

Dr. Annette Trimbee - Edited

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SPEAKERS

Dylan Cave, Dr. Annette Trimbee, Brittany Ekelund

B Brittany Ekelund 00:00

We would like to acknowledge that we are on treaty six territory the gathering grounds of many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people whose footsteps have marked this land and whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

D Dylan Cave 00:15

Hello, and welcome back to Research Recasted - the knowledge mobilization Podcast. I'm Dylan cave and I'm here with my co-host, Brittany Eklund, and our guest today is Dr. Annette Trimbee.

B Brittany Ekelund 00:26

Dr. Annette Trimbee is the sixth President and Vice-Chancellor of MacEwan with an academic appointment in the biology department and has been since August 2020. Before that, she was the President and Vice-Chancellor of another downtown undergraduate university - UWinnipeg from 2014 to 2020. What you may not know is that she also has a long history with the Alberta public service including as a deputy minister in advanced education and Treasury Board and Finance.

D Dylan Cave 00:57

She chairs the Canadian research knowledge network and also sits on the board of Conversation Canada. Dr. Trimbee is also Metis and recently won an Indspire Laureate Award in the education category. Dr. Trimbee thank you so much for joining us here today. We are so excited to have you on the podcast. We've been anticipating it for quite some time. We'd love to begin by hearing about how you came to be the President and Vice-Chancellor of MacEwan University, what excites you about MacEwan, and what brought you here to us.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 01:30

I was excited to come back to Edmonton. I lived here for 25 years before I went back to the University of Winnipeg, which was my undergraduate school. I really like downtown undergraduate universities. I was a Deputy Minister of Advanced Ed when MacEwan became a university and I remember the big celebration and all the hopes and aspirations and it's a really exciting time to be here. It's an exciting time to be back in Edmonton.

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Dylan Cave 01:55

And it's, you know, even more exciting we're bringing most of our off campuses downtown, where our Fine Arts and Communications are now downtown over the past five years. And all the things moving forward there.

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Brittany Ekelund 02:08

Well, and also, I think that, you know, we really, as an institution are gaining momentum in people's minds as not just the community college in Edmonton. And that is one of the entire reasons that we have this podcast was to advertise that, you know, serious research happens here, serious collaboration happens here, and it's coming from the community, and it's coming from people that are getting down to business.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 02:37

MacEwan means business.

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Brittany Ekelund 02:38

Yeah, we mean business. So on that vein, because we are a research podcast, we'd really love to hear about your relationship with research and what has excited you as a researcher throughout your career.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 02:52

I am an aquatic ecologist, who at one time spent most of my summers outside on the lake in the lab, peering through microscopes collecting water, fabulous, fabulous time. And I am, you know, really excited to be part of a university that is embracing its research and scholarly work. And again, in our vision, we talked about being a trendsetter and a turn breaker. And my sense was MacEwan wasn't really talking enough about the incredible scholarship that is happening here in the positive impact that's having on our community, as well as talking about the benefits to our students to being taught by professors who are scholars and to students for being involved in research because you learn a lot of transferable skills for almost anything you do once you leave MacEwan. And in terms of my own research, you might wonder how a person who studied blue-green algal blooms which are kind of timely right now if you ever caught it

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Brittany Ekelund 03:51

very timely.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 03:52

And by the way, if you see those things that look like little grass clippings, that's a cyanobacterium *flos-aquae* and I spent a lot of time counting strands and counting cells and, you know, I'm probably one of those people, you could see me as a bit of a blue-green algal chaser rather than a runner away from so I learned a lot about systems about how if you poke something here, something else happens over there. And ironically, you know, I think the lessons I learned during my PhD helped me become a reasonably good Deputy Minister of Treasury Board and Finance, because systems are systems, right?

B

Brittany Ekelund 03:52

Yeah, and if you poke one thing over here, absolutely. I mean, that's really fascinating and interesting. Also, like just the journey from, you know, out knee deep in a pond somewhere and then coming all the way to your work with government. Is there a way that then your work in the private or public sector, then informed your path to coming back to an academic?

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 04:58

Oh, definitely. I often - when I first went to the University of Winnipeg - would get asked what's the difference between being a Deputy Minister and being a University President? And I would say, being a University President is kind of like being a Deputy Minister and a Minister, except you don't have a party, you don't have a cabinet, you don't actually have a department, you don't actually have anybody who works for you because universities, the way I see them, are like a community of startups. Our faculty members, our students have to be very self motivated. Our faculty members have to generate ideas for what to research, they have to go out and seek funding. So it's very different than other hierarchical environments. And being a university president is much more political, you have many, many bosses, you have to think about past students, current students, future students, you have a board of governors, you have a general faculties council, you interact with community, it's really dynamic. It's really exciting. I love both of those leadership roles. The thread that runs through them is at the end of the day: they're both about developing talent, and developing people and unleashing their potential. So they're both leadership positions that require great listening skills, great observation skills, great sensemaking skills. Wait a minute, isn't that what you learn as an undergraduate doing research at MacEwan?

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Dylan Cave 06:18

Oh, exactly. And that kind of leads us into our next thing about like our strategic vision and you being a key contributor to that. So can you tell us a little bit about how research and MacEwan fits into the vision and is setting trends and breaking trends?

into the vision and is setting trends and breaking trends.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 06:35

Universities around the world have three roles, and they're all related: teaching, research or scholarly work. And if I keep saying research, what I mean is the whole umbrella, okay. And different disciplines might focus on one word or the other. And I know at MacEwan, it's important to talk about scholarship in its broadest sense. But I'm going to probably say research more often than some people may like, but I want you to understand why it's just, it relates to my origins as a researcher. So we teach, we research, and we serve the public good. Where universities differ is in the balance of those three roles. So across the river, the University of Alberta would be seen as a more research intensive university, we would be seen, as a more teaching intensive university, our focus in the strategic vision and directions on teaching greatness is to reinforce that we don't see research being done at the expense of teaching, we see research as contributing to making our teachers, better teachers. And in fact, I listened to one of your recent podcast and Cynthia Purdue, put it really well. She said, simply put, you know, I'm a better teacher, now that I've had a research leave for a year, like I'm so inspired to be back in the classroom, I've got some new things, who doesn't want to be taught by somebody who's leading in their field by somebody who has the fundamentals, but is challenging everything as they go, that's what makes University exciting. That's what makes us different than high school.

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Dylan Cave 08:04

And that's just what makes sense. You know, it's, it's a great way to learn. And I know for coming from a music perspective, as well, as a lot of my colleagues that are music teachers, they learn they are such better players, because they're constantly in their, in their field learning and, and they're better teachers, because they're performing at these clubs and doing all these events, and then coming back, and that's that informs their teaching.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 08:30

And I also hear from any faculty not only here, but other institutions, they, they keep learning, in part, because they're also learning from all of the students that they are interacting with, right. So it's about the fundamentals and challenging them and being challenged.

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Brittany Ekelund 08:45

Absolutely. So I mean, we've talked about teaching greatness and kind of setting trends and breaking trends. But I'm curious about what are some of the other kind of pillars of the strategic plan and the vision for MacEwan going forward?

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 09:01

We have five big directions that we didn't number for a reason, although we did title the overall plan teaching greatness. And I love teaching greatness, the double entendre. They're great

teachers, great students. And, you know, I thought of an embarrassing situation for me when I was in elementary school and this was a long time ago when there was less parental student, parent teacher interaction. And I remember my dad on my report card wrote great marks mean great teaching, and I said, why are you writing that? Why aren't you just saying where to go on it? Why are you paying the teacher a compliment, but it really struck a chord. And I'm kind of impressed that my dad actually, you know, took the time to thank the teacher. But anyways, teaching greatness again to reassure people. We haven't lost that special part of what makes MacEwan MacEwan. We were a community college. We are a University, we are still very engaged in community. And it is about teaching and students and getting to know students by name, and having faculty who are really passionate about that student journey. So teaching greatness overarching. The second one, we had a lot of fun. I look at the clock tower of my office is close to that. And I'm kind of obsessed with time, my research was on blue green algae, but it was also on disturbances to ecosystems at different frequencies and different magnitudes and how systems respond and how the species within them respond at different rates. And how if you look at a particular situation, you might think you can understand cause and effect. But really, there's a whole bunch of things happening at different speeds. So if you think about MacEwan, and our clock tower and academic calendar, it kind of implies like, everything's very rigid, and everything's very predictable. And truth is, our students are very diverse. So smashing the calendar was our way of saying that we care about outcomes, we care about your journey, we want to do whatever we can to make it more flexible for you. We have diplomas and certificates, it's easy to come in, it's easy to go, it's easy to come back, we want to find ways to allow students to do a four year degree in three years, we want to move quickly with micro credentials and so on. And there are a number of policies we need to have a more careful look at. And, you know, we're very committed to doing so. Going with technology more hybrid is only a part of that. And sometimes when people see smash the calendar, I get asked, Does that mean you're gonna go online? No, absolutely not. We are a place based university, what we teach what we research is very much influenced by where we are, and we see the city as our campus. So smashing the calendar. Next one Grandest Griffins. Well, our women's soccer team won the Nationals I used to chair Usports. So I'm kind of into sports. And I was really, really surprised and pleased that happened and amazing team, a group of players that work so well together. And Grandest Griffin to me, let's have a little fun, you know, the magical qualities of the Griffin and our students get work integrated learning experiences, they get to do experiential learning. You know, I just love to hear about that design class that went out and came up with ideas for how to make the Edmonton transit service a little safer. This is what students remember. So ideally, you want our graduates to go out and be leaders, leaders in their fields and to be leaders, you need to be a whole person - to be a whole person, you have to learn in a variety of ways, right. So that Grandest Griffin, again, let's reach for the stars. Let's be grand. Next one trendsetters and trend breakers. Again, I wanted to remind people that scholarly work research is very much a part of what we do. And we have positive benefits in our community. And again, with our students. They leave with a greater set of skills because they've had that opportunity. Perpetual motion - we have aspirations to grow to 30,000 students by 2030. This isn't crazy. You just look at the demographics. You look at what the province is saying they need you look at what industry is saying they need you look at what civil society is saying they need the students are going to come our way. And we need to grow in areas of strength and we need to grow in a strategic fashion in a sustainable fashion. And part of that requirement to grow is we do need some more facilities. We need a new building on 109th and 105th a business building and that will help us get to that 2030 target. Then of course we're mindful of where we are we talk about honoring our place in Edmonton. Indigenisation reconciliation, sustainability, equity, diversity, sustainability. I think I said that already. Anyways, it's how we do things, right. So it's not just what we do, it's how we do. That is what people remember. Because that is how they feel about being here. What gives students

a sense of pride is, you know, I believe they want to accomplish more than what you see on a transcript. And I've had the pleasure of meeting with lots of alumni from many institutions in Canada. And they inevitably talk about that turning point, that moment where somebody you know, kind of lit the fire, said, hey, you know, you got something special, or, you know, their first publication, their first performance, their first podcast, whatever. These are the experiences we want to give people. So I'm really excited about some of the parts and it's a plan, not like others. And it's, it's, it doesn't pretend, we can write a manual and describe what each and every person at this university is going to do for the next 10 years. Universities are the sum of the people in those universities and all of the decisions that get made the Board of Governors make some general Faculty Council makes some but sort of individuals every day. It's a community that's, you know, got a great sense of purpose.

D Dylan Cave 14:50

And you know, that's part of some of the things that we even deal with with our Student Association and having the student committees kind of inform some of the decision making or at least give their input on it anyway. But we're also really engaged in community, community engaged scholarship. And so if we wanted to talk a little bit more about the community, community engagement on why, you know, why do we want to go? Why is community so important to MacEwan moving forward with the strategic vision?

D Dr. Annette Trimbee 15:26

Again, think about where we are and the community around us and think about some of the challenges the community around us is facing. MacEwan brings 20,000 people a day, when everybody's back, which I haven't actually experienced, I haven't, you know, found it difficult to walk through the halls, like I haven't been squashed or anything like I'm at a Rolling Stones concert. But I hear - I hear it can be like that. But we bring a lot of energy downtown. And I tell people don't see us like an anchor institution. That's kind of, that sounds kind of slow. See us, as you know, this, this bundle of energy, young people with ideas, right? So we bring a lot of people downtown. The neat part about community engaged research is we don't sit in an ivory tower, speculating what their research questions are, you can just go out and ask! And you can go work with a community group, you know, within walking distance, and see the tangible impact of your work. So that's, I think, the beauty of being part of a downtown university. When I first started to talk about downtown University, some people thought I was suggesting that we only attract students from downtown. I said, No, it influences how we be so to speak, right? So so the city is our campus. And people can experience things in their curriculum, that are very tangible, and find solutions and create things and form audiences and so on and get off to a good start.

B Brittany Ekelund 16:52

And we've like, we've spoken with researchers and even student researchers that are already like in their first year saying, you know, I'm working with the community as part of a research project or with a class because the professors that are teaching them are involved in community based research, and it's making them better students, and it's connecting them to their field before maybe a four year practicum.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 17:16

Absolutely. And I like to say, we're in the mix. And if you read the literature on downtown universities, there are some stories of universities not being in the mix, not being good neighbors, and almost this perception of a moat around them and displacing life, so to speak. And the previous university I was at actually was covered on some American talk show as this rare gem that had done these marvelous things with community that was so different than a lot of the universities in the States. MacEwan has that same history, that same trajectory. But again, I don't think we've talked enough about it. Like I think people who know, know - but I don't know that in general Edmontonians know, of the impact we're having, both from a social perspective, from an economic perspective, from a cultural perspective, and even from an environmental perspective. We haven't really threaded that together for them. And I do think for students, you want to go to a place that is seen to be having positive benefits, right?

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Dylan Cave 18:17

Well, I'm really interested in that, because, you know, me starting as a student moving to Edmonton just for university, you know, I came to MacEwan for a couple of reasons and I mean, one of them, one of the biggest ones was a brand new facility for music and art and all this wonderful stuff and that was one thing that drew me here - but what kept me here was the community engagement. And, you know, starting this podcast, with the Office of Research really helped me see what a great impact our university is doing in the community and on a global scale. You know, there's just some amazing things here that I would have never even heard about unless we started talking about them and it's great that we're able to have these conversations to let people know that we are community engaged learning.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 19:01

Well, let's also talk a little bit about knowledge mobilization, because, you know, I know that some of the people you featured, there was a time when you became an academic and it was all about how many articles you published in what journals and I'm not saying that doesn't matter anymore, but there's much more to it now. So researchers compete for money from tri council. So those are three councils that give out money and Natural Sciences and Engineering, Social Sciences in the Humanities, and Health Research. And institutions also get CFI money, Canadian Foundation for Innovation money, very competitive, peer reviewed and even those agencies now are asking the applicants how they intend to share their work, because it's recognize that to truly have impact, you need to reach a larger audience. And attitudes are evolving. I remember, you know, early days as a postdoc at U of A, if I wanted to hang out with other disciplines and work on a project together with them, the person, other people in my lab might be a little suspect. What are you doing hanging out with those economists? What are you doing hanging out with those economists? You know, we're biologists. But now, you know, there's much more value and understanding of researchers from different disciplines working together, of researchers wanting to be public academics, and actually go on talk shows and published in the conversation Canada and have their research picked up in newspapers. So a lot of things have changed since I started on my journey and I think these are all changes for the good. At the end of the day, universities are publicly funded to a lesser degree, perhaps today than they were when I started many years ago. But to the average person, you know,

what do they care about, they care about whether the people they care about can get into post secondary, and they do like it when we appear to be working on things that are relevant and interesting. And they also do get that it's important that we have people here thinking deep thoughts about things that maybe they haven't thought about or might not think are necessary right now. But there's lots of stories where, you know, we face these wicked problems, and somebody pops out of university and has a clue and has an answer. And people are grateful, from a societal perspective that we publicly support research and scholarly work done at universities.

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Brittany Ekelund 21:36

Yeah, I mean, MacEwan, we do a lot of research but we are an Undergraduate University and so something that we wanted to ask about was like, without a Graduate Program, supporting research at the post secondary level, what are some of the unique challenges for Undergraduate Student Research versus Graduate Research?

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 22:04

Well, I've heard Trevor Hamilton speak about that. And I heard a computer science professor speak about that the Life on the Edge launch. So undergraduates, you might think, have less experience, perhaps less time, because unlike graduate students, masters and PhD students, they haven't picked a lane exactly - they're still discovering. But those professors and many others I've talked to, are constantly surprised by the incredible talent that undergraduates bring. I myself at the University of Winnipeg, a long time ago was so thrilled when I got hired by a professor to work on a research project over the summer, I figured out how to grow corn on the roof, I figured out that I couldn't repeat this staining procedure, no matter how hard I tried, I learned patience and I got a sense for the life of an academic, and I'm very grateful for that. And then, you know, I do think we have to advocate for ourselves. And I do spend time with tri council, reminding them that undergraduates count as high quality personnel because when you apply for money, you have to demonstrate that the benefits of this research will help grow the research capacity in the country. So we're not alone in that there are many undergraduate universities in Canada, where undergraduate students are involved in research and scholarly work. And, you know, we need to make that the norm, rather than a special story. And at MacEwan, it's not just a special story. Many students are having those opportunities now. And I'm really proud of that. So there are some challenges. But the faculty I hear talking about how they work through their challenges, they just have such a glint in their eye so, you know, obviously, it's working for them.

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Brittany Ekelund 23:56

Oh, and 100%, we just, you know, recently spoke with Dr. Ross Shaw. And to hear that, you know, some of the students that work on the games are getting snatched up by Microsoft, or, you know, speaking to student researchers, that are then going on to graduate and getting accepted into their masters and who are publishing research that is making a difference and already being applied in community settings. So I think that undergraduate students, and an

undergraduate degree can offer an incredible wealth of experience and knowledge and it is great also that we've spoken to many researchers here who are actually working with graduate students in other parts of the country.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 24:40

Well, and that too - many of our faculty members, well, have collaborators all over the country, right. So if you need facilities that are only at three schools in Canada, and Europe MacEwan, you obviously find a way to tap into those assets and you find a way to stay here. So research is very, very collaborative. If you look at the output from research, more and more, you'll see many, many names. And, you know, obviously, more and more you'll see students publishing with faculty publishing with community members, which is also new. Right?

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Brittany Ekelund 25:21

Yeah. It's amazing. This I think is a good place to take a little break. We will be right back. We're here with Dr. Annette Trimbee. I've worked in kitchens for a long time and boy, oh boy has the world changed when it comes to dietary restrictions. Whether it's people trying to eat a little bit more consciously, or the increasing prevalence of food allergies, trying to navigate a potluck isn't getting any easier I tell you what. Well look no further than Bloom cookies. Their whole mission is to make sure that everyone can enjoy a fantastic cookie, regardless of restrictions, unless it's gluten. But there are no nuts and no animal products and they're made locally, so skip the Oreos and hit the MacEwan convenience store, or visit Bloom at their 124th Street storefront and grab a cookie with some substance - Bloom. Alright, we are back. So Dr. Trimbee, there are many research methodologies that have been identified, and the list keeps growing. Of course, we have spoken to researchers on our podcast that have really opened our eyes to different kinds of - I don't like to say non traditional - but new to us at least. Things like Photo Voice, I know Cynthia Purdue, used that before. So do you feel that there are some best fits when it comes to methodologies for scholarship and knowledge creation here at MacEwan?

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 26:51

Our faculty are very diverse in terms of their interests and so every discipline has its norms. So when you talk about traditional or alternative, you know, the language varies, right? So in my day, the tradition was for some reason, you had to demonstrate incredible work ethic and I think I sampled well flake for 110 days in a row and I'm literally saying I got up early, and I took a group together and we collected samples and we worked from dusk to dawn for 110 days and it was like a rite of passage and I had to collect this data and I had to do all of this work myself. And today, if I was starting all over again, I would be spending a lot of time mining the data collected by many other people and not feeling bad about that. And I know when I came here to do a postdoc, I went to the government and I found out that they had data, and they would let me use it and I was like oh you know, it's kind of like that IKEA ad - stop the car, stop the car - I've got data! I've got data, and I didn't have to go get it myself. So it really does depend on your field. And obviously, when we talk about methodologies, they are influenced by worldview. So for example, I'm an ecologist, we talked about changing paradigms, about how we viewed the impact of disturbances and how ecosystems responded. And I remember at the time thinking, Hmm, you know, the old way ecology was taught was very much people were at the

top and as a biologist, I didn't think that way, as a Metis person, I didn't think that way. So, you know, from an Indigenous worldview perspective, you know, we don't necessarily see things quite the same way, right. So sometimes when people talk about alternative methodologies, they're talking about, not sort of those experiments done in that particular way, where you have a hypothesis, you test it, you either accept it or reject it, you don't prove anything, right. So, you know, what I like is we can do so much more, we can do so much faster. And if you think about, for example, drug discovery, and how some of our biologists work, everything's just been sped up with big data and machine learning. And so, you know, now, you know, we have to think about, we have to think deep thoughts about the ethics of some of the research we're doing. So I like the fact that, you know, technology is everywhere. And, you know, we're trying to both use it and understand it and not abuse it. And so, for a university like MacEwan, we're not likely going to be the place chosen to build the next snow lab, for example, or the next triumph system of magnets for the physicists to work on over at UBC. So but it doesn't mean that our faculty can't partner with those schools with those assets. When I listened to Trevor Hamilton, and he talked about how in his journey here, he realized he couldn't necessarily have the same type of laboratory he might have had at a different type of institution. But I love the way he improvised his work. And he improvised his work in a way that we could sustain we could afford. And he also found ways to engage more students. So I loved hearing his story, because I thought at the beginning of his story, it might come out as I can't get what I need here. And my immediate thought was no, don't leave. And then the story went to but this is why I love MacEwan because I figured this out and I figured that out, and I'm having the time of my life, right? So obviously, it depends on the discipline and it depends who you partner with and it depends, you know, if we rally together, we can do what we can internally to help grow a critical mass in a particular area, because universities are both deep and wide, right? So we have an incredible diversity of research output but at the same time, we should be able to say to people, what are we really good at? What are we known for, and that shouldn't threaten others, because it doesn't mean you can't work on what you want to work on - but it means you have a bit of a lead. So for example, you studied music, what's MacEwan University known for? I mean, there's room for all sorts of quirkiness. But it's also important to say, hey, there's some things that are standouts.

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Dylan Cave 31:35

Yeah and we are one of the top leading institutions for music production, just based on how well our facilities are equipped, better than Berkeley better than like many other of these prestigious music institutions, just by on the technology alone, that the community and that everyone has invested in this institution.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 31:58

So that's strategic choice. And that allows us to get stronger in a particular area. Right. So, you know, in part, we go where our faculty go. What does administration do? What does leadership do? I think of it as understanding the ecosystem and looking for whatever you can do to nourish the people in that ecosystem. And like I said, it's okay for some things to rise above, if that is perceived as fair and if that is perceived as kind of lifting all boats.

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Brittany Ekelund 32:28

I mean, it has given us a fantastic opportunity to not only speak with researchers, but speak with people who are doing scholarly and creative activity. And you mentioned earlier that, you know, when I say research, it means all sorts of things. And it's the same thing for us. We are research recasted, but we've spoken to composers, we've spoken to creators and people who are doing things that don't fall under just qualitative or sorry, quantitative research. And it's been such a delight to learn about, you know, research being done on audio, and sound and how sound travels and what that means - the human brain is just fantastic.

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Dylan Cave 33:09

Yeah, taking the psycho-acoustics class here at MacEwan was so eye opening for me, because, you know, thinking about it from a psychological perspective was so new to me, you know, it was sound was always subjective to me. And the psychological side of things was never something that I really even thought about and that's the whole point of the class is like teaching you, you know, why we listen to things why, why is it deemed that when you listen to music, and they put something in the mix that's above you - why does that seem like it's like right in front of you. And the most important thing, it's because as children we grew up, and our parents were tall, and we were constantly looking up toward towards our parents. So that was deemed as an important thing in our brain development. It was such a interesting thing that I learned.

D

Dr. Annette Trimbee 33:55

You just got me thinking about masks and all these young kids wearing masks and seeing adults with masks and how that will impact their long term development. But you know, back to your question, you're saying, you know, what methodologies should we focus on? And so my short answer is, it depends. And I think you know, where there's a will we can rally and we can support. And I'm really thrilled, we have an allocation of four Canada Research Chairs, you may have already talked to Dr. Christopher Wells, I'm not sure.

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Brittany Ekelund 34:24

We have spoken with Dr. Chris Wells twice now.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 34:27

Okay. Don't tell him that I haven't listened to him yet.

B

Brittany Ekelund 34:30

You're in for a treat, those were some of my favorite conversation.

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 34:34

Well, that's good. So you know, he's got the Center for sexual and gender minority studies. And, you know, I think, again, we're known for that and we have an impact on community and, you know, we're fundraising to even grow that program. And if you establish centers of excellence, you know, I think that is symbolic for people and, you know, we should be talking about our excellence. So as President, I don't tell people what to research but as President, I can read the tea leaves and I can do what I can to leverage opportunities and incent certain opportunities. I can try and influence policy at Tri Council, I can try and influence policy of the province, I can, you know, help people critically review some of their ideas - the research office, you know, exists to help our researchers be more successful in ways that they define as success, right.

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Dylan Cave 35:26

Exactly. That's, that's exactly it. Well, keeping with the, the kind of the theme of different research methodologies, how does we're starting to move towards these non western approaches to research such as land based learning, and how does that fit into our strategic vision moving forward?

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Dr. Annette Trimbee 35:47

I mentioned that all universities teach research and serve the public good. And I should also say that, you know, faculty are part of a collective agreement, where universities talk about that relative mix of teaching, research and service. So whereas at the University of Alberta, most of those professors would be expected to spend 40% of your time teaching 40% research and 20% on service. Here, most of our professors would be 60/30/10, not all of our professors. So, there are some guidelines around that relative mix and so one of the things we often hear about is, how performance in those areas is evaluated. And generally speaking, in western universities, it's all about peer review. And we have moved away to some degree from that publish or perish. But it does depend on your discipline, and how they see things. So in Allan Gilliland's world, you know, he composes music, and he has a knowledge of the fundamentals, and he moves the bar, and he can point to things he's created. And so can other people in the music department. And they have an appreciation for that. So they would see that the right way. One of the things that I'm really impressed we've done and the union Faculty Association is, you know, we've signed an MOU on this is we're now hiring Indigenous faculty that sit in a department but also have as part of their service, a commitment to *kihÅw waciston*. Right. So what I really like about that, it means we're bringing in Indigenous faculty, they are serving community in ways that they would like to, and they are a community unto themselves. So as a cohort, they have two homes, right? So this is new, this is innovative and it's another way of looking at service. So, you know, how does research quality get recognized? Well, obviously, we try and attract people, they go through the tenure and promotion system, but it's also influenced by how the outside world recognizes research prowess. So again, faculty members want to win money from trial counsel to do their work. So you know, we're not only influenced by ourselves, we're influenced by others, right. And I have seen phenomenal shifts in my career. And the thing about change is sometimes you have high expectations for things to change in a year, but you've kind of missed just how much things have changed in 10 years, things have changed so much in the last 10 years. And one of the triggers in Canada for a big switch in mindset around research, was they started this Canada Excellence Research Chair, threw in a ton of money, and then for some reason, none of the recipients were women. And

this raised a few eyebrows. This wasn't that long ago. And I remember being invited to a panel as a deputy minister. And, you know, I presented this idea at the time. I said, you know, what's kind of wrong with our system. It's all based on this child prodigy model, where you have to figure out what your passion is, when you're nine and you just have to go at it as deep as you possibly can never veer off the track. There's no room to be a mother, there's no room to run for office, there's no room to go make a record. There's no room to do anything other than that thing you're 100% passionate about. But where does real innovation happen? It happens at the edges. It happens because you're a musician that suddenly interested in psycho-acoustics or something like that. That's where the real innovative, edgy stuff happens. Right. So attitudes are shifting. And I think in the collective agreements that universities are negotiating with faculty, in trial counsel programs and criteria, in how peers are seeing one another, you know, these things are evolving, right?

B

Brittany Ekelund 39:59

Absolutely and I think...

D

Dylan Cave 40:01

I was just gonna say that really speaks to me. I really, that was a great perspective on that.

B

Brittany Ekelund 40:07

Yeah, um, and I think, you know, coming to kind of bring it a little bit back to the beginning is, as a teaching first university, you know, there's the saying publish or perish and some criticisms of say, someone going to the U of A is that they never really interact with their teacher, it's a lot of TA's because the teachers are so busy pumping out research. So, you know, as our role teaching first university, how is MacEwan balancing the priorities of our professors to publish research and put us on the map, but also make sure that a focus stays on teaching.

D

Dr. Annette Trimbee 40:53

You know, part of it starts with hiring. And at UW, and here, I sometimes meet people along their journey i know with the Canada Research Chairs and when I interact with them, you know, I say do you love teaching? And if you don't love teaching, this isn't the place for you, to be honest with you. So you have to pick people who really are super passionate about teaching. And what can we do to support? You know, I think part of it is valuing that diverse type of scholarly activity incenting things the right way. And not everybody will be as research intensive. And that is perfectly fine. Right? I think our system can have - and we do now - we have under the collective agreement, three different types of workloads. And one of them is less research intensive. So part of that is thinking about what you actually need in a particular department and a particular faculty, and looking at the sum of all of those parts and allowing room for difference, because that's what gives our system our ecosystem resiliency, right.

B

Brittany Ekelund 42:11

Absolutely. And there's the Board of Governors chair, which we got to speak with some last - some winners.

D

Dr. Annette Trimbee 42:17

Yes. Yeah.

B

Brittany Ekelund 42:18

Yeah. Which is a really interesting, you know, taking a break from teaching, so to speak, to focus on research. But what struck me about that is that I think all of them still had students working with them in their research, while they were not actively teaching, and it's just very impressive to me. I mean, I've never gone to another university. So I don't have a comparison here.

D

Dylan Cave 42:43

It seems like a good investment.

B

Brittany Ekelund 42:48

Yeah, everyone that we have ever talked to on the podcast has always had such a strong focus on their students, and been impressed with the caliber of student here. So I mean, I've never had a TA at MacEwan, I always just had my prof and they were doing research and writing books and working in newsrooms still. So yeah.

D

Dr. Annette Trimbee 43:14

And that is one of MacEwan's strategic advantages that I don't think is well enough understood. And what I hear from faculty is, you know, they want to be recognized, they want enough time to be able to do high quality research and scholarly work. And they want enough time to do their pedagogy. The way they would like to keep it fresh, right, so the world is under stress. I know the last two years have been particularly hard. I think we've all surprised one another with what we are able to accomplish. You know, it was its own experiential learning class that we were all a part of whether we registered or not. So I am very mindful that we're entering a new decade, or I shouldn't say we're entering what two years in or two years into the defining decade, people are a little bit tired, a little bit stressed, but at the same time, I'm really pumped to be interacting again, face to face with students. So, you know, I'm hoping we've all individually and collectively learned a lot. But time, right, it is all about time, and where we shine the light. And, you know, sometimes people ask me what my role is, as President to sort of signal some of these directions. And sometimes I say, you know, it's where you put your time, and what you value and what stories you tell. So, you know, my commitment is I want to tell more stories about the incredible work that's happening here and why it matters.

D Dylan Cave 44:49
I love that. That's so great. Well, we appreciate your contribution.

B Brittany Ekelund 44:52
And your time!


D Dylan Cave 44:53
Your time for sure. Are there any other points that we didn't talk about that you maybe want to highlight? Or something that you just like to convey to our listeners about our new path forward and and our strategic vision or otherwise?

D Dr. Annette Trimbee 45:07
I would say to students find those opportunities to engage in research. Because the critical thinking skills, the design skills, designing a project, designing an experiment, the communication skills, the synthesis skills will really help you no matter where you go, if you have that ability to discern information, and to help others chart possible futures. That's an amazing skills. So go for it, go for it, go for it. It's for everybody.

D Dylan Cave 45:41
In that sense, I just want to make a quick plug to the USRI student research grant. Make sure to search that out if you are a student looking to do research. I myself was a lucky recipient of the USRI grant and it helped my research immensely in immersive audio. So if you're passionate about something, get in touch with your program chair and see how you can get involved with a USRI grant. But other than that, I think that's all we have for today. Unless there's anything else you'd like to mention.

D Dr. Annette Trimbee 46:11
No, well go out there and enjoy the summer - go find some blue-green algae - let me know where they are and i'll come and admire it with you.

D Dylan Cave 46:18
Amazing. Well, thank you so much. Dr. Trimbee. This has been a another episode of Research Recasted.



B

Brittany Ekelund 46:27

If you think this podcast is absolutely presidential, you can visit research recasted on your favorite podcast platform to find new episodes every two weeks. Also, check us out on Instagram @researchrecasted where you can leave a like, give us a follow, or send us a message if you have any follow up questions from today's episode.

D

Dylan Cave 46:45

This has been Research Recasted a knowledge mobilization podcast brought to you by the Office of Research Services and the Faculty of Fine Art and Communications at MacEwan University. Research Recasted is hosted and produced by Dylan Cave and Brittany Ekleund. Music, sound, design and editing are done by me - Dylan Cave - with research copy editing and scripting by Brittany Ekelund. Our executive producer is Ray Baril.