



MOBILIZE FOR IMPACT!

Western Research Strategic Plan :: 2022-2027



Western
Research



Introducing *Mobilize for Impact!*

The Western Research strategic plan seeks to mobilize campus to realize a shared vision for research, scholarship, and creative activity – *across disciplines, methods, and career stage.*

It seeks to mobilize supports that enable success – *as defined by our community.*

And it seeks to mobilize the knowledge we create so it has impact – *within the academy and for society.*

Western is home to a diverse group of innovative researchers, scholars, and artists at all career and learning stages who advance and promote knowledge across the spectrum of fundamental and applied discovery, creative activity, and research creation.

It is home to artists, activists, scientists, and clinicians; to those working individually and to those contributing to collaborative and multidisciplinary teams. All are valued. All are critical to our mission and to the university's role in society.

Collectively, we produce, preserve, and protect knowledge. We enhance culture, develop technologies, innovate, inform policy, train the next generation's leaders, and help shape societies. We have impact within the academy, within our communities, and around the world.

Unique facilities, excellent library resources, internal funding programs, and dedicated, professional services support these efforts.

We already have a lot to be proud of and to be excited about – and there is a strong appetite to do more.

Grounded in Western's strategic plan, [*Towards Western at 150, Mobilize for Impact!*](#) strives to capture this energy and to accelerate our momentum. It guides the activities of Western Research, which are inextricably linked to the university's mission to facilitate the production of research, scholarship, and creative activity.

This plan is Western Research's commitment to our community, and it outlines how we will provide support, foster inclusiveness, advance collaboration, and facilitate, recognize, and celebrate success.

Mobilize for Impact! reflects not only what we are and where we have been, but what we can become – together.





Developing *Mobilize for Impact!*

Our strategic planning process began in late 2020 with an environmental scan of other university plans and subsequent efforts to socialize approaches and seek guidance from partners across campus.

From January to August 2021, we obtained approximately 300 inputs through a series of townhalls, small group discussions, one-on-one meetings, and a feedback survey that was included on the Western Research website and distributed to all research-eligible faculty members. The process was further informed by 100 interviews conducted as part of a concurrent Western Research Parks visioning exercise.

Throughout this process, we worked closely with the research, scholarship, and creative activity theme group of the university's strategic planning steering committee to share findings and gain additional insight

from consultations with students, alumni, government, industry, and community organizations. Overall, the strategic planning steering committee received more than 3,700 inputs.

The draft plan was provided to more than 250 members of our community for further review. We are particularly grateful for repeated input from Associate Deans (Research), the University Research Board, research officers, and colleagues within Western Research.

Mobilize for Impact! also directly considers, and aligns with, other relevant campus plans, including *Towards Western at 150*, the Indigenous Strategic Plan, and those produced by WORLDdiscoveries, Western Research Parks, Western International, and individual faculties and schools.





Having Greater Impact

Stimulating research, scholarship, and creative activity is a key area of focus identified within the Greater Impact theme of *Towards Western at 150*.

It is also at the heart of Western Research's mission.

Impact takes many forms – from individual scholars creating and promoting knowledge to collaborative teams developing novel technologies and solutions to grand challenges. From researchers influencing policy to artists creating culture and bringing joy to our lives. And from efforts to understand the fundamental questions that drive curiosity to knowledge that supports the development of our business, legal, health, and education systems.

These contributions advance the public good.

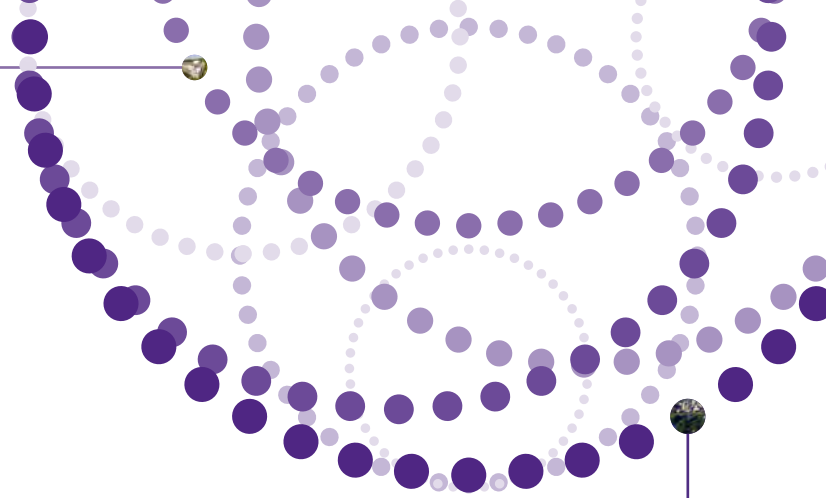
Western's community adds to the sum of human knowledge, preserves it, and passes it down to future generations. As thinkers, innovators, artists, leaders, scientists, and entrepreneurs, we have impact within academia, within regional communities, and around the world.

As a key partner in this success, Western Research is committed to supporting, recognizing, and celebrating the full range of these efforts.

As administrative demands increase, we provide professional services, strategic guidance, support, and programs across a project's lifespan – from inception to development, completion, and dissemination. These efforts allow our community to spend more time focusing on their research, scholarship, or creative activities – and having impact.



Dr. Todd Simpson, Western Nanofabrication Facility, nanofab.uwo.ca



About Us

Led by the Vice-President (Research), Western Research sets institutional strategies and fosters a vibrant culture of research, scholarship, and creative activity across campus and across disciplines. We are partners in the university's research success.

Our dedicated team of professionals is knowledgeable and skilled, offering a unique breadth and depth of specialized expertise. We identify needs and respond with progressive services, funding mechanisms, and programming.

These supports begin at the idea stage.

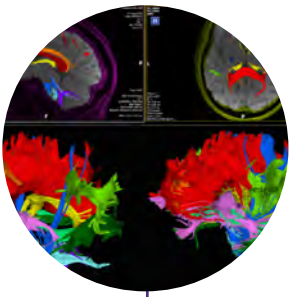
Some Western scholars benefit from grant, partnership, and strategy development; others from expertise related to commercialization, knowledge exchange, and communications. Still others rely on assistance with contractual agreements, veterinary care, or supports that ensure ethics and compliance needs are met. There are many pathways to our services.

These efforts help our community dedicate more of their time to the work they are passionate about.

As the research landscape evolves, Western Research commits to continuing to identify and implement tools, services, and programs that ensure our researchers, scholars, and artists have the support they need to remain competitive and to be successful.

We look forward to working with you.





Guiding Principles

The following four guiding principles are foundational to Western Research's mandate and flow across all we do. These values and touchpoints guide us as we design and implement strategies and develop activities, services, programs, and relationships.

CATALYZE RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Western Research will lead and partner on activities that support our community's success and all the steps along the way. We will provide services and foster a culture of inclusivity that embraces, supports, and accelerates research, scholarship, and creative activity in all disciplines and at all career and learning stages. We will continue to provide, evaluate, and expand upon administrative and strategic supports and programs that enhance our scholars' success.

ADVANCE EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND DECOLONIZATION

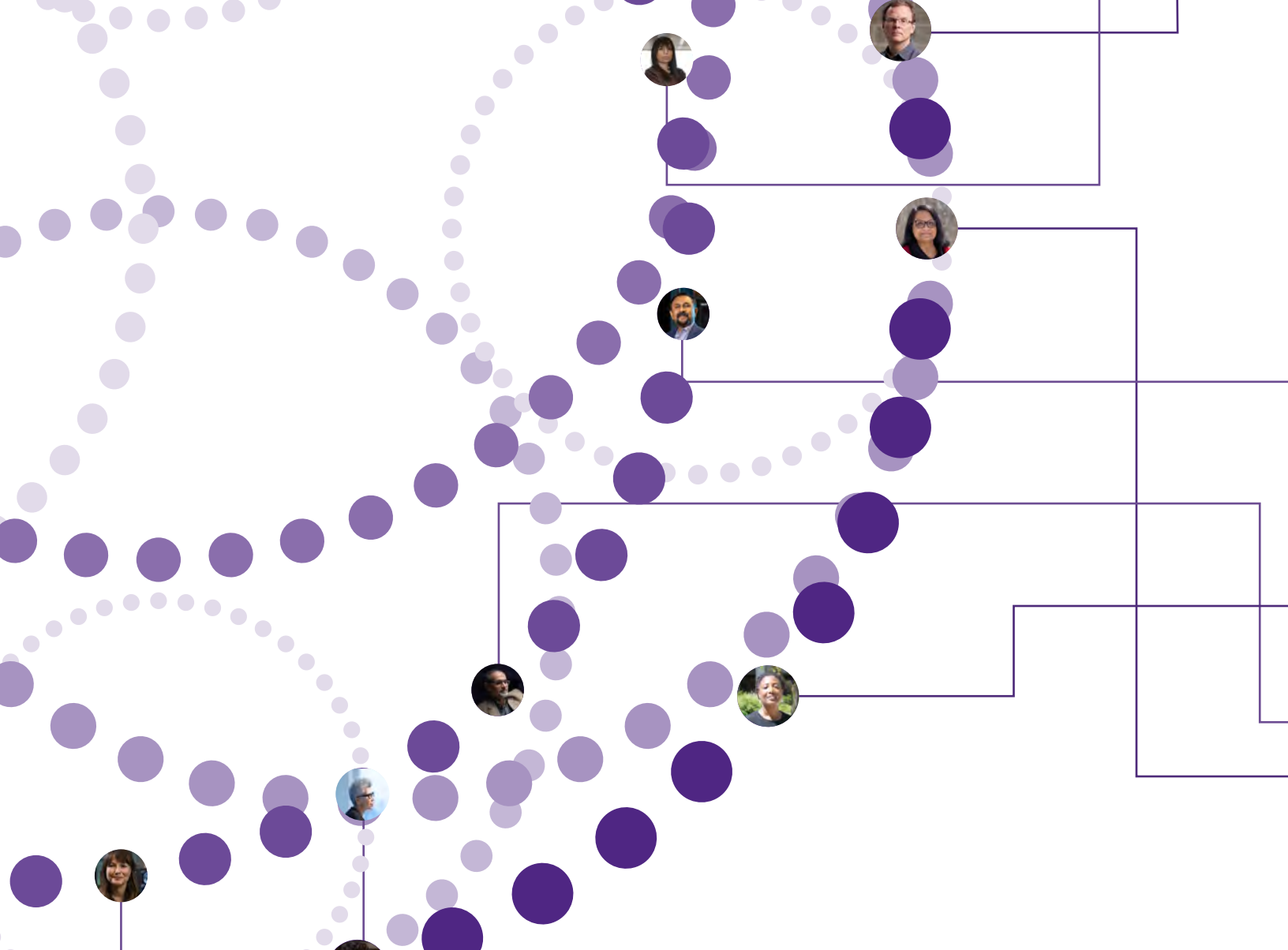
In collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the office of the Associate Vice-President (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion), Western Research will take proactive steps to extend equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization efforts in the academy and in related activities. We will ensure ethical research engagement with Indigenous communities; recognize colonial practices in, and adopt anti-colonial approaches to, research; and work with partners to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in all programs, services, and funding initiatives we support.

ENGAGE WITH PARTNERS

London and Southwestern Ontario are home. By co-creating welcoming spaces, places, and activities that encourage partners to engage with Western's research, scholarship, and creative activity, we will establish strong, ethical, and reciprocal partnerships on campus and with local and regional communities. As our collaborations, impact, and aspirations extend around the world – and beyond – we will also continue to nurture relationships, engage in mutually beneficial partnership development efforts, and share knowledge provincially, nationally, and internationally.

BALANCE RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Academic freedom is at the heart of university life and protected by the Faculty Collective Agreement. Respecting this core commitment, Western Research will be responsible stewards of knowledge, support open access initiatives, and help our community to safeguard research activities by protecting intellectual property and by ensuring compliance with regulations governing research, including national security guidelines for partnerships and the Tri-Agency research data management policy. Where appropriate, we will seek opportunities to advance the university's research mission through high-risk, high-reward research.



Strategic Goals

Mobilize for Impact! identifies four strategic goals that describe what we seek to do as a unit and how. Taken together, they lay the foundation for our plan to support our community and to engage with stakeholders. Each is aligned with all three themes – and multiple sub-themes – identified in *Towards Western at 150: Greater Impact; People, Community, and Culture; and Western's Place in the World.*

Enhance Research Support

Ensuring Western's research success is a shared responsibility, requiring close coordination and collaboration among many individuals and groups across campus.

Western Research is a key partner in this integrated and interconnected network of support that includes Associate Deans (Research), faculty-based research officers, Research Finance, Western Libraries, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies, Western International, and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, among others.

Together, with campus and city-wide partners, Western Research will continue to inspire research success by providing a range of professional and strategic services and programs that help scholars reach their full potential at every stage – from a project's conceptualization, through its development, implementation, and dissemination of outcomes.

Strategies to enhance research support include:

- Maintain and increase professional administrative support for research activities, including for grants and contracts, innovation and partnership development, human and animal ethics, animal care, knowledge exchange, and awards and distinctions.
- Commit to ensuring equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization activities are incorporated into all aspects of our work, including through grant-writing support that increases our scholars' success.
- Offer progressive and professional training that provides scholars with skills they may need to be successful, including those related to leadership, equity, knowledge exchange, grant-writing, patent searches, partnership development, and communications.
- Strengthen relationships with Lawson Health Research Institute and hospital-based research entities to streamline processes and support.
- Foster a welcoming, supportive, and vibrant environment to set new and emerging scholars on paths to success, including by providing orientation, peer mentorship, and postdoctoral supports.
- Integrate research, scholarship, and creative activity into the student experience by increasing engagement opportunities for undergraduate students.
- Develop and support core facilities, institutes, and common resources.



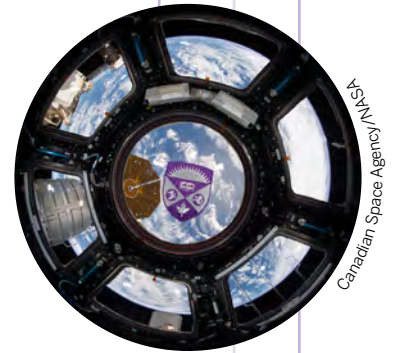
Foster Relationships

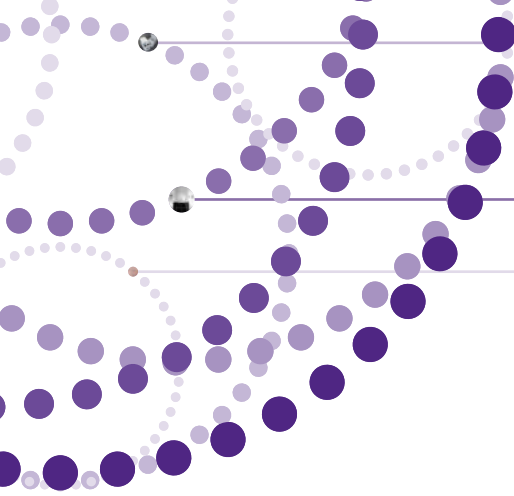
We live in hyper-connected times. The relationships we form allow us to examine new viewpoints, identify needs, access research participants, find solutions, and connect the work we do to knowledge users. In short, strong relationships facilitate success.

Western Research will support the development of ethical and reciprocal research relationships. We will work closely with colleagues on campus and with regional, national, and international partners to engage governments, health care, corporations and businesses, not-for-profits, community groups, and other academic partners.

Strategies to foster relationships include:

- Support the development of connections within various sectors through networking events, a centralized expertise database, and partnership concierge platforms.
- Co-develop collaborative research, scholarship, and creative activity-based relationships within regional communities, including efforts that bring knowledge to campus.
- Foster ethical, reciprocal, community-based participatory research models with Indigenous partners.
- Establish strategic spaces within regional communities that foster research connections, community-engaged scholarship, creativity-based events, and knowledge exchange opportunities.
- Create a new Innovation and Strategic Partnerships portfolio to provide innovation-related supports and programs that foster connections with industry.
- Increase support for international research engagement and collaborative programs, including through enhanced research components of memoranda of understanding with international universities.





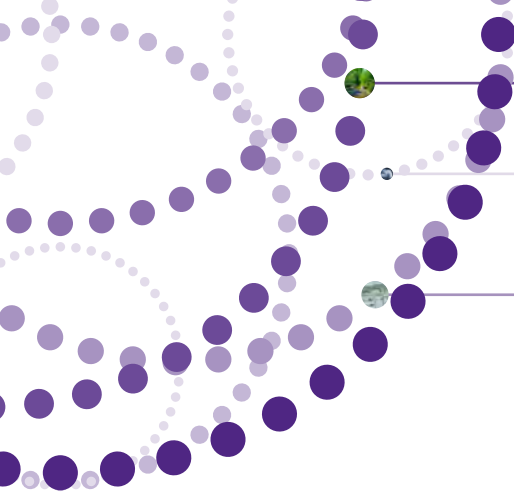
Connect our Work to the World

It is important to extend the impact of our academic community's work and to celebrate its successes. Western Research will increase support for knowledge exchange efforts – within the academy, private and public sectors, civil society, and arts communities. We also continue to lead and support nominations for prestigious awards and distinctions, and promote achievements to various audiences.

Strategies to connect our work to the world include:

- Increase support in government relations, particularly with respect to contributions to policy at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels.
- Enhance knowledge exchange capacity through training, support, and tools, including workshops related to writing, strategies, and tactics.
- Enhance public access to visual arts and musical performances, including online.
- Increase support for nominations to prestigious national and international awards and distinctions.
- Advance business development and technology transfer activities that connect Western's research to knowledge users, create spinoff companies, and license technologies.
- Increase engagement with a range of outreach and communication opportunities that bring Western's research to a broader audience.
- Support participatory and community-based research that mobilizes knowledge horizontally within partner communities.
- Support open access to research, scholarship, and creative outputs through the Western repository.





Tackle the Grand Challenges of our Time

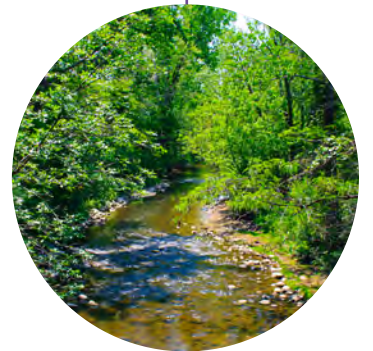
All researchers address challenges. Some of these challenges are grand.

Issues like systemic racism, sustainability, global health, socioeconomic inequality, threats to democracy, and climate change – as examples of grand challenges – require collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches because they require interdisciplinary and collaborative solutions.

Western Research will foster models of collaboration and interdisciplinarity that bring together top minds from within and outside the university. Research centres, groups, and institutes often play a vital role in these efforts. By working together, we can apply diverse perspectives and expertise to some of the most pressing challenges facing our world.

Strategies to tackle the grand challenges of our time include:

- Build upon Western’s institutes model by seeking additional ways to organize our collective research efforts.
- Introduce and support interdisciplinary initiatives, including institutes, the Western Academy for Advanced Research, and the Interdisciplinary Development Initiatives program.
- Reimagine the Western Research Chairs program to add new opportunities and capacity.
- Provide resources and opportunities to facilitate grassroots connections, identify partnerships, and better frame interdisciplinary relationships.
- Foster and support university-wide research interests and infrastructure.
- Create internal, issue-focused funding programs that encourage interdisciplinary engagement and teams.



Conclusion

Mobilize for Impact! fits within the larger context of *Towards Western at 150*, other campus plans, and aspirations set out by faculty, staff, students, postdoctoral scholars, and partners. Its success is a collective responsibility.

Our strategic plan embraces broader conversations about the work we do, supports Western Research offers, and the impact of these efforts. It will mobilize our community around a shared vision for research, scholarship, and creative activity – across disciplines, methods, and career and learning stages.

The plan also paints a broad picture of the directions we intend to take to support themes set out in *Towards Western at 150*. Detailed steps, which will include many of the valuable contributions our community has made over the past year, will be included – and in some cases, co-created – in accompanying implementation plans.

It is an exciting time for research, scholarship, and creative activity at Western.

Western Research is here to support you.

Together, we can mobilize for impact.



AREAS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Mobilize for Impact! :: 2022-2027

Introducing Areas of Research Activity at Western University

Western's researchers, scholars, and artists seek to understand the world in which we live and to examine the role the academy plays in society. They contribute to the sum of human knowledge, preserve it, connect it to communities, and pass it down to future generations.

This is the role of the university – to maximize human understanding and better society.

These efforts advance knowledge that underpins societal progress by allowing us to scrutinize the past and present, while informing the future. They enable us to learn about learning, about ourselves, and about teaching. And they allow us to engage with issues related to policy, leadership, governance, social infrastructure, and the role of the public intellectual.

The breadth of these contributions underpins, traverses, and transcends the five areas of research activity identified in this document.



A Healthy Future

Western enjoys a long history of health-related research success across various disciplines. Today, the university is home to multiple clusters of expertise focused on understanding healthy development across the lifespan, including our brains, minds, bodies, and relationships, as well as the ethical, legal, and policy issues associated with our mental and physical health and health-care systems.

Our community makes significant contributions along the full range of fundamental and applied approaches, from the molecular and behavioural level to community-engaged health promotion of mental and physical health and education, and the development of novel treatments, tools, and devices.

Western's contributions to foster a healthy future include:

- Developing innovative biomaterials, treatments, tools, and devices
- Ensuring the healthy development of children and youth
- Preserving and restoring mobility and physical health
- Promoting healthy communities and health-care systems
- Understanding brain health and development throughout the lifespan



A Sustainable & Resilient Future

Environmental sustainability, the promotion of healthy ecosystems, and the capacity to protect ourselves from extreme environmental events present some of the most significant challenges of our time.

Home to unique facilities, excellent scholars, and collaborative research groups, Western provides new ideas and solutions to address a full range of questions related to climate change, our planet's health and sustainability, and the social, political, educational, economic, and practical dynamics of environmental disaster mitigation.

Western's contributions to foster a sustainable & resilient future include :

- Addressing the role of climate change on sustainability, food production, and health
- Advancing equitable sustainability policy, practice, education, and communication
- Contributing to the sustainable use of resources, including for renewable energy and storage systems
- Developing resilient infrastructure and policy
- Producing clean water and water systems

A Just & Equitable Future

Western's researchers, scholars, and artists have long led efforts to promote equity and justice, enabling them to connect their work to communities and to help create stronger institutions, cultures, and societies.

By applying broad interdisciplinary approaches, our community contextualizes and addresses historical wrongs and provides evidence and education to inform and update policies, laws, and structures that serve as barriers to marginalized groups.

Western's contributions to foster a just & equitable future include:

- Addressing societal issues, policies, and laws related to gender and sexual orientation, disability, anti-Black racism, and Indigenous experiences
- Contextualizing our world through migration, ethnic relations, and transitional justice
- Ensuring health equity and social justice
- Promoting violence prevention and policy, particularly for women and children
- Reducing poverty and inequality

A Technology-Informed Future

We live in an increasingly technology-dependent time, which offers opportunities to develop new tools, materials, treatments, and knowledge. It also raises critical questions about the ethical and practical implications of how these technologies affect societies – today and for the future.

From leveraging the potential of big data and the digital humanities, to developing new innovations and understanding the implications of artificial intelligence; and to developing new technologies for exploring the Earth, Moon, Mars, and beyond, our community develops novel technologies and interrogates their presence in society.

Western's contributions to foster a technology-informed future include:

- Creating novel materials, biomaterials, and smart materials
- Developing new technologies for exploring Earth, Moon, Mars, and beyond
- Producing innovative smart systems, robotics, and wearable devices
- Ensuring a socially responsible use of technology
- Interpreting data and its role in democracy and society

A Creative Future

From research, scholarship, and intellectual contributions about art, literature, and music, to musical performance and the creation of visual arts, and other forms of creative activity, our community provides important context about historical and contemporary civilisations, while contributing directly to cultural activities all around us.

These efforts help us understand how cultures travel the globe, how they change within societies, and how they influence our education and daily lives.

Western's contributions to foster a creative future include:

- Creating cultural artifacts, events, and performances that establish, share, and communicate culture
- Collecting, curating, exploring, reflecting on, and understanding current and past cultural artifacts and performances
- Engaging communities through the public humanities
- Exchanging intercultural understanding, including in the context of colonialism, postcolonialism, and decolonization
- Integrating digital and technological approaches to understanding human history

Mobilizing Supports for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

Mobilize for Impact! :: 2022-2027

As identified throughout *Mobilize for Impact!* we are committed to supporting the full breadth of research, scholarship, and creative activity at Western. Where appropriate, we also strategically allocate relevant funding envelopes and chairs to advance efforts by established and emerging individuals and groups within identified areas of research activity.

Widely recognized as the gold standard for excellence in Canadian research, Canada Excellence Research Chairs and Canada Research Chairs play a significant role in our ability to recruit and retain the excellent students, postdoctoral scholars, and faculty who are at the core of Western's research enterprise. Cutting-edge infrastructure funded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation supports campus-wide efforts to answer some of the world's most pressing questions, including throughout our identified areas of research activity.

At Western, all chair nominations are advanced by faculties and approved by our Canada Research Chairs steering committee, led by the Provost and Vice-President (Research). Each nomination places a particular emphasis on equity and on the proposed chair's fit with departmental, faculty, and institutional plans and priorities. Interdisciplinary appointments that serve the needs of more than one faculty are also often highly considered. Western has also implemented a robust [equity, diversity, and inclusion action plan](#) and cluster hiring processes to support these efforts.

On the whole, we seek to leverage and optimize these programs to attract and retain the best talent available in an increasingly diverse workforce and to increase, foster, develop, and accelerate internationally competitive research programs across campus. We are similarly focused on providing the mentorship, training, and supports necessary to help Chairs thrive, including through the Research Scholars Academy, which prioritizes supports for Tier 2 Chairs who self-identify as equity-deserving.

While each Chair is expected to strive for excellence as per the program's mandate, specific outcomes and measures vary across disciplines and career stage. To these ends, success is largely defined and measured at program, department, and faculty levels – with institutional oversight. In addition to closely tracking traditional publication, awards, funding, and commercialization measures, we continue to actively assess efforts to build a more equitable and diverse academy, to have greater impact, and to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of our region and nation.



Western Research

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