

Proposal:

**Renewal of The Centre for Sport Policy Studies as a KPE Extra-departmental Unit
(Level D)**

**Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education
University of Toronto**

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This document outlines plans for the ongoing activities of The Centre for Sport Policy Studies (CSPS), housed within the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KPE) at the University of Toronto.

1. Vision and Scope

The Centre for Sport Policy Studies is an internationally recognized hub and repository for research into sport, policy and development (broadly defined). To date, and under the leadership of Professor Peter Donnelly, the Centre has conducted empirically based, critically informed, and theoretically driven research for more than two decades, aimed at academics, students, and policy makers. Pending the retirement of Professor Donnelly, and transition to Dr. Simon Darnell as Director, the Centre will continue to conduct cutting-edge research, while expanding its focus internationally.

The vision and scope of the Centre aligns with goals outlined in the current Academic Plan of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education (2018-2022), namely “to strengthen recognition and productivity in research, scholarship, innovation and creative activity” and to “build new capacity through investments in infrastructure, people and partnerships.”

2. History and Legacy

The Centre for Sport Policy Studies was established in 1999, under then Dean Bruce Kidd and the Directorship of Professor Peter Donnelly. In 2008, it was recognized as an EDU:D by the University of Toronto and has held that status ever since.

From the outset, the Centre conducted research and advocacy in three main areas:

- Sport for All
- Healthy high performance sport
- Sport in educational settings

The Centre produced a series of notable research outputs between 1999 and 2020, including (but not limited to):

- Gender and Race Audits, analyzing gender and race-based equity and inclusion in sport organizations and events, including Canadian Inter-university Sport, The Commonwealth Games, and the Olympic Games.
- Scientific Literature Reviews, notably commissioned by the International Working Group – Sport for Development and Peace, and focused on the scholarly literature regarding sport, international development.
- Policy Reviews and Recommendations, most recently on how to adapt sport policy and delivery in response to COVID-19.
- Academic/Policy Partnerships, notably the Sport Canada Research Initiative.

3. Academic Rationale

The main academic rationale for the continuing work of the Centre for Sport Policy Studies is as follows:

- Sport continues to be an important element of the policy landscape, both internationally and in Canada. For example, Article 37 of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cites the potential contributions of sport to sustainable development, and the 2012 Canadian Sport Policy outlines five pillars of sport’s contribution to Canadian society.
- A series of urgent challenges and crises currently face sport, and sport policy makers, and call for and require strong research/policy responses. Such crises include, but are not limited to, the place of sport within environmental sustainability and amidst the climate crisis; struggles to ensure athlete welfare and child protection in sport; controversies about the place and role of sport in social movements and political protests; public funding priorities in sport.
- The global Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) sector, comprised of the organizations and stakeholders that mobilize sport to meet the goals of international development and peace building, continues to grow, and to develop within a changing policy landscape. For example, the 2017 Kazan Action Plan, formally adopted at UNESCO’s Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, highlighted three main policy areas for sport: ensuring access for all to sport, maximizing sport’s contribution to the SDGs, and maintaining ethics and integrity in sport.

Overall, such issues and challenges are important aspects of the global sport policy landscape, and the Centre for Sport Policy Studies remains well positioned to serve as a leader in research, knowledge dissemination and advocacy. The Centre can, in this way, make policy recommendations to a variety of international stakeholders about how best to organize and pursue sport, and sport for development, that is equitable, accessible and sustainable.

4. Leadership

Pending the retirement in July 2021 of Peter Donnelly as the Centre’s current Director, the leadership of the Centre will transfer to Dr. Simon C. Darnell, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. Dr. Darnell has conducted research and teaching in the areas of global sport policy and the SDP sector since 2003. He has led fieldwork in the Caribbean, Southern Africa, and Europe focused on a number of topics and issues related to sport policy, including:

- South-South Development Cooperation
- Canadian volunteers in the SDP sector
- SDP, climate change and environmental sustainability
- The organization and structure of the global SDP sector
- Sport and social development in Toronto
- Athlete activism and political protest in sport

To date, a range of funders has supported Dr. Darnell's research, including:

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
- International Development Research Centre
- Province of Ontario (Early Researcher Award)
- University of Toronto's Connaught Fund
- Sport Canada Research Initiative
- Laureus Sport for Good Foundation

As of 2021, Dr. Darnell has written/edited 7 books, more than 35 refereed journal articles and more than 25 chapters in scholarly books. (See complete CV attached).

Beginning in 2021, the CSPA will operate according to a collaborative organizational structure:

- Director – Dr. Simon C. Darnell
- Steering Committee – Comprised of 5-6 Associate Members and Partners, on a rotating basis, and invited to steer the CSPA research agenda and core activities
- Advisory Board – Comprised of the total of Associate Members and Partners (academic and non), and invited to contribute research and industry expertise and insights to the activities of the Centre
- Graduate Student Members – Comprised of students in the Graduate Department of Kinesiology, and invited to contribute research expertise and insights to the activities of the Centre
- Administrator (pending funding) – A staff member dedicated to the administrative duties of the Centre.

In its operations, the CSPA will commit to the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, specifically by prioritizing racial, ethnic and sexual diversity among its members and within its areas of research. The Centre will also explore opportunities to act upon the recommendations put forth in the Final Report of the KPE Task Force on Race and Indigeneity (2018).

5. Associate Members and Partners

The Centre for Sport Policy Studies will adopt both a multi- and inter-disciplinary approach that seeks to collaborate with and integrate expertise from a range of social scientists (and from disciplines including sociology, policy studies, political science, development studies, behavioral sciences, and others).

Associate Members, comprised of the excellent researchers within the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, will be recruited to lend expertise and support to the Centre for Sport Policy Studies. In alphabetical order, these Associate Members include:

The Centre will also seek to create and/or strengthen partnerships with key colleagues and academic units across the University of Toronto. Those to be invited include:

- The Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy and Department of Political Science
- The Centre for Critical Development Studies at University of Toronto, Scarborough
- The University of Toronto's School of Cities initiative
- Rotman School of Management (Sport Management) at University of Toronto, Scarborough

The Centre will also seek to strengthen, extend and leverage Dr. Darnell's current relationships with key colleagues and academic units beyond the University of Toronto. Those to be invited include:

- Centre for Sport and Sustainability at the University of British Columbia (Professor Brian Wilson)
- School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences at Loughborough University (Professor Richard Giulianotti)
- Health and Sport Science at Adelphi University (Dr. Meredith Whitley)
- Department of Kinesiology at Brock University (Dr. Rob Millington)
- School of Kinesiology and Health Science at York University (Dr. Lyndsay Hayhurst, Dr. Parissa Safai)
- Future of Sport Lab at Ryerson University (Dr. Cheri Bradish, Dr. Richard Norman)

The Centre will also seek to create and/or strengthen partnerships with industry and non-academic partners. Those to be invited include:

- The Commonwealth Secretariat
- UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Sport
- Sport Canada
- Laureus Sport for Good Foundation
- Women Win
- Olympic Studies Centre

6. Planned Activities

Beginning in 2021, the activities and efforts of the Centre for Sport Policy Studies will fall broadly into the following six categories:

(a) Research

The Centre will continue the research program currently led by Dr. Darnell. This program is comprised of the following focus areas:

Short-term

- Sport, development and climate change (currently supported by SSHRC Insight Grant)
- Sport and social development in urban Toronto (currently supported by Province of Ontario Early Researcher Award)
- Sport, political protest and social movements (previously supported by Connaught Fund)
- Sport and international development (previously supported by ESRC)

Medium-term

- Sport and global citizenship

Long-term/On-going

Under Dr. Darnell's leadership, the Centre will also look to continue and/or build upon various legacy projects of the CSPS, including gender and race audits, sport-for-development literature reviews, and COVID-19 policy recommendations.

(b) Partnerships

Under Dr. Darnell's leadership, the Centre will work to extend, create and/or formalize partnerships with stakeholders from public policy, industry and the charitable sector. Partnerships will be pursued with the following stakeholders:

Short-term

- The Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment (MLSE) Foundation
- Laureus Sport for Good Foundation

Medium-term

- Peace & Sport (NGO)

Long-term

- Sport Canada
- The Commonwealth Secretariat
- Canada Games

(c) Funding

Under Dr. Darnell's leadership, the Centre will seek funding to support its research and partnership activities.

Short-term

- Key funding opportunities to pursue will include (respectively) the Partnership and Connection Grant opportunities from SSHRC. Both of these fit within the collaborative mandate and approach to be taken up by the Centre.

Medium-term

- Working with the KPE Office of Advancement, the Centre will pursue private and endowed funding to support its ongoing efforts.

(d) Knowledge Translation

Knowledge translation will remain an important element of the activities of the Centre. Outlets and processes for knowledge translation include (but are not limited to):

Short-term

- The continuation of the Centre's Policy Matters Seminar series, initiated by Professor Donnelly, which recruits experts to deliver research presentations. New modes of delivery will also be explored, including the creation of a Policy Matters podcast series.
- Policy reports and recommendations published on the Centre website and disseminated through academic and policy channels.

Medium-term

- A regular (e.g. bi-annual) research day and/or invited lecture, hosted by KPE, and focused on a topic relevant to the Centre's mandate.

Long-term/On-going

- Public speaking and keynote addresses, delivered by Dr. Darnell and/or associates.
- Public symposiums and fora with research partners, such as The Commonwealth Secretariat, Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, and Sport Canada.

(e) Engagement and Recruitment

Under Dr. Darnell's leadership, the Centre will pursue new means of engagement and recruitment, particularly focused on students and early-career researchers. Actions to pursue include:

Short-term

- Aligning the activities of the Centre with the current prioritization within KPE of providing international experiences for undergraduates.

(NOTE: Supported by KPE administrators, starting in 2019 Dr. Darnell facilitated the reorganization of *KPE 401 – International Development through Sport*, to include fieldwork in Jamaica. The course was cancelled due to COVID-19 but the plans to deliver international experiences for KPE undergrads remain in place for future implementation.)

Medium-term

- Leveraging and promoting the brand and profile of the Centre to recruit quality post-doctoral and graduate level researchers to work on various aspects of sport policy and SDP.

Long-term

- Exploring opportunities to align the Centre with other programs, such as the University of Toronto's Reach Project, which currently organizes and supports student researchers to take on international development research around the world.

(f) Administration

Under Dr. Darnell's leadership, the Centre will pursue several administrative goals or changes, including:

Short-term

- Rebuilding the Centre website and social media presence (to occur in consultation with KPE Communications).

Medium-term

- (Re)branding the Centre, and possibly updating the name to reflect the international focus and the importance of SDP (to occur in consultation with Associate Members and Partners).

Long-term

- Exploring extensions to the Sport Canada Research Initiative.
- Developing a Training Certification Program, in which participants can earn a Certificate in Sport Policy and Development (or the like), in a manner similar to a Certificate in Public Administration offered in other departments and institutions.

Review

- Reviewing, in five years' time (approx. 2026), the Centre's achievements and status, in order to provide a recommendation to the Dean of KPE about the Centre's continuation as a EDU:D.

7. Summary

Recognizing its legacy and strengths, the Centre for Sport Policy Studies at the University of Toronto aims to expand its key areas of focus and the scope of its outreach within the current global sport policy landscape in order to maintain its position as an internationally recognized hub of research.