

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 Enriching University 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 Support

● 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**.

