

Western University

Mobilize for Impact!

Western Research Strategic Plan Summary 2022-2027

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 through its strategic plan, [Mobilize for Impact!](#)

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.

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.

ENGAGED 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.

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.

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.

Together, with campus and city-wide partners, we will 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.

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.

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.

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.

We 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.



AREAS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Western's researchers, scholars, and artists advance creative practice and contribute fundamental and applied knowledge that enhance understandings of the world and of the academy's role in society. They contribute to the sum of human knowledge, preserve it, connect it to communities, and pass it down to future generations.

Knowledge created at Western underpins societal progress by allowing us to scrutinize the past and present to inform the future. It enables us to learn about learning, about ourselves, and about teaching. And it allows us to engage with issues related to policy, leadership, governance, ethics, the economy, social infrastructure, and the role of the public intellectual. These building blocks of discovery have the potential for unforeseen and profound impact within the academy, within our communities, and around the world. The breadth of these contributions underpins, traverses, and transcends the five areas of research activity identified below.

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.

A SUSTAINABLE & RESILIENT FUTURE

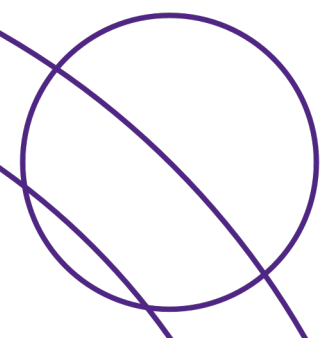
Environmental sustainability, the promotion of healthy ecosystems, and the capacity to protect ourselves from extreme environmental events present some of the most significant challenges of our time. Home to unique facilities, excellent scholars, and collaborative research groups, Western provides new 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.

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.

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, and contributes 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.



AREAS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY, CONT.

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.

MOBILIZING SUPPORTS FOR RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP & CREATIVE ACTIVITY

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 Vice-President (Research) and Provost. 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.