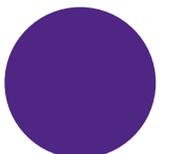


PARTNERING TO SUPPORT ONTARIO'S RECOVERY

2020 Fall Pre-Budget Submission
to the Ontario Government



Contents

3 Five-Point Plan to Support Ontario's Recovery

4 Introduction: Supporting Ontario through the Recovery

6 Partnering in the Fight Against COVID-19

Supporting Ontario's Students

Working Together to Build Community Resiliency

Bettering the Social and Economic Fabric of Ontario

10 Developing a Strong Workforce for a Strong Recovery

Developing Resilient Life-Long Learners

Career-Ready Skills through Work-Integrated Learning

Technology-Enhanced Learning for the Future of Work

16 Building Resilient Communities through Talent and Infrastructure

Supporting Local Communities through Infrastructure

Social and Economic Recovery through Global Talent

20 Driving a Strong Provincial Economy for the Recovery and Beyond

Commercializing Made-in-Ontario Solutions

Job Creation and Investment through Innovation

Ground-Breaking Research for the Fight against COVID-19 and Beyond

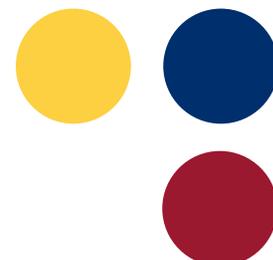
25 Ensuring a Vibrant Postsecondary Sector

Providing Stable and Predictable Funding for Universities

27 Conclusion: Partnering to Help Rebuild Ontario

28 Budget Priorities - Summary of Recommendations

30 Additional Reading



Five-Point Plan to Support Ontario's Recovery

The impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak have been felt by families, workers and businesses across the province.

While the road to recovery may be long as Ontario continues to navigate through large-scale economic and social disruption, now is the time to work together to build the foundation for a new Ontario.

Ontario's universities stand ready to support our province now, and in the next chapter in the fight against COVID-19 to build back better.

Our five-point plan outlines how our institutions will continue to partner to empower and support students, families and communities; connect people and ideas; drive the innovation that helps create jobs and bring made-in-Ontario solutions to market.

Together, Ontario will emerge from this crisis united and resilient with a clear path to growth, renewal and long-term recovery.



1 Support Ontario through COVID-19

Ensure students, researchers and universities continue to address the immediate needs of the province and demonstrate the Ontario Spirit

2 Develop an Adaptable Workforce

Ensure Ontario has a workforce of life-long learners poised to drive innovation and navigate our changing economy

3 Build Thriving Regions

Stimulate Ontario's local economies by investing in cutting-edge infrastructure and attracting top global talent to support growth in communities across the province

4 Drive a Competitive Economy

Leverage made-in-Ontario research and innovation to commercialize new technology and help modernize our manufacturing, health, natural resource and service sectors and increase opportunities for high-demand jobs that will help Ontario retool and rebuild

5 Support a Vibrant Postsecondary Sector

Ensure Ontario has vibrant and financially sustainable postsecondary institutions, vital to the economic and social well-being of our province and all who live here

Introduction: Supporting Ontario through the Recovery

“Whether it’s donating PPE, researching a vaccine or treatment, or helping with contact tracing, our students, researchers and postsecondary community in Ontario have stepped up in a big way to support our frontline health care workers in response to COVID-19. Now, we have to have their backs and make sure our students can keep learning, in class or virtually, and become the next generation of frontline heroes, innovators and community builders.”

– Premier Doug Ford, June 2020

From downtown Toronto to rural and remote communities in northern Ontario, the impacts of COVID-19 are being felt across all aspects of life.

These are unprecedented times. But as our province continues to face these challenges, there is also great opportunity before us. Rebuilding Ontario will take partnership – across all sectors, regions and levels of government to help build a brighter future – not just for the students we teach, but for the communities we serve.

Universities across Ontario are contributing talent, technology and much-needed supplies, as well as conducting meaningful research to help our province.

Whether it’s by partnering with small businesses to help mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, working with local industry to develop made-in-Ontario solutions, or supporting individuals, families and vulnerable populations, universities are inextricably linked to Ontario’s communities.

Our students, researchers and educators continue to use resolve and ingenuity to demonstrate the Ontario Spirit. They are volunteering, manufacturing vital personal protective equipment (PPE) and exploring discoveries that lead to better testing, treatments and vaccine development.

In fact, our students are and continue to lead the groundswell for community engagement. By supporting their peers and families, helping health-care workers and

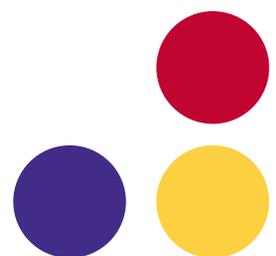
marginalized communities and working with professors to find innovative solutions to the challenges facing businesses and municipalities, students are playing a pivotal role in contributing to the economic success of the province.

The vital contributions of our institutions will be critical, as the pandemic continues to take a heavy economic and social toll on our province. While the economic situation is improving, more will be necessary to restore jobs and economic growth in communities throughout Ontario.

Although it’s difficult to predict what tomorrow will look like in the midst of the pandemic, one thing is certain: as changes affect our world, our province and specifically the workforce, a university education will play an essential part in weathering the storm.

The job losses associated with COVID-19 highlight the need for Ontario to prepare for unexpected shocks to the labour market and develop a modern workforce with skills that will help all workers continue to engage and transition throughout their careers.

Ontario’s universities remain committed to creating a dynamic workforce and driving the innovation that leads to new jobs and evolving industries. Our students graduate



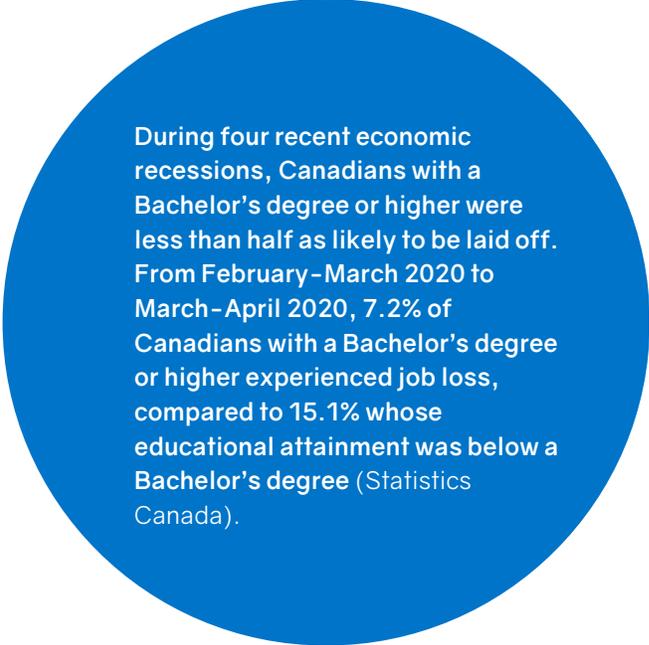
equipped with the transferrable skills they need to find jobs in these industries, while our institutions also provide courses and credentials for workers to reskill and upskill, as they adapt in a changing economy.

Ontario will need a strong adaptable workforce in order to help the province build back better and drive a competitive economy that is open for business – one that can boost local economies and attract investment to communities and regions throughout Ontario.

As the province starts down the road to long-term recovery, and the government prepares to responsibly lead our economy back to a strong position, Ontario's universities will continue to be good partners.

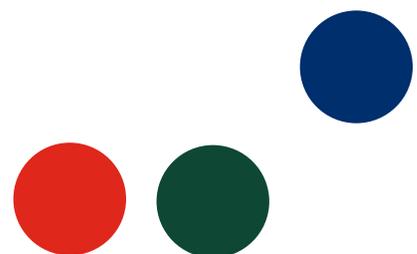
Our institutions have a vital role to play in fortifying our province and helping address the urgent needs of Ontario. It is more important than ever to ensure the province has vibrant, financially sustainable universities in order to:

- Ensure students, researchers and universities continue to address the immediate needs of the province and demonstrate the Ontario Spirit
- Develop a workforce of resilient life-long learners who can adapt to a rapidly changing economy through new types of learning and new technologies
- Strengthen community resilience, attract top talent and support the province's social and economic infrastructure in order to better prepare our communities for future crises
- Conduct ground-breaking research that drives innovation, fuels job creation, attracts investment and commercializes made-in-Ontario solutions



During four recent economic recessions, Canadians with a Bachelor's degree or higher were less than half as likely to be laid off. From February–March 2020 to March–April 2020, 7.2% of Canadians with a Bachelor's degree or higher experienced job loss, compared to 15.1% whose educational attainment was below a Bachelor's degree (Statistics Canada).

This pre-budget submission details how, through a Five-Point Plan to Support Ontario's Recovery, government and universities can partner to tackle the priorities that are critical to Ontario's economic growth, both now and in the future; creating a more prosperous future for our students, communities and the province.



A vibrant, stylized illustration of a diverse crowd of people, all wearing white face masks. The individuals are depicted in various colors and styles, representing a multicultural group. In the center of the image, a large white circle contains the text "PARTNERING IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19" in a bold, purple, sans-serif font.

**PARTNERING
IN THE FIGHT
AGAINST
COVID-19**

Ontario's universities have a significant role to play in the fight against COVID-19. Our institutions are providing assistance and working together with our provincial government and local communities to address the urgent needs of the province and protect the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Whether it's through ground-breaking research discoveries, such as, isolating the virus, supporting their local public health teams, or volunteering in our communities, the individual and collective efforts of our students, researchers and faculty play a significant role in slowing the spread of the pandemic.

Below are just some of the ways universities are working together across sectors to support the success of students, foster innovative research and help workers and communities in the global fight against COVID-19.

Supporting Ontario's Students

As we face the uncertainties brought about by COVID-19, Ontario's universities continue to support students – the province's talented workforce. Universities are committed to ensuring new and returning students can continue to access a high quality postsecondary education that will not only prepare them for a career, but also provide them with the life-long skills they need to be adaptable in a rapidly changing world.

Adapting and Developing a High Quality Education and an Enriching Experience

- ▶ To help students reach their academic goals for the 2020 spring/summer term, Algoma University swiftly built a robust online learning experience with interactive models. The university proactively digitized 100 relevant, accessible courses, as well as developed new courses, including the unique Science of COVID course.

- ▶ Eighty-six per cent of students find work-integrated learning opportunities result in an easier transition from school to a successful career. To ensure students receive these valuable experiences, Carleton University is providing students interested in teaching innovation and curriculum design with the opportunity to work with instructors as they prepare their online courses for the fall term.
- ▶ Visually communicating meaningful information about COVID-19 in effective ways is the challenge now facing graphic designers. At OCAD University, fourth-year graphic design students are focusing their projects on the social, financial and/or mental health impacts of COVID-19, and their professor is leading a new study on trends in data visualization of COVID-19 information in two Canadian daily newspapers.
- ▶ 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.

Ensuring Access to Mental Health, Wellness and Financial Supports

- ▶ Community support can be vital during times of crisis, especially for students who don't have strong networks or reliable income to see them through. In response, Lakehead University created a Student Relief Fund to provide immediate relief for students who are facing challenges with their living and food expenses due to recent job loss or reduced earnings.



- › As students continue their studies, while navigating mounting stress levels brought about by COVID-19, Nipissing University is now providing students with access to an additional mental health services. Real Campus offers online short-term therapy, specialized counselling and more.
- › To help students adjust to a new technology-enhanced learning environment, Ontario Tech University has adapted their peer tutor program, offering undergraduate students the opportunity to work one-on-one, or in groups, with a trained peer tutor. This program is tailored to the individual's needs to give them the added resources, connection and support they need.



Working Together to Build Community Resiliency

Ontario's universities play a vital role as anchors in communities throughout the province. Whether it's providing accommodations for frontline workers, developing much-needed products and equipment, or supporting families, our institutions recognize the importance of working together to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Expertise that Beters our Communities

- › As communities seek creative ways to stay connected and remain informed during COVID-19, Queen's University's only community and campus radio station is using the airwaves to connect people across the region, providing critical COVID-19 information and updates. Radio Pandemic, a call-in show that discusses news about COVID-19, helps inform and support its listeners.

Supporting Ontario's most Vulnerable Communities

- › Long-term care homes in Canada have faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. To help address this issue, researchers from Ryerson University are working to identify best practices in relational care during pandemic conditions and create innovative strategies to support the well-being of older Ontarians and their health-care providers.
- › To gain a deeper understanding of how newcomers are managing during the pandemic, Wilfrid Laurier University researchers are studying how refugee families are coping and how losing access to local services has affected them. They will share their findings with community organizations and policymakers to help strengthen their capacity to serve that community better.

Strengthening Communities through Digital Connectivity

- › Cybersecurity risks are increasing as more people work from home. To help mitigate both personal and corporate risks, the University of Waterloo facilitated a security and

data privacy panel. From fraudsters and phishing scams to tracing apps and data collection, they are sharing information to help individuals, companies and policymakers make sound decisions around the use of technology.

- › Investing in broadband infrastructure in underserved areas is essential to providing equal access across Ontario. To help service providers build-out Internet infrastructure and increase access in rural communities, the University of Windsor has partnered on a non-profit municipally-led broadband expansion project that will build an ultra-high speed Internet network across Southwestern Ontario.

Bettering the Social and Economic Fabric of Ontario

As we navigate COVID-19, Ontario's universities, students, faculty and researchers are driving social and economic development across the province by leveraging world-class research and expertise, adapting equipment and infrastructure and creating made-in-Ontario solutions in order to create a better future for Ontario and all who live here.

Working on Vaccines and Treatments through Ground-Breaking Research

- › An interactive online tool is helping hospitals and other health-care providers estimate their capacity to manage new cases of COVID-19. Designed by a group of PhD students and researchers at the University of Toronto, the tool examines the number of critical care resources, data on age and severity of cases and expected duration of patient stays.

- › Developing a vaccine for the deadly COVID-19 virus is one of the most urgent needs. A team of researchers at Western University has set out to do just that, working to establish and test an effective vaccine, while also developing a “vaccine bank” for ready-made vaccines that can be used at the start of another coronavirus outbreak.

Supporting Health-Care Workers and Hospitals

- › More than 300 headbands have been shipped to Health Sciences North to help build the face shields that protect health-care workers, due to the efforts of Laurentian University researchers. Using an open-source design created by a Swedish firm, researchers were able to 3-D print the headbands and plan to deliver hundreds more to the frontlines.
- › To meet increasing hospital demand for personal protective equipment during COVID-19, a team at McMaster University's Manufacturing Research Institute is leveraging their research expertise to pivot the manufacturing efforts of local industry partners in order to help create critical PPE and supplies for local hospitals and health-care facilities.



- › By leveraging a combination of technologies, including virtual reality, the University of Ottawa and the Ottawa Hospital are partnering to better prepare local health-care professionals in the fight against COVID-19. The training is helping medical workers run through rapid response simulations and frontline scenarios, mimicking the realities hospitals currently face.

Working with Businesses to Find Solutions

- › A local company is making an international impact in combatting COVID-19 with kits to help test for the virus. With the help of Brock University's Machine Shop, Norgen Biotek – founded by a Brock professor – has been able to multiply its manufacturing capacity, building kits as quickly as possible.

- › In an effort to help Dixon's Distilled Spirits pivot operations from producing liquors to bottling much needed hand sanitizer for local frontline workers, the University of Guelph supplied ingredients to create up to 2,000 litres of hand sanitizer. The product was distributed to essential workers in medical clinics, the local fire department and the local OPP dispatch centre.

- › Designed to help small businesses and entrepreneurs access financial support programs as they face the challenges of COVID-19, the Schulich School of Business at York University has established the COVID-19 Small Business Support Centre. The centre provides critical assistance to help small businesses stay afloat during these challenging times.



Ontario's universities, at every stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, stand ready to work together with our provincial government and local communities to navigate these challenges and help support our communities, businesses and province. For more information about how our institutions are providing assistance, visit the *Ontario's Universities COVID-19* page.

1

Developing a Strong Workforce for a Strong Recovery

“It’s critical that we allow students to complete their studies and graduate so they can join the workforce in high-demand, frontline roles and help put the province back on the path to prosperity.”

- The Honourable Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities, June 2020

We all have a role to play in educating the workforce of tomorrow. As we navigate these unprecedented challenges, ensuring that Ontario has a strong and stable workforce that can adapt during economic downturns and supports displaced workers will be critical to a successful recovery.

Approximately two-thirds of all job openings will require a postsecondary education. In fact, in just three decades, jobs requiring a university education have increased by 145%, according to Ontario’s Long Term Report on the Economy, Ministry of Finance, 2017.

To future-proof the workforce of tomorrow, Ontario’s universities are working to ensure students graduate equipped with:

- Adaptable skills and tools to become resilient life-long learners, through preskilling, reskilling and upskilling
- Work-integrated learning opportunities to help students gain the career-ready skills required to navigate a changing economy
- Digital learning experiences that reflect new ways of learning and support greater access for the future of work

Our institutions remain committed to providing students, workers and non-traditional learners with the life-long, adaptable skills that will fuel the changing workforce and help stimulate the economy as we rebuild Ontario together.

Developing Resilient Life-Long Learners

To help navigate through the social, economic and technological change that will continue to face our province throughout the pandemic and beyond, Ontario needs a strong workforce of life-long learners – well-equipped to transition into new roles and meet the changing needs of Ontario’s labour market.

The value of a university degree, credentials and the skills and experiences that come with it are critical to ensuring the workforce of today and tomorrow has the adaptable skills it needs.

“For mid-career workers whose jobs may disappear, the key to successful and speedy re-entry into the labour market is a strong foundation of transferable skills that will help them pivot into a new work environment.” – On Test: Skills, Summary of Findings from HEQCO’s Skills Assessment Pilot Studies, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, November 2018

Today's universities are no longer a destination point during a single stage of education. Our institutions are preparing students for the future by providing them with the tools to adapt and encouraging life-long learning through a range of short-duration programs and certificates.

Through preskilling, reskilling and upskilling, Ontario's universities are helping the modern learner become a life-long learner.

Preskilling for the first job: In moments like these, preskilling and preparing Ontario's students with the skills to begin their career will be critical as they prepare to enter the labour force and an unpredictable work landscape.

A university degree helps students develop the transferable skills they will need and employers demand. A 2019 RBC assessment found an increasing employer need for critical thinking, co-ordination, social perceptiveness, active listening and complex problem-solving skills.

Ontario's universities continue to ensure students are equipped with these in-demand soft skills – as well as the digital badging programs to communicate this valuable skillset to employers. For example, a third-year engineering student at an Ontario university was able to work on an extra-curricular project aimed at enlivening the urban landscape in their local community and also receive a digital "micro-credential" recognizing the skills honed while working on the project, including research, entrepreneurship, communication and collaboration.

But today's university students are also much more than Ontario's future workforce. They are making intangible contributions to our communities and are interwoven into the social and economic fabric of our province.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen students take remarkable initiative. They have stepped up to organize volunteer groups dedicated to support health-care workers and vulnerable populations. They are helping small and medium-sized businesses navigate COVID-19 and they are working with professors, researchers and entrepreneurs to create new tools, testing methods and treatments.

In order to protect health-care workers during COVID-19, a 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.

These students also help boost local economies and support businesses – whether it's by contributing to the rental or housing market or through spending activities at shops and restaurants.

Their commitment and impact will only continue – Ontario's university students will be the innovative employers, creative entrepreneurs, nimble employees and job creators of the future who help strengthen community resilience, drive innovation, rebuild new industries and adapt to Ontario's rapidly evolving economy.

Reskilling to prepare for new jobs: As changes in occupations, career paths and industries become the norm, Ontarians will need access to high-quality, short-duration skills development opportunities that meet the needs of today and tomorrow's employers.

According to a May 2020 report by the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship entitled, [Ahead by a Decade: Employment in 2030](#), one-third of Canadian workers are in occupations with "a high probability of change." The report states that policy responses, such as retraining programs and adapted school curriculum, are needed to increase resilience across Canada's workforce as companies and employees rapidly adjust to a new normal.

Ontario's universities are uniquely positioned to deliver this training and are committed to supporting these workers as they experience changes in their careers. They are working with industry to adapt courses and provide short-duration programming that supports Ontarians of all backgrounds, including workers who may have been displaced by the pandemic – particularly women.



In March, women between the ages of 25 and 54 lost more than twice as many jobs as men in Ontario, as outlined in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's *The She-Covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario*. The report found that women's labour force participation rate fell to its lowest level in 30 years. Since then, women have seen slower re-employment than men.

It is critical to ensure these workers have access to flexible retraining opportunities where they can help businesses prepare for post-pandemic growth.

One example of how universities are helping employers includes a partnership in advanced manufacturing, which offers short programs that help manufacturing workers and managers adapt their skills as they work in a changing industry.

To assist workers who have lost their jobs, one university is partnering with a non-profit in the tourism and hospitality industry, to provide immediate resources to displaced workers and equip them with new skills. The partnership is also supporting businesses as they respond to changing market realities across Ontario's regions.

In addition, a collaboration between universities, eCampus Ontario and industry partners has resulted in 10 micro-credential pilot projects at universities. Through a unique micro-credentials program, one Ontario university is helping the Windsor-Essex region digitize health-care records. Learners receive verifiable credentials and create a pipeline of qualified applicants for anticipated employment opportunities within the health-care system in the region.

Not only does this type of short-duration programming benefit employees, it also helps employers advance local industry. Further leveraging federal investments in training programs that quickly skill up workers will help ensure Ontario builds the workforce it needs.

Upskilling for the long term: Ontario's universities are responding to the increased need for upskilling with innovative programming for both current students and non-traditional learners.

Through continuing education and professional development programs, our institutions offer a range of micro-credentials, collaborative programs and stackable credential initiatives that help workers upgrade their skills and remain competitive in the marketplace.

Universities are also redesigning traditional programming, such as graduate programs, to be more flexible for adult learners and mid-career professionals.

These upskilling opportunities ensure Ontario can build a workforce of life-long learners, where employees can stack their credentials and employers can gain access to the talent and skills they need to recover in a post-pandemic world.

Upskilling will become increasingly important for the development of the province's workforce, enabling Ontarians to rapidly build on their experience as the economy continues to evolve.

One Ontario university, for example, is partnering with Trilogy Education to offer a Coding Boot Camp that teaches the front-end and back-end skills necessary to become a proficient full-stack developer, empowering local adults with the latest technology skills in demand by employers.

According to a recent report in the University World News, micro-credentials are largely functioning in the labour market as supplements to traditional degrees, rather than degree substitutes, supporting advanced skill development and facilitating career change.

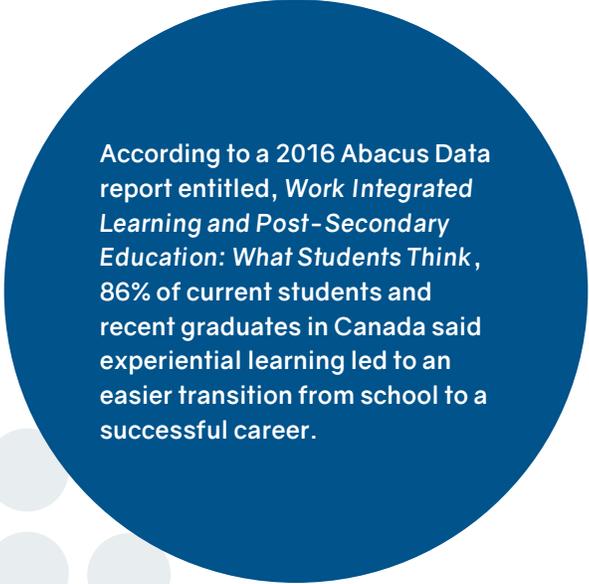
Enhancing micro-credentials will require considerations of academic standards, rigour and quality assurance to ensure they carry weight with Ontario's employers.

Career-Ready Skills through Work-Integrated Learning

As Ontario's businesses, large and small, face the impacts of COVID-19, ensuring students gain real-world experience is critical in preparing them for the workforce.

While the pandemic has introduced many challenges to work-integrated learning (WIL), it is also pushing the postsecondary sector to think differently about what is possible in order to provide students with the experiences they value and employers want.

By providing WIL for students in a variety of programs, including in high-demand areas, such as, nursing, engineering and computer science, we can ensure they graduate with the adaptable skills required to address the health-care needs of Ontarians, retool industries and rebuild Ontario.

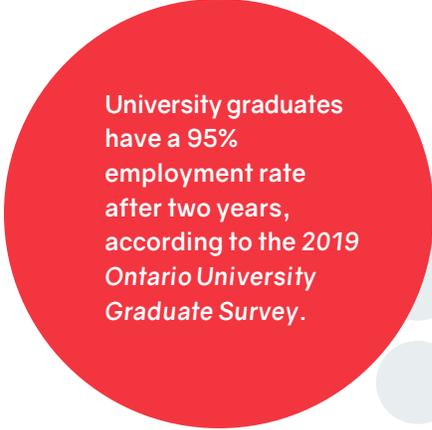


According to a 2016 Abacus Data report entitled, *Work Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think*, 86% of current students and recent graduates in Canada said experiential learning led to an easier transition from school to a successful career.

Re-launching internships, work placements and other hands-on learning opportunities remains a key priority for our universities and can play an important role in Ontario's economic recovery.

In *Work-Ready Graduates: The Role of Co-op Programs in Labour Market Success*, the C.D. Howe Institute found that participating in co-op programs is linked to higher incomes and a higher likelihood of success in the labour market.

Not only are WIL opportunities beneficial to students, they also help their future employers. The C.D. Howe Institute report found that nearly 60 per cent of surveyed employers in Ontario offered employment to at least one graduate who had participated in a co-op program.



University graduates have a 95% employment rate after two years, according to the 2019 Ontario University Graduate Survey.



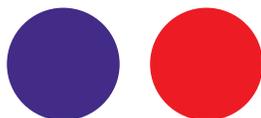
According to a report by the Business Council of Canada and Morneau Shepell, *Investing in a Resilient Canadian Workforce: Business Council of Canada Skills Survey 2020*, there is a significant increase in entry-level employees across the country who have work-integrated learning experiences, such as internships and co-op assignments – up from 31% in 2018 to 66% in 2020.

Businesses navigating a new normal due to COVID-19 will require innovation on all parts. That is especially true for small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that, in many cases, will have to adjust their business models.

SMEs, non-profits and community organizations often cite a lack of resources as reason for not engaging in WIL. These partners typically have less financial and human resources to devote to WIL, and many are concerned about the legal questions around taking on students.

Providing support for SMEs who partner with universities to offer WIL will be a win-win for both students and employers – especially during these challenging times. Students gain valuable learning opportunities, while businesses benefit from their fresh and creative perspectives.

Ontario's universities are and will continue to innovate the nature of WIL and partner with employers to adapt learning models and ensure students graduate with the practical experiences that will help them start their career.



Small Ontario businesses are receiving support from one hundred masters and undergraduate students at one Ontario 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.



Technology-Enhanced Learning for the Future of Work

As COVID-19 accelerates the shift to remote and digital work environments, each Ontario university continues to evolve programming to support new types of learning and help future-proof Ontario's students by preparing them for a new world of work.

As businesses continue to adopt digital technologies, it is clear that digital skills in the workplace will become even more important in the future. Having a workforce with the know-how to use these technologies will be key to a company's ability to adapt, evolve and remain nimble in a rapidly changing environment.

"As the urgency of managing the crisis shifts to securing Canada's economic recovery, students looking to gain the skills to compete in the post-COVID world will demand more from digital education." – Andrew Schrumm, Senior Manager, Research, RBC Thought Leadership, RBC Report: *The Future of Post-secondary Education: On Campus, Online and On Demand*

Whether it's a factory worker or an accountant in an office, a workforce that can help companies leverage these technologies will be better positioned in a post-pandemic world.

Ontario's universities are:

- Integrating for-credit WIL into the curriculum across disciplines, as well as offering non-credit WIL opportunities
- Bringing WIL into the classroom by collaborating with community and industry partners on in-class projects
- Supporting local communities by partnering with SMEs, cultural institutions, community organizations and the public sector
- Investing in Co-Curricular Records (CCRs) to help document student learning and skills developed outside of the classroom



Innovative courses that integrate new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data and robotics, will continue to change the way our students learn. This cutting-edge knowledge will be invaluable, as they transition into the workforce and help make businesses more resilient to future pandemics.

Through a hybrid of in-person classes and lab work, as well as quality online courses services and social and cultural supports and activities, institutions are finding ways to educate students through a broad mix of alternative and blended learning models.

In making the transition to remote learning, one Ontario university has developed a series of resources for its faculty, including Guidelines for Remote Course Delivery and new online courses, workshops and discussion groups for faculty about teaching online. The toolkit is unique within the university sector given its emphasis on art and design education.

These opportunities are integrated across disciplines at all of our campuses and reflect local community needs – including supports for Indigenous and French learners.

Supporting faculty and administrators as they build out the digital space and fully leverage online learning at universities can help support access for students, particularly those in rural and remote communities.

During these uncertain times, it is critical that Ontario's universities can respond to the immediate needs of all our students and ensure they are well-prepared for a digitized world – equipping them with both the digital skills and the tools needed to thrive in a technologically enabled economy.

Recommendations

- **Develop a 'First Jobs' strategy to support postsecondary students transition into the labour market by:**
 - › Creating a fund to support work-integrated learning across all programs
 - › Expanding existing tax credits, such as the cooperative tax credit, to small businesses who partner with universities to offer work-integrated learning opportunities for current students and recent graduates
- **Ensure Ontarians are able to reskill or upgrade their skills as the labour market continues to change by:**
 - › Creating a common understanding and validation of micro-credentials for employers through the development of a 'Micro-credential Framework'
 - › Providing funding to support short-term micro-credential courses for upskilling and reskilling
 - › Helping Ontarians access continuing education by adjusting the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) to support programs less than 12 weeks in duration or that do not receive government operating funding
- **Leverage digital learning to enhance access to postsecondary by:**
 - › Updating the province's digital infrastructure to help ensure quality Internet access for all learners
 - › Creating new technology grants for students to support their online learning



2

Building Resilient Communities through Talent and Infrastructure

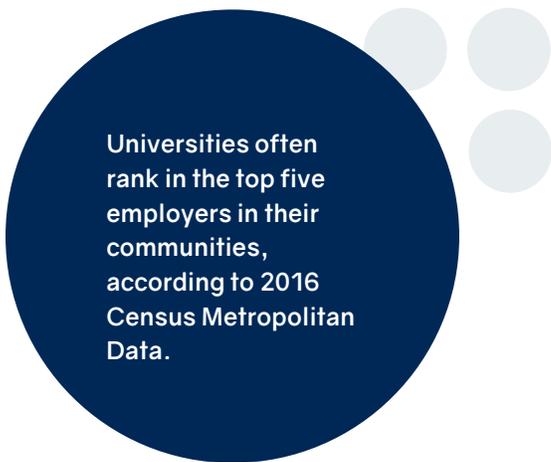
“The recovery plans should focus on laying foundations for Canadian prosperity in decades to come. Well-targeted infrastructure investments should be the centrepiece.”

– Grant Bishop, associate director of research at the C.D. Howe Institute, Globe and Mail Op-Ed: [Canada’s recovery plans should focus on building the infrastructure of the future](#)

A competitive Ontario is built on the strengths of its regions. Cultivating local ecosystems of talent and innovation helps create the type of environment that enables people to find jobs in their hometowns and communities, and attract investment.

Communities with universities grow faster than those without, and within Ontario’s smaller regions, the university’s role is even more important. Investment in the infrastructure of a university can help drive regional economic development and make local regions attractive to top talent from near and far.

As economic and social anchors in our province’s communities, Ontario’s universities keep our industries growing and our diverse regions thriving. They attract and retain top talent and business to our communities, increasing their innovation and competitiveness.



Universities often rank in the top five employers in their communities, according to 2016 Census Metropolitan Data.

Universities play a pivotal role in contributing to the economic success of communities across the province. According to COU’s latest economic impact report, *Driving a Prosperous Future: Economic Analysis of the Lasting Impact of Ontario Universities*, universities purchase approximately \$5 billion in goods and services each year, and collectively employ more than 110,000 people in areas, such as skilled trades, maintenance, catering and more.

In addition, the economic impact of spending related to university activities – from institutions, employees, students, visitors and alumni – is more than \$42 billion a year, while government grants and contracts to universities provided \$4.2 billion in funding during that same year. These spending activities increase the demand in goods and services in local communities, creating more than 478,000 jobs and attracting investment and global talent to Ontario’s regions.

To ensure our communities remain strong, Ontario’s universities must continue to:

- Provide safe and modern learning environments to students, and sharing infrastructure with local industry to help small businesses scale operations
- Attract and retain global talent that boosts local economies through spending, contributes to rental and housing markets and partners with local businesses

Ontario’s universities will continue to help spur the type of regional economic development that leads to economic activity for all of Ontario’s communities.

Supporting Local Communities through Infrastructure

Technology-enhanced learning environments, sustainable campuses and cutting-edge research facilities are vital to

rebuilding Ontario, spurring innovation and driving a globally competitive province.

On a local level, university infrastructure drives regional economic development. It strengthens our communities by helping revitalize downtown cores and creates jobs – especially in construction, maintenance and associated supply chains. It also provides small businesses and community members with access to innovative facilities where they can test ideas and scale operations.

As communities look to recover and retool, support for university infrastructure will continue to help contribute financially to regional economies and employ members of the local workforce.

In an effort to keep families and communities safe during the pandemic, several of Ontario's universities partnered with local hospitals and shelters to adapt their spaces and offer housing to frontline workers and vulnerable populations, at no cost.

In addition, university infrastructure provides students with modern learning environments, preparing them for in-demand jobs. Because a changing labour market requires the traditional lecture hall to become an innovative space that incorporates the type of group work valued by employers.

In fact, data shows that students have been enrolling in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs that respond to labour market demands. Since 2009, there has been a 52 per cent increase in enrolment in Ontario university STEM programs – these in-demand programs are expected to continue to grow and rely heavily on modern infrastructure.

Support for university infrastructure means campuses can maximize efficiencies, operate smarter and renew their facilities to continue to provide modern learning environments for students.

The Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) is one program that provides important funding for deferred maintenance projects. But as universities look to retrofit and redesign spaces in a new COVID-19 reality, investment in

infrastructure is critical and the amount of funding needed to retrofit buildings is growing.

Universities require \$420 million annually to maintain the current condition of buildings, but more is needed to improve their overall condition.

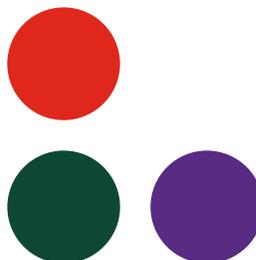
Ontario's 21 universities have 30 campuses with more than 1,300 buildings, according to Facilities Condition Assessment Task Force data, October 2019.

The Auditor General has noted that the serious backlog of repairs in our sector – currently at \$4.6 billion (Facilities Condition Assessment Task Force data, October 2019) – needs to be addressed through long-term planning. Universities account for 75 per cent of the backlog in the postsecondary sector, but only receives 56% of the funding.

The FRP makes up a fraction of the cost needed to keep pace with basic repairs. In 2018-19, universities contributed more than \$322 million to FRP-eligible projects that would upgrade classrooms and learning environments and address the backlog of deferred maintenance that exists, compared with the \$50 million provided by government.

Our institutions are also finding efficient ways to fund the construction of non-FRP eligible projects, such as roads, residences and research infrastructure, both physical and digital.

Despite these efforts, almost half of the total space on university campuses has been deemed in "poor condition," according to the Facility Condition Index.





The average age of university buildings is 44 years old (oldest is from 1827), including heritage or historical, as well as complex research facilities and labs, according to the Facilities Condition Assessment Task Force data, October 2019.

Investment in leading-edge infrastructure can spur innovation and economic growth, and stimulate our local economies – critical components in helping Ontario remain competitive. Leveraging federal investments in infrastructure will support modern learning, cutting-edge technology and growth in communities across the province.

Social and Economic Recovery through Global Talent

International students can play a vital role in Ontario's future, and its social and economic recovery, as the province begins to rebuild – supporting the local communities in which they reside and boosting regional economies through volunteering and spending activities.

These students have the option of studying anywhere in the world, but they choose Canada, not only to receive a high-quality education, but also because they gain enriching cultural and social experiences and opportunities to work and start their careers.

Last fall, more than 90,000 international students enrolled at our institutions – accounting for 16% of total enrolment at Ontario's universities, according to Ontario Universities' enrolment data.

International students enrich university campuses, and help build a multicultural student body that prepares students for a globalized world. They also bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to local businesses and communities. Whether they return to their home countries or remain in Canada, these students become valuable ambassadors for Ontario and its universities.

In 2016, the amount of international students' overall annual spending translated to 79,034 jobs in Ontario, according to [Statistics Canada](#).

Many continue to participate in the labour market in their local communities – helping address labour and skills shortages; and ease the demographic pressures of an aging population.

International students are critical to the province's long-term competitiveness – the economic activity resulting from their presence each year in Ontario employs tens of thousands of Ontarians. A loss of this economic driver will have long-term economic impacts to universities, our communities and our province.

According to a recent RBC report, *Canadian Education, Anywhere: How our universities can go global online*, as of September 2020, three-quarters of the 2019 level of international students have arrived in Canada, while the number of study permit applications has fallen, risking billions in annual contributions.





International students in Canada spent an estimated \$21.6 billion on tuition, accommodation and other expenses in 2018 (more than exports of auto parts, lumber or aircraft), and sustained close to 170,000 jobs for Canadians in 2016, according to *Global Affairs Canada's Building on Success: International Education Strategy 2019-2024, 2019*

The RBC report also indicates that while the global pandemic has slowed international student arrivals, internationally mobile learners are motivated to continue studying abroad, but might postpone the start of their studies due to travel restrictions and access to online course delivery.

Over the summer, Academica, a research and consulting group for the postsecondary education sector, conducted a preliminary survey that found 50 per cent of international university students would delay their start until they were able to arrive on campuses for in-person classes.

Many of these applicants listed a lack of access to the appropriate resources and materials to study from home or feel their online courses would not be of the same quality.

Helping international students stay in the province and enter the workforce will be critical to Ontario's success.

Ontario's universities will continue to work with public health officials to ensure the health and safety of these students, as well as of our communities, by implementing rigorous protocols on campuses, including social distancing, quarantine spaces and PPE.

A concerted effort – among our schools, province and federal departments – is needed to resume Canada's leadership in attracting international talent, numbered at 642,000 in the beginning of 2020. Expedited visa processing, safe housing and broadening recruitment efforts will be critical.

Recommendations

- **Ensure Ontario has the modern infrastructure that attracts talent and private sector investments, and generates local employment opportunities by:**
 - › Increasing critical investments in the Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) for universities, determined by evidence-based formulas
 - › Creating a one-time capital investment fund this fall to help modernize university infrastructure. The fund would prioritize shovel-ready projects that could be operational within 18 months. This funding outside the FRP would create jobs now, help address pent-up capital pressures in the system and help Ontario attract business investment and international students throughout the province
- **Support Ontario's universities in attracting and retaining international students by:**
 - › Creating an international marketing campaign promoting Ontario's Universities and Colleges as a destination of choice in postsecondary education
 - › Discontinuing the collection of the International Student Recovery Fee in order for universities to cover additional supports for international students, such as providing quarantine spaces and digital learning opportunities

3

Driving a Strong Provincial Economy for the Recovery and Beyond

“Ontario has world-class academic and research institutions and the most talented workers anywhere in the world.... We have a leading innovation and technology ecosystem that can make the solutions of tomorrow a reality of today. That is what made-in-Ontario solutions are all about. It’s a key pillar in our government’s approach to combating COVID-19, while ensuring our road to recovery is sustainable and contributes to a long-term economic recovery.”

– The Honourable Victor Fedeli: ‘Ontario-Made’ Solutions, Canadian Club of Toronto, September 2020

Now, more than ever, towns and cities across Ontario need talent and innovative solutions to navigate the challenges of COVID-19 and begin to rebuild.

Research and commercialization across all sectors have a vital role to play in the province’s post-pandemic economic recovery, resiliency and prosperity.

To ensure homegrown ideas are benefiting all Ontarians, Ontario university research will continue to drive innovation, support talent development, partner with communities and businesses to fuel economic development and attract investment to Ontario’s regions.

Ontario university research and development contributes nearly \$25 billion a year to the province’s economy, according to COU’s economic impact report, *Driving a Prosperous Future: Economic Analysis of the Lasting Impact of Ontario Universities*.

Our institutions are also ensuring the province has a talented workforce that can adapt to the high-demand fields that this innovation creates, helping Ontario retool and rebuild.

Through talent and innovation, Ontario’s universities are working to ensure the province has a strong economy for the recovery and beyond by:

- Commercializing made-in-Ontario solutions that will help protect intellectual property and advance the province’s industries
- Building strong innovation ecosystems that fuel job creation, attract investment and increase opportunities for high-demand jobs that will help Ontario rebuild
- Conducting ground-breaking research to support the fight against COVID-19 and beyond

Ontario’s universities remain committed to partnering with government and industry to continue to drive the type of innovation that has helped Ontario throughout the pandemic – and that will be critical to its recovery.

Commercializing Made-in-Ontario Solutions

Research and innovation creates the made-in-Ontario solutions that will be essential to the province’s economic recovery. Partnerships between universities, industry and government help businesses scale operations, make new discoveries and generate intellectual property (IP).

Ontario’s universities are working to foster a culture of risk-taking and entrepreneurship, fuel the innovation pipeline and partner with industry to encourage investment in the early-stage commercialization of university research.

Both students and researchers, alike, work with entrepreneurs and industry to build on the province’s strengths and commercialize new discoveries – turning made-in-Ontario ideas into products and services. Their work has resulted in thousands of start-ups and revenue-generating companies that attract foreign investment.

In fact, students are increasingly looking for opportunities to support commercialization on campus – experiences that employers value when looking to hire.



Between 2014 and 2016, more than 280,000 students had used campus-linked accelerators and incubators. These students created or supported more than 2,200 start-ups, which directly resulted in more than 4,700 jobs in Ontario during this time period, according to UBI Global's report, *Ahead of the Curve*.

But more can be done to help ensure the social and economic benefits of university research and innovation stays right here in Ontario.

University Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) play a vital role in moving university-generated IP into the marketplace, as well as supporting students and researchers as they look to commercialize their discoveries.

TTOs provide early investments to protect and de-risk commercially viable IP and make it more attractive to private sector investment.

By further incentivizing businesses, particularly SMEs to invest in university research, Ontario can remain competitive in the commercialization of our innovative homegrown ideas.

SMEs make up 99.7% of Ontario businesses, and can help further drive commercialization in Ontario, according to the government of Canada's 2019 *Key Small Business Statistics*.

A 2017 House of Commons report stated that financial and opportunity costs for the private sector were primary deterrents to investing in IP. This risk-aversion can impede the adoption of high-potential, but commercially unproven university IP.

Universities, government and industry all have a role to play in fueling dynamic innovation and attracting the entrepreneurial spirit Ontario needs to drive long-term economic competitiveness and position our province for success in a global marketplace.

Job Creation and Investment through Innovation

Ontario's research and innovation sector has a leading role to play in the province's recovery and future prosperity as it begins to rebuild after COVID-19.

Strong innovation ecosystems throughout the province will help drive economic growth by using new technologies to advance local industries, create jobs and attract talent and investment to Ontario's regions.

In 2017, Toronto added more tech jobs than Seattle, the San Francisco Bay Area and Washington, D.C., combined. In 2018 (the most recent year for which numbers are available), the city was second only to the Bay Area in new tech jobs (WIRED).



From Windsor to Thunder Bay and Ottawa to Niagara, every Ontario university is connected to an innovation ecosystem through an innovation park, regional innovation centre (RIC) or incubator. These spaces bring together university talent, researchers and industry leaders with the shared goal of transforming ideas into products, services and jobs, and helping businesses scale their operations. In most cases, they even lay the groundwork for future industries – those that have yet to emerge.

Their reach and research extends to the province's rural, remote and economically distressed regions in order to help catalyze economies throughout.

The impact of university research and innovation is supporting talent development and attracting interest and investment from the global marketplace – it will continue to do so throughout Ontario's recovery.

At \$5.8 billion, the province leads the country in direct foreign investment, placing it third in North America, according to InvestOntario. In 2016, it spent \$15.3 billion in research and development, according to Statistics Canada.

Much like Silicon Valley, Toronto, Ottawa and Waterloo have become high-tech ecosystems – desirable for companies like Amazon, Uber and General Electric who are looking to

invest, as well as homegrown start-ups seeking to thrive and create new jobs. For example, Amazon recently announced that it would add 500 jobs in Toronto to expand its high tech and corporate workforce.

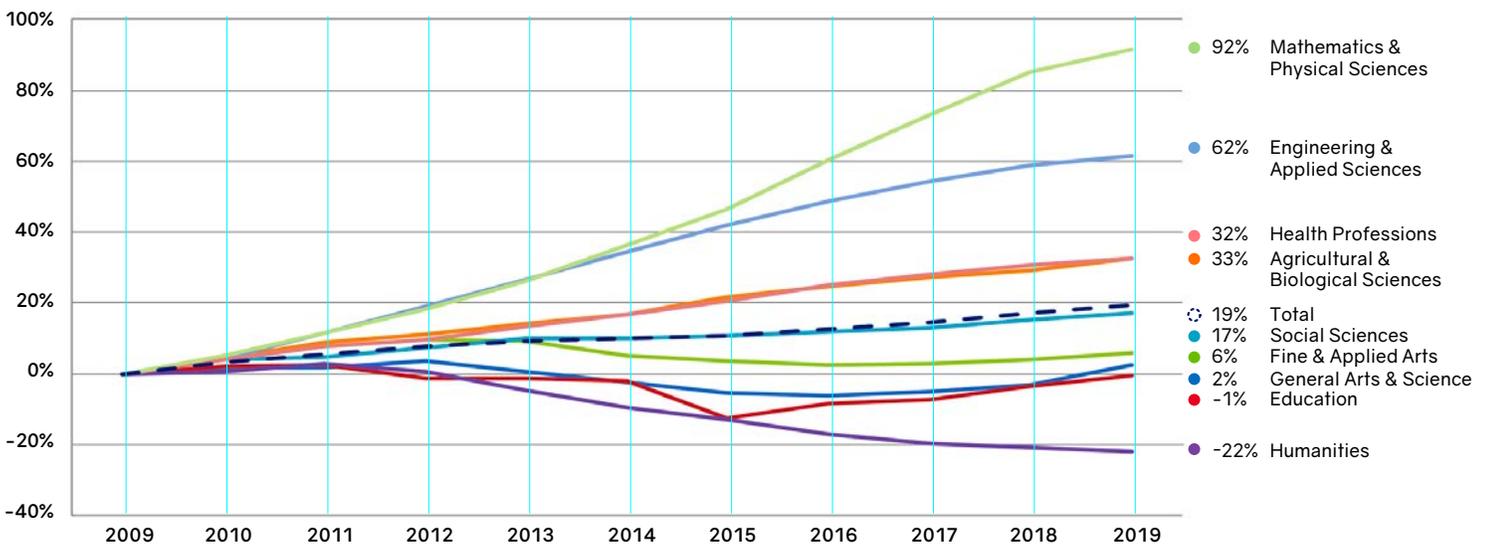
In fact, Toronto is now one of North America's fastest growing tech markets, attracting companies, such as LG, IBM and Google – all who want to work with university talent and researchers.

Ontario's universities are equipping students with the adaptable skills required for high-demand fields and changing labour market demands. Our institutions are also driving the type of research and innovation that leads to new jobs and companies in these sectors.

While we may not know all of the jobs that will exist in the future, we do know that prior to COVID-19, employment in STEM occupations was expected to grow by 15 per cent in Canada, adding 230,400 new jobs to its existing 1.5 million+ jobs, according to the Canada Occupational Projection System (COPS) Summary 2019-2028. It also cites expected labour market shortages in fields, such as computer engineers, software engineers and designers, computer programmers and interactive media developers and mechanical engineers.

Students are already responding to these changes in the labour market. The graph below indicates a 92-per-cent increase in enrolment in Math and Physical Science, 62-per-cent in Engineering and Applied Science and 32-per-cent in Health Professions.

Enrolment at Ontario Universities by Program Area



As the impacts of COVID-19 continue to impact businesses across Ontario, employers will need adaptable talent that can navigate shifting economies and industries must continue to leverage partnerships with innovators who can help create the jobs of the future.

By working together, we can ensure Ontario has the modern workforce and innovation it needs to support a strong recovery.

Ground-Breaking Research for the Fight against COVID-19 and Beyond

With a focus on meeting the needs of families, workplaces, businesses and industries across the province, Ontario's universities are applying world-class research and innovative solutions – vital components needed in the fight against COVID-19 and Ontario's recovery.

We have seen how campus research and innovation has helped mobilize Ontario's manufacturing and innovation might throughout the pandemic by providing made-in-Ontario solutions.

Using homegrown innovation, researchers quickly pivoted their work towards the development of treatments and a vaccine, as well as finding better testing methods and modeling outcomes, while entrepreneurs helped businesses adapt and build online stores.

A new modelling tool using computer simulations is helping hospitals manage staff workloads and safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic. A team of researchers at an Ontario university and staff members at the University Health Network are partnering to create a virtual care unit that can predict potential impacts of COVID-19 on hospital workloads.

These rapid responses were made possible by early investments in university research. For example, early research in virology at one Ontario university lab in the 1970s has played a key role in informing and advancing the COVID-19 vaccine work done by University of Oxford researchers.

In addition, researchers across campuses have rapidly addressed the shortage of PPE in order to support frontline workers and help make Ontario more self-sufficient. Due to existing campus infrastructure and operations, as well as industry and health-care partnerships that were already in place, university innovation has resulted in retooled industries that help provide much-needed PPE and resources to essential workers.

“When we needed help we put out a call to our manufacturers to retool, the response was truly overwhelming. Thanks to the #OntarioSpirit of so many businesses we will never again be reliant on others for our critical PPE.”
(@Fordnation)

A new made-in-Canada high-filtration facemask for health-care workers has been designed and tested thanks to a partnership between Ontario university researchers, Woodbridge Foam Corporation and Canada's Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association. The masks are certified as Level 3 surgical masks with an aim to be designated as N95.

Similarly, researchers and distilleries have been working together to develop hand sanitizers that are distributed to local hospitals, fire departments, police departments and more.

Beyond the pandemic, university research has led to the daily discoveries that help feed us, save lives and power our homes. Many of the technologies we have come to rely on – from creating radiation treatment for cancer to inventing Technicolor and discovering insulin – originated on a university campus.

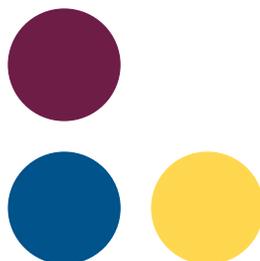
More recently, due to early investments in Ontario research, the province is now a global leader in AI. Companies, such as Deep Genomics, which develops treatments for genetic diseases, and Acerta Analytics Solutions, which improves automotive safety, are examples of successful AI start-ups that began at an Ontario university.

“(Toronto) has become a global AI hub because it’s the home of deep learning pioneers like Geoff Hinton at the University of Toronto – and ‘brilliance attracts brilliance.’” – Garth Gibson, Vector Institute, quoted in WIRED

It is critical that this important work can continue. Fostering an environment where our researchers can continue to conduct curiosity-driven research, maximize opportunities for innovation and better collaborate to solve pressing issues - whether it be addressing the COVID-19 pandemic or otherwise - will benefit all Ontarians and further increase Ontario's competitive advantage.

Recommendations:

- **Maximize research and commercialization opportunities to support the provincial economy by:**
 - › Providing additional funded spaces to increase enrolment in high-demand programs
 - › Funding Technology Transfer Offices, or other networking groups, that connect industry and academia and help commercialize new research
 - › Supporting student internships in research and innovation to help transfer student knowledge and IP to the private sector
 - › Supporting patenting/IP protection to ensure Ontario is capturing the full value of innovation from the province's academic institutions
 - › Fully leveraging federal government funding to support research and innovation, particularly research infrastructure dollars, that will help ensure Ontario remains a leader in research and innovation
 - › Providing more flexibility in the Ontario Research Fund programs to engage more researchers in varying disciplines and encourage collaborations across the spectrum of research, maximizing innovation opportunities for Ontario



4

Ensuring a Vibrant Postsecondary Sector

Providing Stable and Predictable Funding for Universities

As all sectors across the province feel the impacts of the pandemic, Ontario's universities are no exception. Our institutions are experiencing broad and increasingly complex financial repercussions that will have long-term implications for our sector and the students and communities we serve.

The financial stability of universities has been challenged by COVID-19 and, without support, there will be long-term implications for the economic stability of our communities. Early estimates of losses in revenue caused by decreases in enrolment and ancillary fees, as well as costs associated with COVID-19, such as implementing health and safety measures and moving courses online could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.



To support our students, help remove barriers to access and protect the health and safety of everyone on our campuses, our institutions are:

- Developing alternative modes of course and exam delivery, as well as mental health and wellness services
- Reconfiguring classrooms and residences to accommodate distancing protocols, creating quarantine spaces and ensuring access to appropriate PPE
- Prioritizing retention and continuity of pay for permanent employees, even where revenues have decreased or work is not currently available
- Providing research supports including animal care, maintenance and service contracts, as well as specialized PPE, new lab materials, reagents, and enhanced and additional sanitation measures
- Providing support for students in short-term COVID-19 emergency relief funds and helping provide access to laptops and other technological supports

The financial challenges that Ontario's universities currently face have been further compounded by a decline in funding over recent years.

Ontario's universities receive two-thirds of operating revenue from provincial operating grants and domestic tuition.

As government operating grants have declined by 11 per cent in real value since 2003, universities have increasingly relied on domestic and international tuition to help cover annual inflation costs.



Revenue from domestic and international tuition accounts for 53% of the university sector's operating revenue – Council of Ontario Finance Officers (COFO)

The declining real-value of operating grants and the tuition reduction and freeze, corridor policies and red tape – coupled with the high additional costs associated with COVID-19 – are challenging universities' financial sustainability.

A pattern of reduced investment by government threatens to erode our ability to be more innovative and nimble – precisely the factors that will keep Ontario's economy competitive and on the leading-edge as we recover from the pandemic.

As the province continues to face the complex challenges of COVID-19, ensuring that Ontario's universities and colleges are in the financial positions to help communities through this period and to spur regional economic growth through Ontario's recovery, is more important than ever.

In order to maintain a healthy, financially sustainable university system that is vital to Ontario's economic and social well-being, the government needs to make critical investments to ensure that our institutions are supported and are able to recover from these financial challenges.

Every sector and region, has a role to play in Ontario's recovery, including universities.

By working together, we will emerge stronger, more resilient and better prepared, as we fight against COVID-19, rebuild and safeguard Ontario's health and economy.

Recommendations:

- **Ensure Ontario has vibrant and financially stable universities that can help lead the province's economic recovery by:**
 - › Working with the sector to offset the costs and recover the lost revenue caused by COVID-19, including costs associated with declining revenue, reduced ancillary services, moving programs online and implementing health and safety measures
 - › Allowing universities flexibility for revenue enhancements
 - › Working with the sector to better target university provided financial assistance to students in greatest need

Conclusion: Partnering to Help Rebuild Ontario

Recovering from COVID-19 will require the efforts, innovations and dedication of all Ontarians.

As the province looks ahead, it will need new ideas and fresh approaches to rebuild Ontario. Vibrant postsecondary institutions will ensure Ontario has the world-class talent, adaptable workforce and ground-breaking innovation it requires to reimagine industries, stimulate economic growth and drive regional development.

Through these uncertain times, Ontario's universities recognize the importance of working together to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians, our communities and our province. That spirit of collaboration will be just as important as we work to rebuild our economy.

As universities, at every stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, we stand ready to provide assistance and work together with our provincial government and local communities to navigate these challenges and help restore a strong, inclusive economy that makes Ontario – and its communities – an attractive place to live and invest.

As we move forward to rebuild, Ontario's universities will continue to partner to build a brighter future – not just for the students we teach, but for the communities we serve. Because together, we will emerge stronger, more resilient and better prepared, as we overcome the pandemic and build back better our province.



Budget Priorities – Summary of Recommendations

1 Developing a Strong Workforce for a Strong Recovery

- **Develop a ‘First Jobs’ strategy to support postsecondary students transition into the labour market by:**
 - › Creating a fund to support work-integrated learning across all programs
 - › Expanding existing tax credits, such as the cooperative tax credit, to small businesses who partner with universities to offer work-integrated learning opportunities for current students and recent graduates
- **Ensure Ontarians are able to reskill or upgrade their skills as the labour market continues to change by:**
 - › Creating a common understanding and validation of micro-credentials for employers through the development of a ‘Micro-credential Framework’
 - › Providing funding to support short-term micro-credential courses for upskilling and reskilling
 - › Helping Ontarians access continuing education by adjusting the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) to support programs less than 12 weeks in duration or that do not receive government operating funding
- **Leverage digital learning to enhance access to postsecondary by:**
 - › Updating the province’s digital infrastructure to help ensure quality Internet access for all learners
 - › Creating new technology grants for students to support their online learning

2 Building Resilient Communities through Talent and Infrastructure

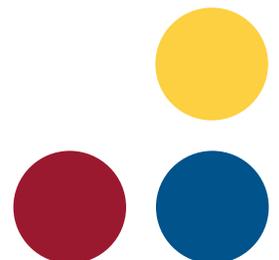
- **Ensure Ontario has the modern infrastructure that attracts talent and private sector investments, and generates local employment opportunities by:**
 - › Increasing critical investments in the Facilities Renewal Program (FRP) for universities, determined by evidence-based formulas
 - › Creating a one-time capital investment fund this fall to help modernize university infrastructure. The fund would prioritize shovel-ready projects that could be operational within 18 months. This funding outside the FRP would create jobs now, help address pent-up capital pressures in the system and help Ontario attract business investment and international students throughout the province
- **Support Ontario’s universities in attracting and retaining international students by:**
 - › Creating an international marketing campaign promoting Ontario’s Universities and Colleges as a destination of choice in postsecondary education
 - › Discontinuing the collection of the International Student Recovery Fee in order for universities to cover additional supports for international students, such as providing quarantine spaces and digital learning opportunities

3 Driving a Strong Provincial Economy for the Recovery and Beyond

- Maximize research and commercialization opportunities to support the provincial economy by:
 - › Providing additional funded spaces to increase enrolment in high-demand programs
 - › Funding Technology Transfer Offices, or other networking groups, that connect industry and academia and help commercialize new research
 - › Supporting student internships in research and innovation to help transfer student knowledge and IP to the private sector
 - › Supporting patenting/IP protection to ensure Ontario is capturing the full value of innovation from the province's academic institutions
 - › Fully leveraging federal government funding to support research and innovation, particularly research infrastructure dollars, that will help ensure Ontario remains a leader in research and innovation
 - › Providing more flexibility in the Ontario Research Fund programs to engage more researchers in varying disciplines and encourage collaborations across the spectrum of research, maximizing innovation opportunities for Ontario

4 Ensuring a Vibrant Postsecondary Sector

- Ensure Ontario has vibrant and financially stable universities that can help lead the province's economic recovery by:
 - › Working with the sector to offset the costs and recover the lost revenue caused by COVID-19, including costs associated with declining revenue, reduced ancillary services, moving programs online and implementing health and safety measures
 - › Allowing universities flexibility for revenue enhancements
 - › Working with the sector to better target university provided financial assistance to students in greatest need



Additional Reading

Discover how Ontario's universities are actively working with partners to ensure our students thrive, our communities are vibrant and our province remains dynamic at www.ontariosuniversities.ca.

Reports include:

- [Partnering to Provide an Enriching Experience for Ontario's Students](#)
- [Making an Impact: How University Students are Contributing to a Stronger Ontario](#)
- [Partnering with Communities for a Stronger Ontario](#)
- [Partnering to Support Communities through Research and Innovation](#)
- [Partnering for a Better Future for Ontario's Regional Economies](#)
- [Partnering for a Better Future for Advanced Manufacturing](#)
- [Partnering for a Better Future for Health Care](#)

