UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON
EDMUNDSTON MONCTON SHIPPAGAN

BRIEF SUBMITTED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND RESEARCH AS PART OF THE STUDY ON THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AND POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

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Background

The Université de Moncton is a generalist university attended by approximately 5,000 students across three campuses in Moncton, Shippagan and Edmundston,[1] including more than 400 students enrolled in graduate programs.[2] The Université offers thirty or so master's programs and eight doctoral programs. Doctoral students account for approximately 25% of all graduate students.

The Université de Moncton has some 350 professors. More than fifty have research grants from the major councils as principal investigators, and twenty or so are co-investigators.

Graduate scholarships from the three major councils

Graduate and post-doctoral scholarships are enviable and allow our country's brightest students to pursue their studies free of financial concern.

Recommendation 1: *We believe that these programs should be maintained and even enhanced.*

Indexation of scholarships

Graduate scholarship amounts have stagnated for nearly two decades. It is clear that the current amounts are no longer competitive and do not provide students with the resources they need to get by, particularly given soaring inflation in recent years.

Recommendation 2: *We therefore recommend that scholarship amounts be indexed to inflation, and that a process be created to increase these amounts on a more regular basis.*

Number and distribution of scholarships across universities

Clearly, the Université de Moncton has not received enough scholarships to meet its needs. This is largely due to the formula for distributing scholarships among universities. For example, we have a quota of eight master's scholarships (two from CIHR, two from NSERC and four from SSHRC).[3] Distribution is based on of the overall amount of funding received by each university from the major councils. The current formula strongly favors larger universities. Here are two examples to illustrate this.

First, NSERC has three categories for universities: large, medium and small. In the 2020 competition, large universities received approximately $67 million in funding, while small

[1] https://umoncton.foleon.com/rapport-la-communaute/um-rapport-communaute/communaut-universitaire-en-chiffres.
[2] http://www.cespm.ca/media/215577/Tableau3_Inscriptions_2021-2022.pdf.
[3] https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-etudiants/cgsallocations-quotasbesc_eng.asp.

universities received $5.8 million.[4] This means that, on average, large universities receive 11.6 times more master's scholarships then small universities. However, in 2020, 1,697 professors in large universities and 198 in small universities received funding. Here, we can see that there are 8.6 times more professors receiving funding in large universities than in small ones. Therefore, the current formula gives funded professors at large universities an advantage relative to the number of scholarships awarded by the major councils.

A second example further illustrates the inequity of the distribution formula used. Take the number of students enrolled in research-based master's programs at the Université de Moncton compared to the university that receives the most funding from the major councils, the University of Toronto. In 2019, approximately 3,154 students were enrolled in research-based master's programs at the University of Toronto. The same year, the Université de Moncton had 174 students in the same situation. Note the ratio of 18.1.[5] The University of Toronto's quota of master's scholarships from the major councils is 403, which is more than 50 times that of the Université de Moncton. This significant discrepancy is clear and further proof of the inequity of the formula used to distribute master's scholarships.

This inequity forces many students, particularly those in regions far from major urban centers, to resort to loans to access higher education, which certainly acts as a deterrent. The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission found that 74% of students continuing their studies after a first degree took out a loan.[6] This study also showed that a higher percentage of students from the Maritimes take out loans than other students.

Recommendation 3: *To address this, we recommend creating a new formula for distributing master's scholarships that would take into account not only the overall amount of funding obtained by each institution, but also the number of professors funded and the number of students enrolled in master's programs that involve research.*

Undergraduate research scholarships

NSERC offers research awards to undergraduate students based on merit. These awards contribute to advancing research and are particularly important for smaller universities that do not usually have a full range of graduate programs. This program offers students an initial exposure to research and without a doubt fuels their desire to pursue a graduate research program. It therefore acts as a pipeline for our universities' graduate programs and deserves to be buttressed.

Recommendation 4: *That NSERC increase the number and amounts of its undergraduate student research awards.*

[4] https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/_doc/DGP2020_e.pdf.
[5] https://data.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Finalized-Factbook-2019.pdf.
[6] http://www.mphec.ca/media/199159/GO-Survey_Borrowing_Media_Release.pdf.

Recommendation 5: *That CIHR and SSHRC develop a program similar to NSERC's.*