
Partners In Research Canada

Executive Director Report 2018/19

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Staff Report

Ben Hobbs joined as an intern through the Western University Science Internship program starting with PIR on May 1, 2018. Madeleine Sattler ended her internship in August 2018. Both of these positions were funded through a 3-year NSERC Promoscience grant of \$40,000.00 per year. Through the Canada Summer Jobs Grant program we were able to hire a summer student (Catherine Hoang - a former High School co-op student) who completed a number of website improvements. In March of 2019, Stacey Joyce left PIR to pursue employment in her local community of Orangeville Ontario. Since Stacey's departure, Ben Hobbs has taken the lead on all video based programming.

Volunteer Report

Deb Wiltshire continues to lead the PIR volunteer team as a (Volunteer) Volunteer Coordinator. The PIR social media team remains intact with 3 volunteers. One of our long-time (2 year) administrative support volunteers ended her time with us in September at which time we recruited a new volunteer who was with us until January 2019 when she found full-time work. Patrick Fong continues to support us 4 hours per week.

Co-operative Education Report

Catherine Hoang (as noted above) was a High School coop student through May 2018 working on graphic design and video editing projects. In September 2018, Tae Won joined us as High School coop student working on video editing and graphic design projects and will continue until the end of the current school year.

Partners In Research National Awards

The 2019 Partners In Research National Awards (PIRNA) was the second year under the new structure (The Engineering and Technology awards were combined into one; a new Young Researcher award was established; a standardized online application process was developed and used; the evaluation rubric was redesigned to put more emphasis on outreach activities; and the awards dinner was eliminated in lieu of recognition through highlighted PIR programming featuring the outreach topics promoted by the recipients). Challenges encountered in the first year were addressed by adding the requirement of a CV with the application to assist in assessing nominees research credentials.

The 2019 winners were:

Biomedical Science Ambassador Award: Dr. Oyedeji Ayonrinde, Queens University

Science Ambassador Award: Dr. Philip Currie, University of Alberta

Technology & Engineering Ambassador Award: Dr. Catherine Mavriplis, University of Ottawa

Dr. Jonathan Borwein Mathematics Ambassador Award: Dr. Rina Zazkis, Simon Fraser University

Ronald G. Calhoun Science Ambassador Award: Dr. Sandeep Raha, McMaster University

Young Researcher Ambassador Award: Ms. Andrea Reid, Carleton University

Programming

Live Event

Live Event is a live interview of a researcher within the STEM fields that is broadcast on the Internet. Schools from across Canada can join the broadcast live through a simple Internet browser. The Live Event program is a passive method of participation that takes the pressure off teachers wondering how to incorporate this kind of content into their curriculum delivery. Participation occurs when students / schools pose questions by email prior to the event or live during the event through a text function.

The PIR Live Event platform, while less interactive and personalized than VROC connections, continues to attract considerable interest and is attracting funding. Live Event is likely the future anchor of our programming

Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Events	14	27	41	60	56
Number of Concurrent Endpoints	90	440	840	743	1010
Average Concurrent Endpoints Per Event	6.4	16.3	20.5	12	18
Student Reach (calculated at 25 students per endpoint)	2250	11000	21000	18575	25250

* Every PIR Live Event is recorded and then house on the PIR YouTube Channel. In the past year, the average YouTube views per webinar are 131 that could convert to over 7,200 additional student views.

In January 2019, PIR introduced a new component to the PIR Live Event referred to as a “Resource Document”. This tool, provided to the teacher upon registration for the event, includes a number of resources about the topic including topical links from recent news feeds, information about the guest and about the topic. The document includes a series of inquiry questions to use before, during and after the event to enhance learning. These documents have proved to be very popular with the teacher audience.

Looking Forward:

The Live Event platform continues to grow in popularity. The PIR reach and our ability to expose students to educational content, research and researchers from across Canada is much more effective under this platform than any other program that we operate. Resources should be focused on growing the PIR Live Event platform such that more programming can be offered more frequently for broader grade ranges with more programming in French.

Sanofi Biogenius Canada

Summary: The SBC is a national biotechnology competition that seeks to spark scientific interest in Canada’s youth. Since it’s inception in 1993, the SBC program has inspired over 5000 students toward discovery and careers in the exciting field of biotechnology. More than just a science fair, the SBC challenges students to initiate and undertake university-level research projects. Students define a project outline, work with mentors to conduct research, and then present their findings in regional competitions across the country. Regional winners compete at the National level, judged by a panel of Canada’s eminent scientists. Finally, national winners go on to the International BioGENEius Challenge in the United States. Tasnia Nabil from Windsor, ON represented Canada at the 2017 competition held in San Diego California and was recognize as “runner-up” in the international healthcare challenge.

The 2017/2018 SBC competition year was a great success and The SBC National winner, Sajeev Kohli from Waterloo Ontario, was the international competition champion in Boston in June.

The 2018/19 SBC competition honoured the 25th anniversary of the competition and featured enhanced branding and new competition area designed that heightened the esthetics of the competitions. The national competition, held at the MaRS Discovery District was a tremendous success. The 2018/19 national winner, Ethan Chan from Victoria BC, competed at the international competition held in Philadelphia in June but did not place.

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Student Project Proposals	169	156	160	134	130	136
Number of Student Projects Competed	130	124	122	102	100	112

Virtual Researcher On Call

Summary: The Virtual Researcher On Call (VROC) program, which involves interaction between researchers and classrooms virtually, was established in 2005. VROC is an educational support program that connects college and university professors and professionals in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) with Canadian students in elementary and secondary schools for real-time, interactive learning opportunities over a video connection.

Since the summer of 2016, PIR has been using the Zoom videoconferencing platform that is an easier program to install, maintain and use and we hoped that this would help to re-engage those teachers who had fallen away from using the VROC program. Usage of the VROC program increased significantly in 2018 and we expect that the program will continue to grow.

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of VROC Sessions	265	277	214	181	69	108
Avg VROC Sessions Per Month	22.1	23.1	17.8	15.1	7	9
Number of Views of VROC Session (student reach)	6890	7202	5350	4525	1725	3525

* Since January 1, 2019 there have been another 33 VROC sessions - maintaining the 2018 pace

Delta Program

The Delta Program is a series of interactive curriculum resource packages that focus on grade 1-8 Science and Technology in alignment with the curriculum standards of the province of Ontario. These packages feature an experiential learning component, use inquiry concepts, have a story backbone and are supported by live interactive expert mentorship through videoconference.

In the summer of 2016, a curriculum writing team completed the first set of Delta lesson plans (85 in total). Starting in September 2016, 14 teachers were recruited for the first Delta pilot. The program received glowing feedback from the pilot teachers. The second Delta pilot began in January with 50 teachers from school boards across the province and early feedback from this pilot is also quite promising.

In the summer of 2017 an online provisioning solution was developed to allow teachers to retrieve the lesson plans independently from the PIR website. The original hope for Delta was that it would be supported by VROC style sessions but that hasn't been seen significantly to date. So far there have been 23,868 lessons downloaded.

PIR TV

Originally referred to as VROC Video, this program was re-branded in 2015 as PIR TV. PIR TV is a series of YouTube playlists assembled into a cohesive channel. It offers us a place to display purpose shot video, partner video and most importantly PIR Live Event video.

With the advent of the Zoom application, we can now upload recorded content from these sessions within 24 hours of completion that has led to a significant increase in our PIR TV viewership. PIR Live Event recorded sessions are viewed between 80 and 250 times with the majority of these views happening in the first 48 hours.