for 22 summer research assistantships and an additional 23 stipends for students working in community-based placements on specific research issues.

“Our proposal was successful because it is interdisciplinary and based on innovative university-community partnerships,” said Ketilson, an associate professor of management and marketing. “We have an exceptional project team, as well as strong and growing links with community and co-operative leaders, managers, and employees to work with our academic researchers.”

The project is co-ordinated through the Centre and the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR).

“This grant represents an evolution in CUISR’s work,” said CUISR community co-director Kate Waygood. “It will deepen and broaden the understanding of what makes and keeps communities healthy and vibrant.”

The research involves 24 academics from 10 disciplines and 12 universities, as well as 33 community partners and other national and international organizations across British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, northern Ontario, and the US.

One of six regional research nodes across the country, the Saskatchewan-led project has long-standing working relationships with most of the other successful applicants in SSHRC's social economy funding initiative.

"This project will advance understanding of this little-studied area of the Canadian economy, assist policy makers, and bolster student awareness of the special contributions of these organizations to society," said U of S SSHRC co-ordinator Peter Stoicheff.

The researchers will look at five areas: social enterprise development; financing strategies for this development; governance of social-economy enterprises; measuring and mapping the social economy; and developing policy frameworks for the social economy.

Co-operatives, businesses owned and controlled by their member customers or employees, are an integral part of the social economy, which is a key policy interest of SSHRC's Community University Research Alliance program.

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives (www.usaskstudies.coop) is an interdisciplinary teaching and research institute funded by the U of S, major national and provincial co-operatives, and Saskatchewan Industry and Resources. CUISR (www.usask.ca/cuisr) is a partnership among community-based organizations, faculty, and graduate students from the U of S.

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Note to editors: *Professor Ketilson will be available for interviews from Winnipeg after 2:00 p.m. Saskatoon time, by calling (306) 227-6133.*

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