

# MAKING AN IMPACT: HOW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO A STRONGER ONTARIO



Across the province, Ontario university students are engaging with their communities, getting involved and driving social and economic development in order to create a better future for Ontario and all who live here.

Whether they are volunteering to help health-care workers and vulnerable populations, developing new products and services for businesses, or working with professors to create new tools, equipment, testing methods and treatments, Ontario's university students and researchers – our province's future makers – are launching new university projects and initiatives to help find solutions to the social and economic challenges that Ontario is facing.



Below are just a few examples of the many ways in which university students are demonstrating their adaptability and commitment to helping build community resiliency and preparing our province for a rapidly changing economy.

## ● Supporting health care across Ontario

- In order to protect health-care workers during COVID-19, a **Brock University** graduate student quickly adapted his exhibit booth design company to produce plexiglass solutions for hospitals across Ontario. The company has created and installed screening stations, built a rapid assessment centre and temporary treatment rooms to help keep front-line workers safe.
- As the need for additional front-line workers increases due to COVID-19, students in the Francophone nursing program at **Laurentian University** are volunteering to help keep their community safe. From delivering groceries to volunteering as COVID-19 screening officers, students are using their skills to help provide support where it's needed most.
- To support health-care workers during the pandemic, **McMaster University** medical students founded the McMaster Healthcare Students COVID-19 Response Team. More than 130 health-care student volunteers are providing pet-care, grocery-run services and more to help front-line workers in the Waterloo, Hamilton and Niagara regions.

- Knowing the toll the outbreak would take on the health-care system, more than 240 student volunteers from the **University of Toronto's** schools of Medicine and Nursing are offering support. They are babysitting, picking up groceries and carrying out other tasks for health-care workers on the front lines.
- A portable life support and ventilation device for use in hospitals across Canada was developed with help from four engineering grads from the **University of Waterloo** to provide hospitals with much needed ICU equipment. The device, which was originally created for military use, was adapted and is now being produced to help ensure COVID-19 patients receive the care they need.

## ● Volunteering to help vulnerable communities

- To meet an increased need for local food bank services during the pandemic, **Algoma University** students stepped up to help those in need. The Food Pantry and the People's Garden, both run by the Algoma University Students' Union, are helping alleviate some of the financial burdens by supplying fresh produce and essential pantry supplies to students on campus and also to families in the community.

- In order to curb the spread of COVID-19 many shelter programs closed, leaving some of Ontario's most vulnerable community members at risk. In response, **Carleton University** students provided "street survival kits" containing socks, biscuits, first-aid kits and other essentials to help individuals experiencing homelessness in Ottawa during the pandemic.
- When the pandemic caused summer camps across the province to close, two **University of Guelph** students created a virtual camp experience for children. From creating art to conducting science experiments, the "Virtually Together Camp" enables kids to participate in interactive activities that provide much needed support for children and their families during the pandemic.
- Uplifting written messages of encouragement are being sent by **Lakehead University** students and community members to help support the well-being of seniors while in isolation. Hand written messages are scanned and sent to long-term care homes to help vulnerable members of the community stay connected during the pandemic.



- Seniors affected by social isolation are benefiting from a **Queen's University** student outreach project. The project matches students and senior alumni who have similar interests, degrees or locations. Through phone conversations students are helping promote wellness amongst some of the most vulnerable members of our society during the pandemic.

- As many self-isolate and limit their time outdoors during COVID-19, individuals who are at higher risk, including seniors, are unable to leave their homes to buy essential items. In response, a group of students at **Western University** organized the London Volunteer Task Force, offering grocery shop-and-delivery for vulnerable individuals and those in self-quarantine.

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### ● Bettering our province through work-integrated learning

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- A hands-on literacy program for children typically held through PA days and summer sessions has been adapted for home use to help them develop literacy skills. Students from the Schulich School of Education at **Nipissing University**, have used their skills to adapt NU Reads into an online newsletter to help families in the community who are learning from home during COVID-19.

- With an intention to reach the larger community, **OCAD University** design students utilized their skills to transform parts of an existing wellness program for students into a community-centric virtual initiative. The "OCAD U ok?" social media campaign features inspirational messages and resources promoting wellness during this public health crisis.

- Through a unique work-integrated learning opportunity, a **Trent University** graduate student and chemistry professor created a free digital resource that helps students prepare for first-year chemistry. This educational resource is fully accessible to the public and aims to ensure that incoming students feel supported.



- Small Ontario businesses are receiving support from one hundred masters and undergraduate students at **York University**. Through paid summer placements and work-integrated learning opportunities, the students are supporting Digital Main Street's ShopHERE initiative to help small business go digital and reach more customers.

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### ● Driving innovation through student entrepreneurship

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- When COVID-19 impacted many jobs and opportunities for students and graduates, the summer cohort from the Brilliant Catalyst Incubator program at **Ontario Tech University** developed some exciting new startup ideas. One example of the innovations that came out of the summer incubator is a health analytic service that can help monitor health markers from home.

- Improved designs for protective face shields have been developed by student engineers at the **University of Ottawa**. By creatively using 3D printers in their labs, they are providing enhanced prototype designs for other makers and producing 10-20 shields every two hours for health-care workers on the front lines.

- To help remote communities get the COVID-19 supplies they need, students from **Ryerson University's** Unmanned Aerial Vehicle team are leveraging existing resources to help with relief efforts. By adapting a long-range drone that can travel up to 200 km and carry 15 lbs, they plan to deliver test kits and medical necessities to those who need them the most.

- Using 3-D printing software and a laser cutter, a **Wilfrid Laurier University** alumnus and founder of InkSmith quickly pivoted his existing 3D printing business in order to meet a growing demand. Tens of thousands of face shields were produced every day with the goal of manufacturing enough to meet the needs of every hospital in Canada.



- DeliverBae, a delivery service founded by a **University of Windsor** student, is ensuring Ontario's vulnerable populations get the supplies they need during the pandemic. By rallying volunteer drivers and partnering with businesses, the local company is prioritizing essential product delivery to those who need it most, free of charge.

