

Engaging with Communities and Partners



Introduction

Nearly 20,000 people work and study at the University of Windsor, which is one of the largest employers in the city¹. Over 70% of the University's annual consolidated expenditures are spent on salaries and benefits. This significant footprint in Windsor and the Windsor-Essex region creates ripple effects in everything from local spending and employment patterns to access to technology, expertise, psychological services, health care, accessible public transportation, and a wide variety of cultural activities. With a long history as a regional collaborative hub, the University works shoulder-to-shoulder with industry, business, government, NGOs, and a range of arts, health, community, and environmental organizations. We are an anchor institution in this area, providing a significant impact on local prosperity and stability, as a generator of the human resources and innovative capacity required for increasingly knowledge-based economies, and in terms of community vitality and economic well-being².

It is important that this process engage rights-bearing stakeholders and members of equity-deserving groups in ways that acknowledge and attend to the lived experience and perspectives of diverse communities and the ways in which those communities are marginalized and silenced. Throughout this document, in referring to 'community', we mean the descendants of original inhabitants, as well as those who now live on this territory. We acknowledge that there are multiple communities that operate within this common physical space, and that voice, access, experience, and outcomes are not equal across these communities. We must continue to address these inequities.

1. Facets of Partnership at the University of Windsor *Partnerships Related to Employability and the Labour Force*

The University of Windsor is a pipeline for the attraction and retention of skilled employees for the Windsor-Essex region. The University of Windsor partners with community stakeholders and employers to support industry and organizational needs while also putting students directly into high-impact learning positions – building skills, relationships, and community connections.

Workplace and Experiential Learning

- In 2021, Nursing students undertook 220,716 placement hours, Education students 149,310, and Social Work 181,960 placement hours.

¹ Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation. (2015).

² Harris, M. & Holley, K. (2016). Universities as Anchor Institutions: Economic and Social Potential for Urban Development. <https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Simmons/EdLeadership/EPL-Faculty/Harris-PDFs/Universities-as-Anchor-Institutions.pdf?la=en>

- 82% of senior undergraduate students reported participation in at least one high-impact practice (HIP) over the course of their undergraduate education (i.e., service learning, research with faculty, field placement or internship, capstone, study abroad, or working in a learning community)³.
- More than two-thirds of graduate students described their participation in HIPs positively, and notably reported more opportunities for these practices than other institutions in the Ontario system⁴.
- 946 students participated in paid co-op placements and full-time internships through the Office of Experiential Learning in 2020/21. Students were placed with 428 organizations and companies, including course-based part-time internships that are unpaid.
- Co-op and paid internship placements increased by 43% from 2015 to 2020

Retraining and Upskilling Programs

Continuing Education works directly with corporate partners and community members to create tailored opportunities and the community on upskilling and lifelong learning initiatives. As an example, the applied leadership program with the Municipality of Leamington provides real world experience to participants while directly impacting a local community with capstone projects and student expertise. A new Health Informatics micro credential program has been developed in coordination with the Faculty of Nursing, based on industry needs: it is now being taught to health professionals who need to learn and use the new hospital information system. The highly successful Fundamentals of Race and Anti-Black Racism course is described below (See *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*)

Community Service Partnerships

The University of Windsor partners with many community and charitable organizations to support their activities and nearby residents.

Some examples:

- In 2020, the annual **United Way** campaign raised over \$87,000 while numerous other charitable causes received over \$100,000 in funding and other supports including food, clothing and toy donations. The University also partners with United Way to support **On Track to Success**, a program aimed at increasing the odds of success for at-risk students, and through **ProsperUs**, a cross-sectoral partnership aimed at improving outcomes for young people through an integrated, cradle-to-career approach.
- **Windsor International Film Festival (WIFF)** - which under normal health conditions - attracts over 42,000 attendees annually. Nearly 3,000 UWindsor students have played a role in planning and running WIFF over the years.

³ National Student Survey of Engagement. (2020). Summary Report. https://www.uwindsor.ca/institutional-analysis/sites/uwindsor.ca/institutional-analysis/files/nsse_2020_report.pdf

⁴ Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (2019). 2019 CGPSS Summary of Results. https://www.uwindsor.ca/institutional-analysis/sites/uwindsor.ca/institutional-analysis/files/cgps_2019_report.pdf

- The University has hosted many **national and local sports events** from Olympic qualifiers to local high school track meets, to summer day-camp programming. The University also hosts the **First Robotics Windsor-Essex Great Lakes District Event**. Event participants who subsequently register at the University of Windsor are also eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship.
- In partnership with local, Toronto, and Detroit school boards and schools, the **African Diaspora Youth Conference** has engaged thousands of Black-identified and racialized students – locally, provincially, and across the border – to engage with a range of speakers and activities focused on the topic of Diaspora, their common African heritage, their life and career aspirations, and to support them in exploring participation in post-secondary education. All participants are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship if they register at the University of Windsor.
- **Enactus Windsor** is a non-profit organization run by student entrepreneurs focused on addressing social, economic and environmental needs in Windsor-Essex. Long running initiatives include You thrive, City thrive, and The Liberty Project. Windsor’s student teams have a strong record of recognition at the provincial and national levels.

Research Partnerships

Many of projects involve **community- or industry-engaged research** led by individuals, teams, departments or faculties. From 2016/17-2020/21, **419 community** and **430 industrial research partnerships were successfully** funded by various funding agencies.

Numerous **research centres, institutes and networks** at the University, such as WE-Spark Health Institute, the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, the Centre for Human Performance and Health, the Windsor Law Centre for Cities, the SHIELD Automotive Cybersecurity Centre for Excellence, the Institute for Diagnostic Imaging Research, the Cross-Border Institute, and Racialized Academics and Advocates Centering on Equity and Solidarity work closely with communities and community organizations to engage in research and problem solving, foster innovation, enhance quality of life, and social justice, and to enhance environmental stewardship.

Examples of Community-Engaged Partnerships

Some examples of partnerships with non-profits, community organizations, and municipalities:

- **The Freshwater Restoration Ecology Centre** is a state-of-the art research facility operated in partnership with the Town of Lasalle, on the banks of the Detroit River, enabling the study of restoration ecology, direct restoration efforts, and educational opportunities for the community.
- **The Windsor Law Centre for Cities** provides avenues for students, faculty, municipal governments, community organizations and advocates to exchange ideas and to work together to achieve the goals of sustainable and inclusive local governance.
- **The “We Were Here: Recovering the Stories of Windsor’s McDougall Street Corridor” Project** is a collaboration with The Essex County Black Historical Society, the Leddy Library, and the Office of the Vice-President, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion documenting the Black history of the McDougall Street Corridor, led by Master’s student Willow Key from the

department of History. An expansion of this project involving multiple partners is currently under consideration for Canadian Urban Institute/FedDev funding.

- In Kinesiology, the **Adapted Physical Exercise Research group** supports healthy living of people with disabilities (autism spectrum and intellectual disability (ASD-ID)) through physical activity. Other community-partnered efforts in Kinesiology include public health and community partnerships to evaluate health initiatives and policies, and partners with hospitals and health care facilities to optimize cardiac rehabilitation programs.
- The **Supply Chain Advancement Network in Health** is an international knowledge translation platform intended to accelerate awareness of and address key problems, challenges and opportunities of high strategic importance for health systems in Canada and around the globe. The goal is to accelerate the implementation of healthcare supply chain best practices around the world.
- Habitat for Humanity Windsor-Essex worked with researchers at the University of Windsor and partnerships with technology creators and Invest Windsor-Essex Automobility and Innovation division to create Canada's first 3D printed home in Leamington.
- The **WE-Spark Health Institute**, a partnership among the University of Windsor, St. Clair, College, Windsor Regional Hospital, and Hôtel Dieu-Grace Hospital brings together health research strengths, expertise, and infrastructure from across the Windsor-Essex to establish research pipelines to address pressing health issues, advancing discovery, innovation and technology, training and promoting excellence among our health professionals, and engaging with our community.
- The **Sister School Network**, led by the University of Windsor and the Faculty of Education, supports the international reciprocal learning cultural education initiative. This network pairs up schools in Windsor, Toronto, Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing, and Changchun and is currently developing broader international partnerships to more broadly support reciprocal learning on a global scale.
- The **Indigenous Legal Orders Institute** at the University of Windsor Faculty of Law brings together Indigenous individuals, groups, and organizations with the academic community. It aims to promote and assist Indigenous peoples with the revitalization and dissemination of their respective Indigenous legal orders through relationship building, collaboration, and re-development using Indigenous and other creative research methods. The Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe law camps are offered annually to build educational framework, promote land-based training, and put Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe legal orders into practice.
- Through the **COVID-19 Wastewater Testing Initiative**, an interdisciplinary UWindsor team *has been foundational to the evidence-based decision making related to community spread of COVID-19. The team is currently working with 5 Windsor-Essex treatment plants and a number of other municipalities. These methods are a critical leading indicator as case metrics have become less clear.*
- The **Cross-Border Institute** is dedicated to cross-disciplinary research, education, and public outreach related to the movement of people, goods, and funds across borders in partnership with public agencies, private firms, industry groups and community groups.

- The University has established a **Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Windsor** aimed at developing strategies for supporting, streamlining and scaling collaboration which may provide new avenues to explore. UWindsor is exploring further municipal partnerships.
- Individual faculty members, departments, and faculties have developed hundreds of partnerships with local organizations to meet common goals and benefit others.
- A faculty of engineering capstone project researched and designed solutions to waste management for Walpole Island First Nation, Bkejwanong Territory, in partnership with the Nindawaabjig Heritage Centre.

Industry Partnerships

Industry partnership supports a wide range of research and innovation activities taking place in our region and beyond.

- Since 2008, the **10 leading industry research partners account, on average, for more than 21 projects per company** while the top 10 community partners average over 25 projects. The breadth of projects with these partners show the importance of partnerships that are enabling knowledge mobilization to impact our community.
- **Annual research revenue from funded partnerships**, including industry partnerships, has grown in the last five years from \$2.2 million to \$4.1 million per year.
- A significant proportion of industrial research partnership focuses on automobility. The University also partnered with industry partners, such as the Automotive Research and Development Centre (ARDC).

Some examples of partnerships with industry partners:

- Ford Motor Company has extensively supported the CHARGE Lab in the Faculty of Engineering to develop, optimize, and adapt electric motors to create safer, and more efficient electric vehicles while reducing cost and complexity.
- TELUS has been working closely with University of Windsor researchers to understand the challenges with connecting and securing vehicles on telecommunications networks and develop systems to identify and mitigate risks to drivers and data.
- A group of researchers is working with the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks as well as industry partners to develop methodologies and tools to assess the impact of microplastics in watersheds and knowledge to create meaningful policy decisions.
- University of Windsor researchers are working with Canadian and international pharmacology companies and health-based stakeholders to support the development of novel therapeutics for a wide variety of diseases and ailments.
- The SHIELD Automotive Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence worked with CUTRIC (Canadian Urban Transit Research & Innovation Consortium) to develop cybersecurity training and awareness programs in the transit industry to ensure safe rides for users and protection of their privacy.
- The Faculty of Engineering partnered with the local agriculture sector, including greenhouse growers, associations and power suppliers to study Next-Gen sustainable agriculture including the optimization of greenhouse operations and additive manufacturing to understand the future of food production at home, and in space.

- A research team partnered with Hydrostor and Toronto Hydro to develop Canada's first underwater compressed air energy storage and conversion system and pursue clean energy production using sustainable sources.
- UWindsor Researchers are exploring the use of used EV batteries and giving them a second life in other applications in the home, industry and even for e-mobility. These researchers are working with a group of industry partners including the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association (APMA), the Gates Corporation and Nikola Labs on a multi-year project.
- Researchers in Human Kinetics are working with partners to understand the factors inherent in Autonomous Vehicles and how to create human centered AV technologies that keep drivers and other road users more safe.

Community-Engaged Infrastructure Development and Capital Projects

- Existing and current capital projects in the downtown core as well as on the main campus have placed strategic emphasis on community engagement. In the downtown core, both the **School of Creative Arts** and the **School of Social Work** emphasize community use and involvement.
- Planning for the University's usage of new infrastructure in the **300 Ouellette Avenue** facility aims at strong community and industry partnership including integrated collaborative and workspaces in support of innovation, work-integrated learning and cutting-edge skills training in applied computing.
- On the West-Windsor campus, the new **Toldo Lancer Centre** will serve as a regional health, fitness, and high-performance athletics hub with a strong focus on community and neighborhood partnerships, while extensive renovations to the **Windsor Law** building will provide better spaces for teaching, learning, and collaboration while serving the accessibility needs of a diverse population in a warm and welcoming way.

2. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: (Re) Building Relationships with Communities

Over the past eighteen months the University has begun the work to become a more just and inclusive learning, working and living environment. As one aspect of that work, the University has launched efforts intended to delve more deeply into the perceptions and experiences of institutional engagement and relationships with people from historically underserved and marginalized communities, with an aim of doing the necessary work to build and repair relationships that have been impacted by experiences of institutional systemic racism and marginalization for decades, both on and off campus. While much of the focus of this work has been on-campus, a number of community-facing initiatives are underway.

- A recent collaborative project involving the office of the VP, EDI and Alumni Affairs engaged **Black alumni** in a series of focus groups: the alumni communicated high levels of disengagement stemming from the University's longstanding silence and lack of tangible evidence of efforts to systematically address many highly visible incidents of anti-Black racism at the University. While the feedback indicated that re-engagement will require sustained reconciliation efforts to mend the relationship, there was also openness to that possibility.

- The highly successful **Fundamentals of Race and Anti-Black Racism** course was launched as a partnership between the Office of the VP, EDI and Continuing Education. Participants have registered from universities, school boards, police, and social work agencies across the country. One course module (*Building the Foundation: Race Literacy*) has been made available for free to University of Windsor students and can also be offered for organizations. University of Windsor employees can receive a subsidy on the course cost.
- Discussions regarding the development of an **Internationalization Framework** are integrating an equity, diversity and inclusion lens, and are also delving more deeply into the experiences of international students as community members.
- Recent changes to the WUFA collective agreement will provide better recognition and support for the heavy burdens of community engagement often carried by faculty from racialized communities: greater diversification of the University's work force and leadership are important goals in continuing to address these challenges.

The University must continue to address the underlying issues that have damaged these relationships and those with others from communities that have been historically underserved and marginalized, to create the context for reconciliation. Upcoming stages of the strategic planning process will also gather campus and community input regarding this necessary and important priority.

For more information on the University's equity, diversity and inclusion efforts, please [visit the Office of the Vice-President, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion website](#).

3. Indigenization and Decolonization

Efforts to build better and stronger respectful, and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous peoples both within urban communities and nation-to-nation are underway under the leadership of the University's newly appointed Senior Advisor to the President on Indigenous Relations and Outreach at the University of Windsor. First and foremost, the University acknowledges the need to do the work to develop the relationships of trust and respect that are core to this process. The University is committed to doing that work, which has been neglected in the past and must be a priority moving forward.

There are a number of strong examples of community-engaged practices involving Indigenous peoples at the University to learn from as these efforts move forward. These include:

- [Turtle Island Aboriginal Education Centre](#)
- [Indigenous Legal Orders Institute](#)
- [The Healthy Headwaters Lab](#)
- [Beginning Time Ab/Original Teachings](#)
- [Minor in Indigenous Studies](#)

4. Mechanisms to Support Community-Engaged Practice

In 2019, the University undertook a study of its community engagement profile as part of the Canadian pilot of the **Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Framework**. The assessment of the quality and outcomes of community-engaged work across an institution is based on the

following definitions of community engagement:

- Collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/provincial/state, national, global) for the **mutually beneficial creation and exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity**;
- **Reciprocal relationships where each party is impacting the activities of the other for mutual benefit**; and
- **Pervasive practice at the institutional level.**

Key Findings from the Carnegie Community Engagement Study

Community-engaged work is deeply engrained in the University's ethos but remains organizationally decentralized. However, the concerns and priorities identified by stakeholders involved in community-engaged practice were consistent.

Institutional Strengths

- **Deep and broad institutional connections** driven by strong individual and team relationships and regional concerns;
- **High levels of community-based service learning** compared to national averages;
- **High level of partner and community interest and commitment** to existing and potential new partnership with the University;
- **Strong and widespread departmental and faculty-level community engagement in many areas**, particularly in professional programs;
- Diverse **research-driven engagement with community partnerships** across all faculties; and
- Evolving **consensus from multiple stakeholders about priorities for further development**, and about the immense potential of this strategy to advance institutional and regional priorities.

Areas for Institutional Improvement

Core Vision

- Clarifying **the value proposition for expanding community engagement practice** in relation to the University's and the region's strategic priorities.

Mechanisms for Engaging Communities and Developing Partnerships

- **A university-led vision for community engagement and supporting infrastructure**, for example, through a central hub that supports community-engaged practice;
- Better, more systematic ways for communities, residents, and partners to **inform decision making and practice**, including in the areas of curriculum development, research programs, and knowledge mobilization;
- Establishing **partnership engagement and coordination** through facilitative centralized supports;
- Establishing regular community feedback mechanisms with accountability;
- Establishing **more systematic mechanisms for facilitating partnership** and partnership agreements;

- Specific **supports for more inclusive participation in community-engaged** work as well as greater consideration of **local neighborhood engagement**; and
- Better way of gathering data on **all of our alumni**, engaging them, and creating connections between alumni, faculty, staff and students.

Mechanisms for Promoting Community-Engaged Practice

- **A Community Engagement communications strategy** as well as more integrated communications to community members, existing and potential partners.
- Systematic collection of **narratives of successful community engagement**; and
- More comprehensive professional development opportunities.

Mechanisms for Improving and Supporting Community-Engaged Practice

- Better ways to get connected, **create networks**, and learn from each other;
- Systematic **recognition of community engagement work**;
- Developing **centralized, cross-functional data systems** to support institutional partnership accountability and improvement, and partner feedback. The University answered “no” to all 6 questions in this section of the study;
- More leadership and **support for the facilitation of knowledge mobilization and collaborative problem solving** around complex urban and regional problems (e.g., transportation infrastructure, newcomer transitions, applied technologies, etc.); and
- Systematically engaging with **external organizations** (e.g. Talloires Network, McConnell Foundation, Ashoka) and the Canadian CF framework pilot network to build community engagement capacity and funding.

Mechanisms for supporting students’ community engagement

- Creating **clear developmental pathways for co-curricular engagement**;
- Expanding **curricular and co-curricular opportunities** for students to engage with the community;
- Expanding **opportunities for paid engagement** to address inequities in students’ ability to engage in these opportunities owing to financial considerations.

Best Practice Resources

- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Framework](#)
- The Canadian Urban Institute CUIXLocal Report: [Windsor Blooms](#)
- [Windsor Works: An Economic Development Strategy for the City’s Future Growth](#)
- [Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

Thinking Questions:

1. There are many factors that go into forming and sustaining partnerships: what factors are most important for the University to consider in supporting the development of effective and mutually beneficial partnerships?
2. What are the tangible benefits of partnership, both for the University and for partners, and what can the University do to enhance the impact of these efforts?
3. How should we be thinking about our relationship with our local neighborhoods?
4. How is the Windsor-Essex region evolving and what role can and should the University play in that evolution?