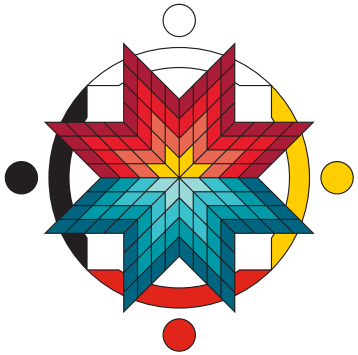


GEORGE BROWN POLYTECHNIC

Research & Innovation

2026 Annual Report



Land acknowledgement

George Brown Polytechnic is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous peoples who have lived here over time. We are grateful to share this land as treaty people who learn, work, and live in the community with each other.

Table of Contents

Land acknowledgement 2

Message from the President 4

Message from the Provost, Vice President Academic 5

Message from the Associate Vice President, ORI 6

Year in review

By the numbers & overview 8

Research institutes 10

Events & outreach 14

Recognizing impact 26

Behind the research

Research themes 32

Inside the student experience 39

Feature: Whole Woman Network 46

Program spotlights

IPON 50

Mitacs 52

startGBC 54

The Research & Innovation team

Remembering Karen Sinotte 56

Our team 57

Our partners 58



Message from the President

At George Brown Polytechnic, research and innovation are powerful catalysts for economic growth, community impact and student success. In a rapidly changing environment, organizations of all sizes are facing new challenges and opportunities. The demand for applied research and innovation support remains strong and, in many sectors, continues to grow. Our partners recognize that the ability to respond quickly, adapt to change and bring new ideas to market is more important than ever.

For nearly two decades, George Brown's Research & Innovation team has helped businesses, community organizations and not-for-profit partners build that agility and resilience. Since 2007, we have engaged 1,670 researchers on 2,423 projects, partnered with 2,265 industry and community organizations, and supported more than 20,000 student research experiences. Over the past five years alone, we have worked on more than 300 active projects, supported 147 active investigators, and collaborated with 237 industry and community partners, further demonstrating the strength and breadth of our applied research ecosystem in addressing real-world challenges.

Our partners range from emerging startups to multinational corporations, as well as community-based and non-profit organizations. For smaller businesses, our expertise, facilities and talent provide access to research and development support that might otherwise be beyond reach. For larger organizations, we serve as an extension of their innovation capacity, helping accelerate projects, solve complex problems and explore new possibilities.

The stories featured in this report demonstrate the impact of these partnerships and the remarkable contributions of our employees and students. Together, we are advancing innovation, strengthening communities and helping create a vibrant future for all.

Dr. Gervan Fearon
President

Message from the Provost and Vice-President, Academic

2026 was a vibrant year for our Research and Innovation portfolio, where once again George Brown delivered significant value to our business, industry and community partners, extending our proud history of applied, partner-driven collaboration. Active since 2007, George Brown's legacy in research and innovation showcases the unique value that colleges and polytechnics bring to the table: these are partnerships designed to focus on real-world challenges, aligning closely and naturally with the needs of local and increasingly global SMEs and community organizations.

George Brown is also a leader in work-integrated learning, technical training and upskilling, which are in high demand in international development and innovation contexts. This is especially true when viewed through the lens of our Research & Innovation portfolio.

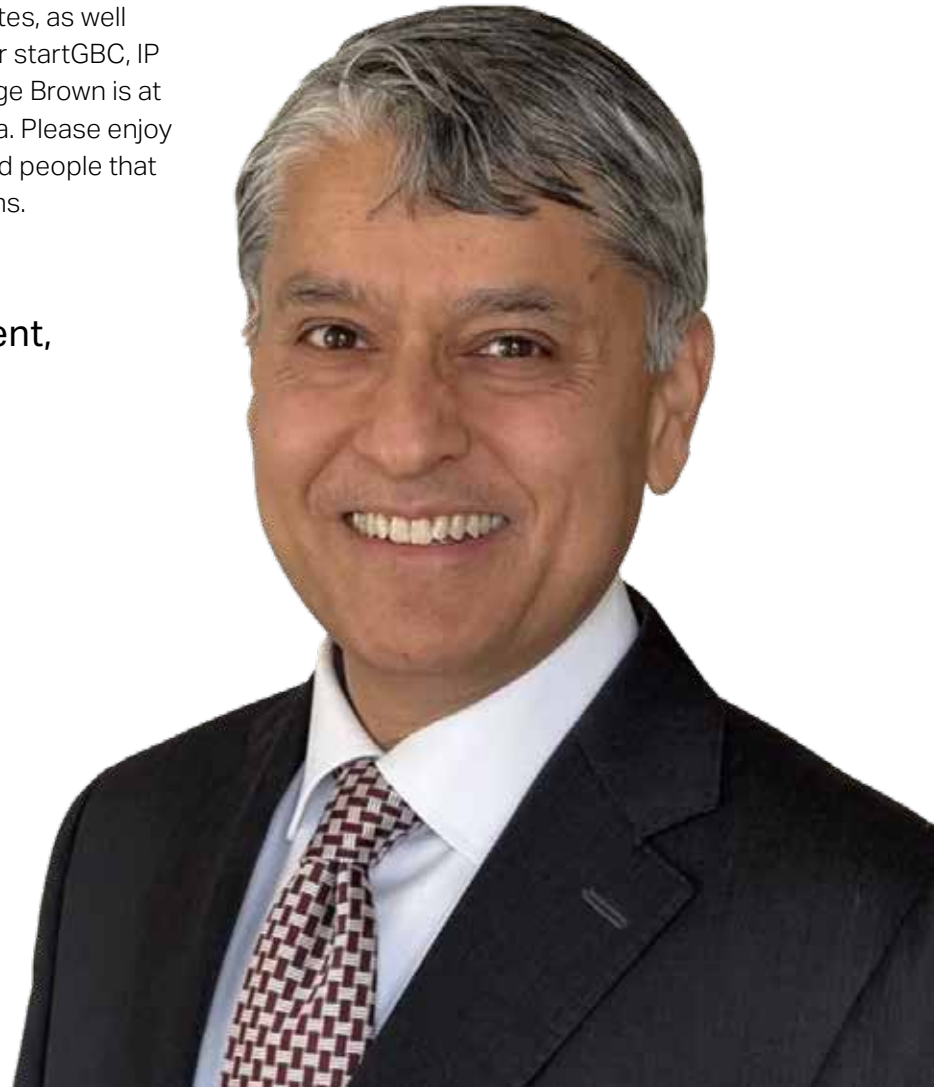
Now more than ever, for Canada's future workforce to have 'innovation aptitude', we must teach our learners to be fluent in the language of invention.

Through our student researcher opportunities, we do exactly this: providing meaningful experiential learning opportunities with almost every project, connecting industry with talent and solutions.

Either through the curriculum and/or as part-time employment, GBP students can work directly with industry to find solutions to their innovation challenges. These opportunities provide learners with crucial workplace skills and the ability to solve diverse and intangible issues within industrial problems and contexts.

Our Research and Innovation Institutes, as well as program delivery systems like our startGBC, IP and Mitacs portfolios, are why George Brown is at the forefront of innovation in Canada. Please enjoy learning more about the projects and people that make up 2025-26 research programs.

Dr. Hassun Malik
Provost and Vice-President, Academic





Message from the AVP, Research & Innovation

When the Artemis II lunar flyby happened in April 2026, it was the first crewed flight beyond low Earth orbit since Apollo 17 in 1972. Around the world, so many of us paused together for a moment in our busy, ever-widening lives, to watch four astronauts set the new record for the farthest distance humans have ever been from Earth. We were reminded of how small we are individually, and at the same time, we were immediately united by profound and universal connections rooted in awe and accomplishment.

To describe the existential delight experienced by these astronauts as they orbited the moon, NASA coined a phrase, one we all felt in the days that followed: "moon joy", or the feeling of intense happiness and excitement that comes from a moon mission.

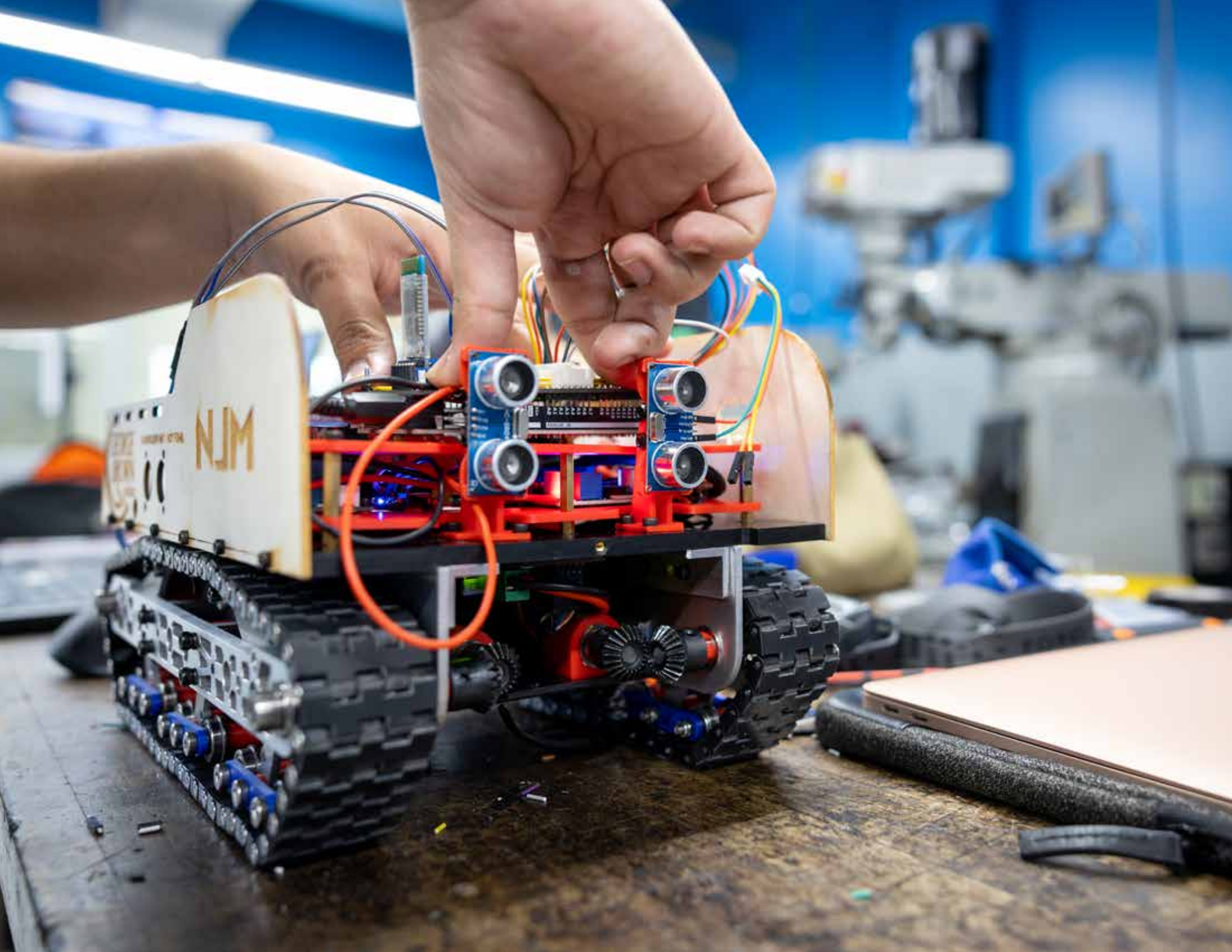
While our researchers, students and employees may not be guiding literal rockets to the moon, they are, in their own way, taking their own steps towards a greater goal -- whether that goal takes the form of new knowledge, the hard-won satisfaction of creation or the triumph of solving a problem that no one else has solved. Like the Artemis II, the accomplishments of this past year represent years of planning, investment and support to reach our potential. They demonstrate how incredible things become possible when we invest in public education, hire diverse teams, and choose to fund research and development.

At George Brown's Office of Research & Innovation, we are excited by big ideas, and we are equally intrigued by the challenges these big ideas can create. Within this report, you'll find stories of the projects, initiatives and partnerships that we worked on during the 2025-2026 academic year. You'll hear from many students, researchers and partners that are tackling research challenges of all sizes about the lessons they learned along the way.

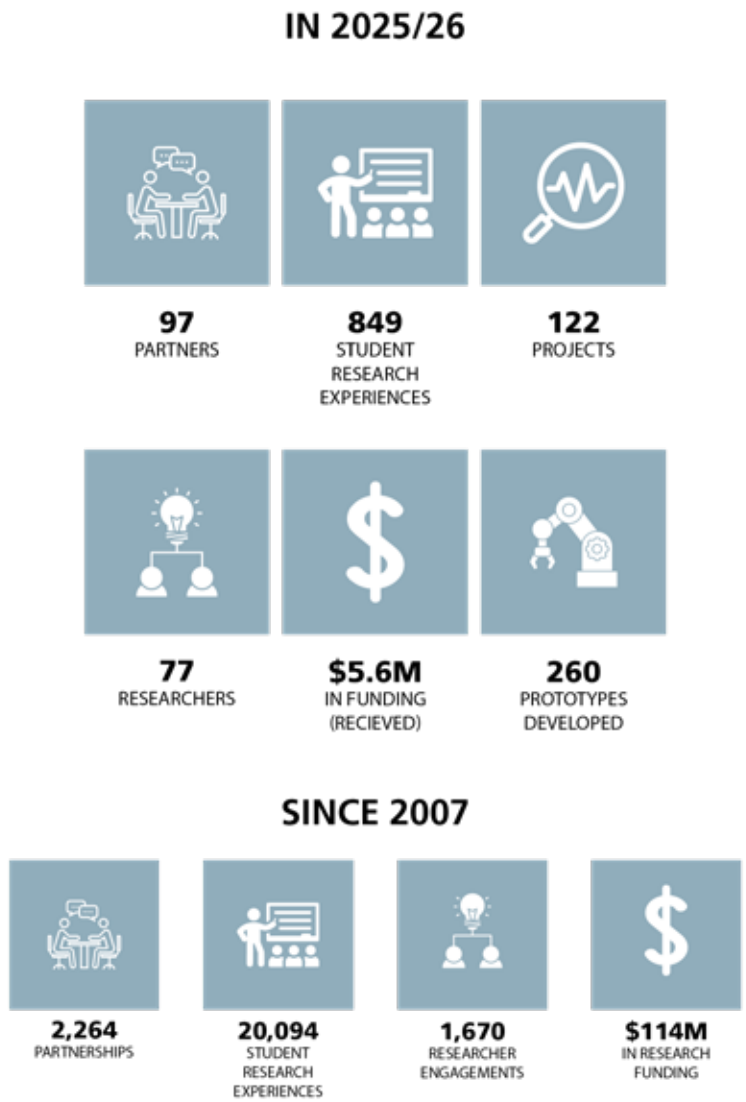
We pride ourselves on producing work that tries to make the world a bit brighter and our existence more sustainable. This work takes many forms. It can look like technology projects that guide industry towards responsible, thoughtful adoption of Artificial Intelligence. It can look like social innovation projects that tackle longstanding issues of inequity and injustice. Or it can look like development of a product that helps a small company give life to an idea that can grow. But the same lens always applies: it is work that makes us proud and helps us build a tomorrow that we can all thrive within. It is work that gives us our own version of moon joy every day.

Please enjoy learning more about these projects. I hope they bring you joy, too.

Dr. Krista Holmes
Associate Vice-President, R&I

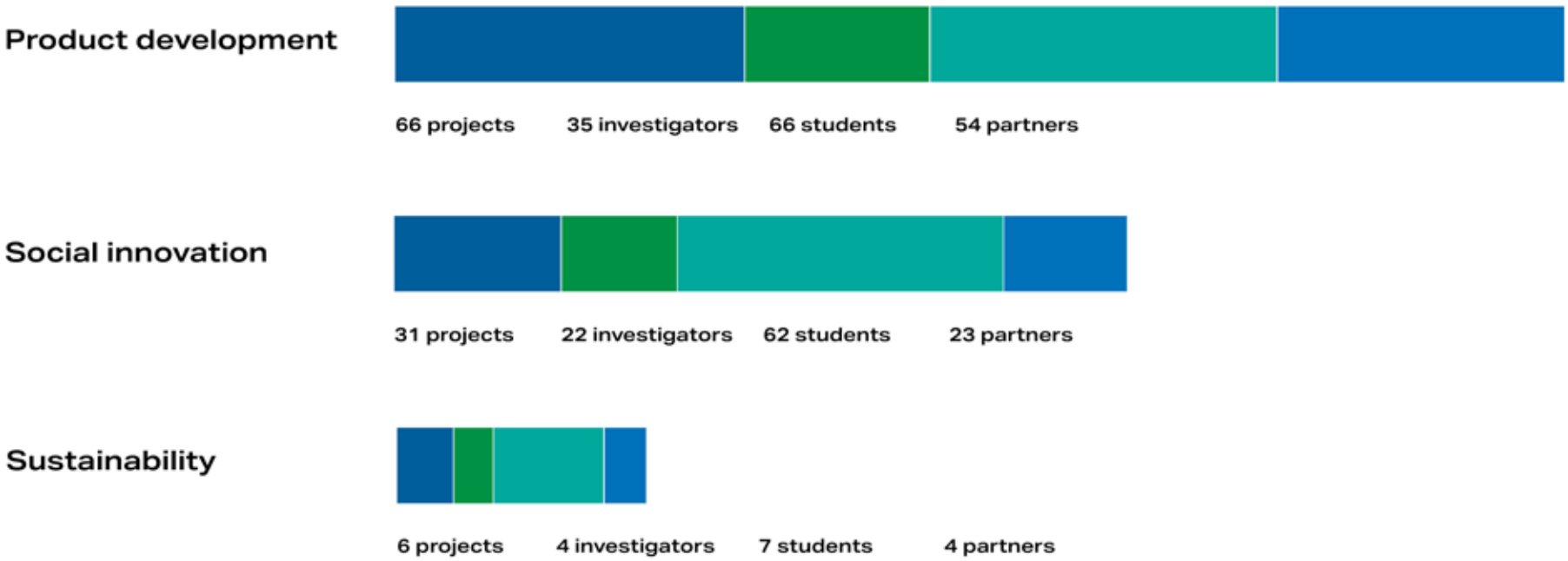


By the numbers



*These metrics represent the fiscal period between April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026

By the numbers



*These metrics represent the fiscal period between April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026



Overview

Research institutes

Our Research & Innovation Institutes bring interdisciplinary researchers together around defined priority areas to create and share knowledge, advance George Brown's strategic priorities and generate meaningful impact for industry and communities.

Affiliated with our Institutes, our Research & Innovation Studios provide dedicated physical or virtual environments where rigorous scientific and technical exploration coexists with creative inquiry. Through systematic investigation, experimentation and data analysis alongside artistic and imaginative approaches, the Studios foster cross-disciplinary collaboration and new ways of solving problems that may not emerge in conventional research settings.

Together, our Institutes and Studios create an integrated research and innovation ecosystem: Institutes establish strategic areas of focus and bring together interdisciplinary expertise, while Studios provide focused environments in which research, experimentation and creative problem-solving can take place.



Brookfield Sustainability Institute

Co-creates practical, systems-thinking solutions to climate and environmental challenges

Experiential Design and Interactive Technologies

Creating immersive, multi-sensory hardware, software, digital platforms, environments and experiences that engage people emotionally and intellectually

Sustainable Food Systems

Exploring how to provide food security and nutrition for all while ensuring fairness, equity and preserving the health of the planet

Built Environment

Enabling innovation in human-made spaces and structures where people live, work and play



Product Development Institute

Transforms ideas into viable, market-ready products from concept through commercialization

Advanced Manufacturing & Prototyping
Designing, developing and manufacturing physical goods and services

Fashion Innovation & Textile Technology
Textile recycling, smart textiles, wearables, digital design technology & more

Food & Beverage Innovation
Food science research and development services to support Canada's food and beverage sector

AI Integration
Developing digital prototypes, data architecture and adoption of new technologies



Social Innovation Institute

Develops and implements effective responses to systemic social and economic challenges

Community & Socioeconomic Development

Connecting researchers and community partners to co-create solutions to social challenges

Black Futures Research

Inspiring and supporting the next wave of Black innovators, inventors and creative thinkers focused on social, economic and ecological justice

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Evidence-based inquiry focused on improving student learning experiences and outcomes



On this and following page: Participants at the 2026 RISE Showcase.



Year in review

Events



Year in review: events

GROW Symposium cultivates research and innovation at George Brown

On May 8, George Brown Polytechnic demonstrated a commitment to strengthening its research culture with the launch of the inaugural GROW Symposium, an ambitious, full-day event designed to turn curiosity into capability and ideas into impact.

Led by the Office of Research & Innovation and funded by Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, GROW (Grants, Research Opportunities & Workshops) reinforces George Brown's institutional commitment to innovation, collaboration, and inclusive research excellence. The symposium brought together more than 80 employees from across the polytechnic, including faculty, administrators, and support staff, all united by a common goal: to better understand, engage with and develop the research landscape at George Brown.

Building a culture where research thrives

At its core, the GROW Symposium is about embedding research into the everyday fabric of George Brown. The event provided a clear, practical roadmap for transforming early-stage ideas into funding-ready projects, equipping participants with the tools, insights, and confidence needed to move forward.

Through presentations, panels, and discussions, attendees were introduced to the full research lifecycle, from ideation and partnership building to proposal development and knowledge dissemination. The result was a dynamic learning environment that emphasized







both accessibility and ambition, encouraging first-time researchers while accelerating momentum for those already on their research journey.

Reframing the future of research

The day was anchored by a compelling keynote from Dr. Glen A. Jones, a leading voice in higher education policy. In his address, "There Is No New Normal: Contemporary Challenges in Research in a Rapidly Shifting Context," Dr. Jones challenged participants to rethink uncertainty, reframing it not as a barrier but as a catalyst for innovation, adaptability, and purposeful leadership.

Against a backdrop of rapid technological advancement, shifting global dynamics, and growing public skepticism, he underscored the urgent need for research that is responsive, resilient, and grounded in purpose. His message set a clear tone: that the future of research will belong to those willing to adapt, collaborate, and lead with intention.

From inspiration to implementation

Throughout the day, speakers translated big-picture thinking into clear, actionable guidance for George Brown employees. Real-world examples and candid insights demystified the research process, equipping attendees with practical strategies for navigating funding opportunities, refining methodologies, and building meaningful partnerships. The sessions empowered participants to anticipate emerging opportunities at George Brown and beyond, sparking new collaborations and helping researchers move forward with confidence, ready to shape what comes next.

The symposium also underscored the power of collaboration—both within the polytechnic and with external partners—as a catalyst for impactful research. By showcasing projects rooted in community engagement and interdisciplinary thinking, the event reinforced a central message: meaningful research does not happen in isolation, but through connection.

Sustaining the momentum

With its successful debut, the GROW Symposium builds on a strong, well-established foundation, positioning George Brown to expand research impact and to empower members of our research community.



Year in review: events

Research, Innovation & startGBC Entrepreneurship (RISE) Showcase

Bringing together researchers, students, entrepreneurs, funders, partners and community members on June 25, the event showcased the breadth of innovation taking place across the polytechnic through thought-provoking discussions, interactive exhibits, entrepreneur showcases, networking opportunities and industry collaboration.

The day's programming explored topics from community-building through technology to the responsible use of artificial intelligence in research and innovation. Guests also connected with emerging ventures supported through startGBC, learned about research projects conducted with industry and community partners, and engaged with organizations that help strengthen Ontario's innovation ecosystem.

Inspiration through leadership and lived experience

A highlight of the event was a keynote address from George Brown Fashion Techniques and Design alumna and acclaimed Anishinaabe fashion designer Lesley Hampton. Drawing on her personal journey and professional success, Hampton spoke about representation, belonging and challenging traditional standards in the fashion industry, encouraging attendees to lead with authenticity and purpose.

The showcase also featured the #WhyNotMe entrepreneur panel, where founders shared insights on building businesses, overcoming barriers and creating meaningful impact through innovation.

Building George Brown's leadership in research and entrepreneurship

The RISE Showcase reflected George Brown's continued leadership in connecting research, entrepreneurship and experiential learning to address real-world challenges.

"Innovation grows when we listen. It grows when we understand the needs of our partners and communities. It becomes meaningful when it is applied," said Dr. Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown Polytechnic, during his opening remarks. "This gathering reflects the ideas, partnerships and talent that continue to shape the communities we serve."

These collaborations continue to advance innovation in areas including digital transformation, social innovation, sustainability and advanced manufacturing while creating meaningful opportunities for students to develop career-ready skills.

"RISE demonstrates the strength of George Brown's innovation ecosystem and the value of bringing together students, researchers, entrepreneurs, industry and community partners around shared challenges and opportunities," said Dr. Krista Holmes, Associate Vice-President, Research and Innovation. "Through research and entrepreneurship, we are creating pathways for students to contribute to meaningful solutions while helping organizations innovate, grow and make an impact."











Year in review: events

Canadian and Caribbean tourism leaders building a more resilient future

The Canadian-Caribbean Tourism Resilience Symposium: Co-Designing the Next Decade, held July 29–30 at Limberlost Place, brought together tourism leaders, researchers, community partners, and representatives from related sectors, including shipping and transportation, such as Tropical Shipping, to discuss the future of tourism.

Hosted by George Brown's Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC), in partnership with the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the symposium focused on how destinations can prepare for disruption while continuing to support economic growth and community well-being.

"This symposium was built by listening to the tourism sector and recognizing the importance of the sector to communities and the economy," said Dr. Tyrone Hall, Head of the Brookfield Sustainability Institute at George Brown. "We asked stakeholders across Canada and the Caribbean what challenges they are facing and what issues should be prioritized. Their insights shaped the conversations we had."

Addressing climate risks to support a sustainable future for tourism

Over two days of keynote presentations, panel discussions and collaborative sessions, leaders explored the issues shaping tourism's future, including climate adaptation, workforce development, supply chains and sustainable growth.

Caribbean representatives shared perspectives on the unique challenges facing island destinations, including the impacts of extreme weather events, rising climate risks and the







need for long-term investment in resilient infrastructure and communities.

"Tourism is one of the most powerful economic forces in the world, but its future depends on our ability to innovate and build resilience," said The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica. "Through collaboration between Canada and the Caribbean, we have an opportunity to share knowledge, strengthen partnerships and develop solutions that will help communities and destinations thrive for generations to come."

"The Caribbean tourism sector has long demonstrated remarkable adaptability, but building true resilience requires strengthening our local capacity, workforce and supply chains," said Dona Regis-Prosper, Secretary-General and CEO of the Caribbean Tourism Organization. "Through collaboration with Canadian partners on innovation, climate adaptation and sustainable development, we can create solutions that help our destinations thrive and deliver lasting benefits for our communities and future generations."

Speakers emphasized that tourism is about more than attracting visitors; it is also about supporting the people and communities that make destinations successful.

Strengthening Canada-Caribbean connections

The symposium also highlighted the longstanding ties between Canada and the Caribbean through tourism, culture, education and economic partnerships.

Toronto's tourism sector was highlighted as an example of the industry's impact on communities. Kelly Jackson of Destination Toronto shared that the city welcomed more than 28 million visitors in 2025, generating $9.1 billion in food spending.

However, she emphasized that tourism success is about more than visitor numbers.



Jackson highlighted the important role of workers, businesses and community organizations in shaping the visitor experience.

Participants discussed how destinations can continue to grow while ensuring tourism delivers meaningful benefits for the communities that support the sector.

Exploring collaboration and tourism industry innovation

Innovation and technology were also part of the conversation, with participants exploring how emerging tools can support tourism's future while preserving the human connections and cultural experiences that make destinations unique.

The event reflected George Brown Polytechnic's commitment to applied research, global partnerships and industry collaboration. As the only North American location of the GTRCMC, George Brown continues to bring together education, research and industry to address real-world challenges facing the tourism sector.

The event also highlighted the next generation of tourism innovators through the Ideas Lab and poster contest, featuring George Brown students who showcased their capstone projects and explored solutions for the sector's future.

"For these reasons, George Brown is proud to host this symposium because it reflects what we value as a polytechnic," said Dr. Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown Polytechnic. "We bring together education, applied research and industry to help solve real-world challenges. That is exactly what this symposium is about."

The symposium created an opportunity for leaders across Canada and the Caribbean to share experiences, explore approaches to building a more resilient tourism sector, and strengthen ties among our interconnected communities.


JAMAICA






JAMAICA











From top to bottom: startGBC co-hosted Build Your AI Operating System: A Hands-On Workshop for Founders for Toronto Tech Week; startGBC collaborated with TDSB and EEP for the TDSB Entrepreneurship Day; the ORI team held a booth at the 2026 Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Connections Conference centred on the theme "Breaking Through: Women Redefining Innovation Leadership."



Above: The Black Entrepreneurship Alliance (BEA) hosted Investment Bootcamp Demo Day 2026, including the announcement of a new partnership with George Brown College Foundation, in collaboration with Black Creek Community Health Centre, expanding pathways for students and innovators through applied learning and entrepreneurship.



Recognizing impact

Events

George Brown Research & Innovation hosted the Grants, Research Opportunities & Workshops (GROW) Symposium at Limberlost. (May 2026)

startGBC hosted an event titled "Build Your AI Operating System: A Hands-On Workshop for Founders" at Toronto Tech Week. (May 2026)

George Brown Research & Innovation, in collaboration with startGBC, hosted the Research, Innovation & startGBC Entrepreneurship (RISE) Showcase at Limberlost. (June 2026)

startGBC, in collaboration with TDSB and EEP, hosted the TDSB Entrepreneurship Showcase at Limberlost. GBP engaged alumni entrepreneurs and community partners to serve as mentors and judges throughout the day. (June 2026)

Dr. Kay-Ann Williams hosted an En-ROADS Climate Solutions Simulator session, exploring how policy and technology choices shape global climate outcomes, emphasizing systems thinking and real-world trade-offs. (June 2026)

GBP, in collaboration with the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) and the Caribbean Tourism Organization, hosted the Canadian-Caribbean Tourism Resilience Symposium at Limberlost. (July 2026)

startGBC hosted a Pop-Up Vendor Market highlighting GBP entrepreneurs as part of the GBP Summer Sounds event. (August 2026)

startGBC hosted a High School Entrepreneur Summer Camp for budding entrepreneurs. (August 2026)

Peer Reviewed Publications

Mitsche, J. *Doing Lunch on Campus: From Scholar Activism to Institutional Buy-in.* In M. Classens (Ed). Hungry for Change: How Postsecondary Campuses are Transforming Food Systems, University of Toronto Press.

Mitsche, J., Chevrier, E., Kitaura, L., Milicevic, M., Wolfe, S. *Transformative Food Literacy.* In J. Sumner and M. Classens (Eds). Food Literacies: Reading the World through Food, University of Toronto Press.

Bernier, T. *Sex Worker Diaries… Spoken and Sung: Arts-based research-creation as a tool for community safety and knowledge.* Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, UTS Press. (December 2026)

Wang, G. (2025). *Effects of a Flipped Classroom College Business Course on Students' Pre-Class Preparation, In-Class*

Participation, Learning, and Skills Development. Administrative Sciences, 15(8), 301.

Other Publications

Gary Hoyer, Suvadra Datta Gupta, Kirsti Tasala, Nicole Weber, and Nina Trask published "School Food Programs Around the World: Lessons for Canada" through The Coalition for Healthy School Food. (2025)

Gary Hoyer contributed two chapters to the book "School Food Programs in Canada: Models for Success" (February 2025)

Rusa Jeremic published the *Grassroots Digital Hub* website, containing digital resources and tips for community leaders. (2026)

Therese Bernier contributed a chapter titled "Would you rather? Choice, Context, and the Subject-Object Dynamics of Performance Ethnography with Sex Workers" to the upcoming book Where is the object? An exercise in fabulation in the writing of ethnographies. (December 2026)

Desi Di Nardo published a project website for *Imagination and Innovation in Education: Poetry Pedagogy to Spark Engagement in Higher Learning.* This is a public-facing website created to share the project's findings, research insights, and poetry-pedagogy resources. Link: https://themusician3242.github.io/innovation-imagination-poetry/

Viz Saraby and Mikael Sandblom launched the Tidbits exhibit at the GUM Gallery in Meaford, Ontario, highlighting stories from the Tidbits Meaford History Project alongside a digital companion hosted at tidbits.site (April 2026)

Conference Presentations

Alostaz, Z., Alshwatreh, A.* (2026, June 25). *Experience-Based Co-Design of an Intervention for Stress Management During Clinical Placements in Undergraduate Nursing Students.* Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Albert D., Kiana Sepasian, K.*, Ahn, J.* (2026, June 25). *Innovation without Borders.* Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Di Nardo, D., Nucci, H.*, O'Connel, D.* (2026, June 25). *Imagination and Innovation in Education: Poetry Pedagogy to Spark Engagement in Higher Learning.* Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Di Nardo, D. (2026, June 15). *Imagination, Inspire,* IGNITE. Oral Presentation, EvolvED Conference, Teaching & Learning Exchange, George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Gillis, L., Ford, W., Walker, N.**, Persaud, K.** (2026, June 25). *Improving Nutrition and Cooking Skills among Youth and Young Adults to help address Mental Health Challenges.* Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Marshall, A., Aguiar, S.*, Sejpal, P.*, Conde, R., Pileri, G.M. , Sitler, E.**, McNeil, D.** (2026, June 25). *Enhancing Dental Assisting Education with Virtual Simulations: Impact on Student Exposure, Skill Acquisition, and Clinical Preparedness of Specialty Dental Procedures.* Poster presentation at Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Pourmajadi, W., Ahn, J.*, Choi, J.*, Ta, J.* (2026, June 25). *Whole Woman Network – Community Banking Platform Modernization*, Poster presentation at Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Rizvi, S. Pryanka, N.*, Medina, C.* .** (2026, June 25). *Transforming Corn Husk Waste into Sustainable Molded Packaging Materials: A Proof-of-Concept Using Lab-Scale Methods.* Poster presentation at Research Innovation

& Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Wang, G., Nawar Orpita, A.* (2026, June 25). *The Development of Virtues-Based Character in Business Students.* Poster presentation at Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Wang, G. (2026, May 22-25). *The Development of Virtues Leadership in College Business Students: A Pilot Study.* Roundtable Discussion, Blue Sky Thinking: Harnessing the Future 2026 Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC) Conference, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Wang, W., Mahalaha, S.* (2026, June 25). *Developing A Scaffold Framework to Improve Real-World Skills for Business Students Through Experiential Learning.* Poster presentation at Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship Showcase (RISE), George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Rusa Jeremic and Leah Yuyitung delivered a presentation titled "Visibilizing the Invisible: Grassroots Leaders Experiences of Going Online During the Covid-19 Pandemic" at the CASAE Conference Proceedings, Congress 2025. (June 2025)

Rusa Jeremic served as the moderator and organizer of the CASAE Closing Plenary titled "ReFraming Partnerships: Community Insights on Academic Research" (June 2025)

Dr. Krista Holmes participated in a panel at the 2026 CICan Conference exploring how women leaders are shaping the future through collaboration, empathy, and impact-driven leadership. (April 2026)

Dr. Krista Holmes delivered a conference presentation titled "From Margins to Centre: Integrating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and Ethical Frameworks for Better Research" at the 9th World Conference on Research Integrity. (May 2026)

Rusa Jeremic delivered a presentation titled "Care, Mutual Aid, Solidarity & Community" at the inaugural 'Intergalactic' Conference on Resistance Studies, hosted at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and online. (June 2026)

Therese Bernier delivered several conference presentations of their project "Sex Work – The Musical: Altering Societal Perceptions of Sex Work Through Audience Engagement with a Musical Play" including at the 9th Global Summit on Feminist and LGBTQ+ Studies, Cross-Sections 2026 at TMU, the Community-Engaged Research conference at McMaster University, the FHSS Big Thinking Summit in Edmonton, Alberta, and the 48th Comparative Drama Conference at the University of Wisconsin.

William Wang delivered a presentation titled "A Scaffolding Framework for Career Transition through Experiential Learning: An AI-Supported Case from Accounting to Supply Chain Careers" at the International Conference On Next Generation Vocational Training Models (ICNGVTM-26) in Beijing. (November 2026)

William Wang presented the project "Scaffolding Framework for Supply Chain/ Business Career Transition Through Experiential Learning" at GBP's EvolvED conference. (June 2026)

Other Presentations

Steffanie Adams presented their research project "Finding Their Voices" to the Kichi Sibi Trails Board and the Pinesi Paddle community. (2025)

Dr. Syed Rizvi delivered a presentation titled "More than Clothing: Textiles at the Frontier of Innovation" at UHN's Toronto Rehabilitation institute, hosted by KITE Creates. (September 2025)

GBP's FIRSt team hosted a presentation titled "Inside Food Innovation: The Future of What We Eat" at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. (November 2025)

GBP Research & Innovation hosted a booth at the 2026 Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Connections Conference. (April 2026)

Di Nardo, D. (2026, May 27). *Imagination and Innovation in Education: Poetry Pedagogy to Spark Engagement in Higher Learning.* Faculty Feature Interview, Teaching & Learning

Exchange, George Brown Polytechnic, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS5YX8-jY-A

GBP hosted a booth at Co-Founder Connect (May 2026)

Steffanie Adams, Jennifer Mitsche and Milan Shahani delivered a presentation titled "Scaling Your Research – Lessons From Multiyear Federally Funded Project Leaders" at GBP's GROW Symposium. (May 2026)

GBP's FIRSt team gave a presentation about shelf-life testing for food products at the VenturePark Growth Hub – *Shelf Life Testing with Confidence* webinar. (June 2026)

In The Media

Jennifer Mitsche was featured on the #MyGBC Podcast "S10E9: The Food Episode Pt1 – How a Shared Lunch is the Gateway to Equity" (March 2025)

Therese Bernier was featured on "Centre Stage with Lyla Miklos" on 93.3FM CFMU (April 2026).

The Canadian-Caribbean Tourism Resilience Symposium was featured in several media outlets including: Caribbean Tourism Authority, Travel Courier, Travel and Tour World, and Education News Canada. (July 2026).





Feature

Behind the research

We're diving into the people and ideas that bring our research to life. Read on to learn more about the researchers, students and partners that make our work possible.

Read on to learn more about:

2026 research themes

Inside the student experience

Feature: Whole Women Network project

Research themes

This year, we're presenting a cross-section of our projects based on their greatest point of impact: we focus in on research that creates community, finds new ways to teach or introduces a new product to market.

Read on to hear more on projects under these themes.



Research Theme #1

Building back better

We find ourselves in a time of unprecedented challenges, but also within a moment of extraordinary opportunity: we can build back better.



Communal Lunch Project

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Mitsche; Student researchers: Lumina Pearl Kitaura, Kasyndra Noseworthy, Milka Milicevic

College and university students have become a vulnerable population, living on increasingly tight budgets, being time-poor, and having experienced the destructive impact of the global pandemic, factors that makes the already detrimental effects of the "student diet" much worse. Building on a previous 3-year CCSIF research project, the Communal Lunch project is developing virtual and in-person communal food programming that can be used on any Canadian campus to address three interrelated student needs: access to nourishing food, food literacy, and opportunities to feel a sense of belonging to their campus communities. The goal: reduce, through prevention, the number of students who experience food insecurity and social isolation and to provide post-secondary stakeholders with evidence-based training tools that support the well-being of students and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), all within an environmental sustainability framework.



Finding their voices: Indigenous archeological architecture

Principal Investigator: Steffanie Adams, Co-Investigators: Ahmet Kokulu, Christopher Pandolfi; Student researchers: Hitesh Verma, Mark Macleod, Alex DaHae Kim, Chris Beech, Denilen Patron, Mahshid Mahmoudian, Talita De Carvalho Leite Da Silva

As Canada continues the process of Truth and Reconciliation (TR), many Indigenous communities need healing and are looking to recover, preserve and strengthen their place, culture, and language. George Brown College (GBC) in partnership with the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) and the community of Deep River will conduct a collaborative 3-year project titled "Finding Their Voices: A Case Study in Architectural Archeology", focusing on digitizing the lost culture, heritage, and language of the Algonquins of Greater Golden Lake First Nation (AGGL) through the medium of photogrammetric, laser and immersion technologies.



Success strategies Black male leaders employ on their leadership journey in the non-profit sector

Principal Investigator: Morris Beckford; Student researchers: Elvis Glover, Myles Roman Muirhead

Historically, Black males not only face barriers accessing leadership programs, but also face impacts from systemic, cultural, and societal barriers that translate into their employment opportunities. In this project with George Brown and Black Business and Professional Association, the collaboration aims to examine the experiences of Black males, who have successfully navigated the non-profit leadership space while managing stress and adversity. The research will seek to uncover the strategies these leaders used to maintain their well-being, and address key questions such as, "How do successful Black male leaders in non-profit leadership manage stress and adversity?"



A digital guide to do-it-yourself adaptive clothing

Principal Investigator: Milan Shahani; Student researchers: Chan Park, Julia Bucar, Kael Scarlett, Marie Anais, Kimberley Ah Why, Seolhee Yu

When living with a physical disability that impacts mobility, daily activities, ranging from buttoning a shirt, pulling on a pair of pants, or pulling up a zipper, can be difficult and require assistance. Adaptive clothing incorporates aesthetic and functional elements, but is mostly available through online stores and can be expensive. Using these research findings, adaptive clothing design, construction techniques and community knowledge, researcher Milan Shahani will build on years of previous work to create "Do-It-Yourself Adaptive Clothing" training videos that will be disseminated by community organizations serving seniors, Person with a Disability (PWD), and clients living with mobility issues to enable cost–effective options for adaptive clothing.

Research Theme #2

New ways of teaching and learning

Academic communities play a valuable role in research and innovation in Canada, forging strong ties with their students and industry alike.

Here are some of the new ways of thinking at George Brown.



Innovation without borders

Principal Investigator: Albert Danison; Student researchers: Kiana Sepasian, Joosung Ahn

In a rapidly evolving global job market, interdisciplinary competencies have become essential for innovation and problem-solving. Employers increasingly seek graduates who can work across traditional academic boundaries to create novel solutions. However, current post-secondary education structures often perpetuate academic silos, limiting students' exposure to diverse perspectives. At George Brown, while interdisciplinary learning is promoted in principle, a research team led by Albert Danison wanted to back up the benefits with empirical research—ultimately this team wanted to study the direct impact on students' innovation competencies including creativity, problem solving abilities, and leadership development within higher education settings.



Imagination and innovation in education: poetry pedagogy

Principal Investigator: Desi Di Nardo; Student researchers: Kobee Soney, Alex Bester

A research initiative led by Professor and poet Desi Di Nardo exploring how integrating poetry into post-secondary classrooms can enhance student engagement, academic success, and social connection. Responding to widespread challenges in student motivation following the shift to hybrid learning, this research applies creative, arts-based teaching methods to revitalize communication and learning in diverse educational contexts. Long-term, the project aims to establish poetry pedagogy as an innovative, interdisciplinary model for fostering equity, empathy, and connection across college departments—reshaping how creativity drives learning and community in higher education.



Bridging the digital fluency gap for community leaders

Principal Investigator: Rusa Jeremic; Student researchers: Emishaw Yimenu, Jhaavani Lisa Diaram, Karlene Ruddock, Kim Leah Yuyitung, Ajanthan Kamalanathan, Amairani Ramos Lopez, Natalia Beatriz Aguayo Hernandez, Rayhan Sultana, Ronnie Blackburn

While businesses, agencies, and institutions were able to dedicate financial and human resources towards upskilling and adapting to digital environments during the COVID-19 pandemic, community builders, organizers, and grassroots activists whose work is voluntary, unpaid, often 'invisible' and under-resourced were left with few opportunities to do the same. This project, led by Rusa Jeremic, wants to address systemic gaps in access to training and resources in order to build critical digital fluency for community organizers and activists in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas who are unpaid and unaffiliated with agencies. Now is the time to capture their experiences, overcome systemic barriers, and develop and share best practices.



Stress management in undergraduate nursing

Principal Investigator: Ziad Alostaz; Student researchers: Ayah Alshwatreh, Anise Mabee Mabee, Kylie Foldhazi, Nadia Ibrahim, Tanisha Meelu

Nursing students may face significant stress during clinical placements, negatively affecting their well-being, learning outcomes, and transition into practice. Although frameworks exist to understand stress and co-design methods have advanced, previous studies have not employed these approaches, potentially overlooking stressors and coping strategies unique to nursing students, limiting the development of effective and sustainable interventions. This study aims to co-design an evidence-based, theoretically grounded intervention to enhance stress management among undergraduate nursing students during clinical placements.

Research Theme #3

Creating new Canadian products

We work with our partners to de-risk innovation by exploring ideas, building and testing solutions, and validating them in real-world settings.



Integrating ethical, scalable AI features with MLD Solutions

Principal Investigator: John Cardoso; Co-Investigator: Laily Ajellu; Student researchers: Amanda Gurney, Dhara Kaji, Harry Song, Jui-Wen Chiang, Vladyslav Turchaninov, Zahabia Chitalwala, Tanupreet Kaur

MLD Solutions (MLD) had created and commercialized the Mozaik.Global platform—a digital web builder for entrepreneurs, coaches, consultants, and content creators—but now wanted to improve the platform's user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) to drive adoption, engagement, and retention. With new AI driven features such as content suggestions and learner analytics being added, there is also a critical need to ensure these features are designed ethically, transparently, and accessibly. This research project, in partnership with George Brown College, aims to assess and enhance the Mozaik.Global platform through UX research, AI-powered tools such as automated usability testing, and explainable AI (XAI)







Designing a better battery with AlumaPower

Principal Investigator: Matthew Hexemer; Student researchers: Yannick Gagnon, Jose Capanema, Alejandro Jorge Leal Corella, Aline Zarpelao, Bennett Manfredi, Thomas Heaney-Coe

AlumaPower Corporation has reinvented the aluminum-air battery as a Galvanic Generator™, a long-duration energy source that uses recycled aluminum as fuel. The technology produces electricity and heat, with significantly higher power density than diesel generators, offering a clean alternative to diesel for long-duration backup power in applications such as data centres, defense, and telecommunications. This three-year partnership has spanned market research and strategy, product concept development, prototyping and brand communications. Most recently, as AlumaPower prepares for commercialization, work has focused on service design and resolving critical mechanical design, user interaction and manufacturability challenges.

One database, endless potential with Ontario Power Generation

Principal Investigator: Moe Fadaee; Student researchers: Ho Yin Chui, Hsin-Ping Wang, Sahar Mirzapoor

Ontario Power Generation Inc. (OPG) is the province's largest clean power generator, operating one of North America's most diverse generating fleets. The Monitoring & Diagnostics (M&D) Center is central to ensuring the reliability and performance of OPG's nuclear and renewable generation assets, but with continued and rapid growth, it had become a challenge to quickly access and analyze available data. To address these challenges, OPG came to George Brown to create a monitoring portfolio tracking tool to cut thorough confusion and deliver a unified view of monitoring activities across all assets.

Chili condiment development for Dript Gourmet

Principal Investigator: Caroline Rebello; Co-Investigator: Candace Mascarenhas

Caterina Marchese is the founder of Dript Gourmet, a Toronto-based company that specializes in upscale condiments. Her product line features savory honey and maple syrup products. She was referred to Food Innovation and Research Studio (FIRSt) at George Brown via Boundless Accelerator in Guelph, Ontario. Caterina approached FIRSt to pursue the use of her 'byproduct' chilis created from the processing of her hot honey products to develop a siracha-style chili condiment. FIRSt will work on product development of two SKUs of these chili condiments with different levels of heat ("Fire" [medium heat level] and "Inferno" [high heat level]).



Feature

Inside the student experience

Student researchers are essential contributors to our research and innovation teams



Kiana Sepasian

Computer Programming and Analysis (T177)

Worked on: Innovation Without Borders

Tell us about your project.

I worked as a Student Researcher on Innovation Without Borders (IWB). My role included supporting the development and delivery of the program, working closely with participants throughout the experience, collecting and analyzing feedback, and contributing to the research outputs and overall evaluation of the project.

Favourite lesson?

Realizing that innovation becomes much stronger when people with different ways of thinking are given the opportunity to work together.

Coming from a computer programming background, I was used to approaching problems from a technical perspective. Through IWB, I saw how the same problem could look completely different to someone from another discipline.

How did your experience complement what you learned in the classroom?

The project gave me an opportunity to apply what I was learning in the classroom in a much more open-ended environment.

In my program, I learn how to analyze problems, develop technical solutions, and build systems. [This project showed] me how those technical skills fit into a broader innovation process involving users, interdisciplinary teams, research, communication, testing, and iteration.

What advice would you have for other students getting involved in George Brown's Research & Innovation programs?

My biggest advice would be: don't wait until you feel completely ready. Research can sound intimidating from the outside, especially if you think you need to already know exactly what you are doing. In my experience, some of the most valuable learning happens because you enter a project with questions rather than answers.

> **"Don't wait until you feel completely ready...valuable learning happens because you enter a project with questions rather than answers."**



Jason Ta

G418 - Web Development - Front-End Design

Worked on:
THINK!Wireless Solutions,
Whole Woman Network

Can you give a brief description of the project(s) you worked on?

The first was with THINK!Wireless Solutions, where the project goal was to give dispatchers a way to assign snowplow drivers to specific routes across Toronto and track the plowing progress live. I was responsible for designing and building out the front end of the application, which included the map interactions, route assignments, and internal dashboard for admins. I worked under my professor, Ahmet Koluku, who was a great mentor throughout!

The second project I worked on was with the Whole Woman Network, an organization offering women financial literacy and leadership training. Collaborating with the founder, Juliet, to make her vision come to life was so rewarding. I worked with an amazing team, including Joosung, Junyoung, and Professor William, who were all integral to such a successful project.

Favourite lesson of the project?

Seeing how much stakeholder communication shapes the actual product. I saw this firsthand through rounds of back and forth with stakeholders to really solidify their vision and how we could best achieve it.

How did your experience complement what you learned in the classroom?

Working with real teams and clients helped strengthen my ability to communicate and adapt. What matters most in development is the ability to explain what you've built to everyone on the team, and that's something you really only start to get good at once you're doing it in a real work setting.

What advice would you have for other students getting involved in George Brown's Research & Innovation programs?

Approach everything with an open mind! This experience provides us so many different opportunities for growth, whether it is from your peers, professors or even the clients. You will be exposed to so many new and exciting things so be ready to take everything in!

> **"The ability to explain what you've built... is something you start to get good at once you're doing it in a real work setting."**



Jorge Alejandro Leal Corella

Design Management G401

Worked on: AlumaPower, Otolabs, Nungia/Advencare

Can you give a brief description of the project(s) you worked on?

I've supported project management under senior leadership across multiple sustainability and design projects.

Coordinating multidisciplinary teams across design, engineering, and branding disciplines while bridging stakeholder communication across design and engineering teams.

Favourite lesson of the project?

To be able gain experience working with industry professionals, while developing my design management skills through real world projects and practical experience.

How did your experience complement what you learned in the classroom?

Yes, this experience will be helpful because it gave me practical, real world experience. It complemented what I learned in the classroom by allowing me to apply design management, problem solving, and project coordination skills to an actual project.

What advice would you have for other students getting involved in George Brown's Research & Innovation programs?

To ask questions, to keep looking for more projects and meeting new people. You never know when the next opportunity may arise.

> **"Ask questions...keep looking for more projects. You never know when the next opportunity may arise."**



Jayesh Kumar Busgeeth

Mechanical Engineering Technology – Design (T121)

Worked on: AlumaPower, Helius Originals, ELO Gaming, Ecotanks, Tesoro

Won gold twice at the Skills Ontario Competition in 2026 (Mechanical Engineering).

Can you give a brief description of the project(s) you worked on?

Since March 2025, I have worked on these projects so far: AlumaPower, to design exterior of zero-emission emergency power containers that make use of Alumapower's technology, contributing to product development and industrial design; Helius Originals, to design and prototype an automated food/drink smoker; ELO Vagabond Pro, to prototype a highly modular gaming controller for mobile phones, consoles and computers; Ecotanks (DEF Dispenser Test), involving extensive testing of a dispenser unit in cold environments, and Tesoro, the design and prototyping of a foldable wheelchair that collapses to approximately carry-on luggage size.

Favourite lesson of the project?

The importance of real-world testing. A design can look great and work perfectly in CAD, drawings, and in theory, but it's through fabrication and physical testing that you often uncover challenges you couldn't have anticipated.

How did your experience complement what you learned in the classroom?

Having early hands-on experience with designing, prototyping, and fabrication has given me a better understanding of how the design process works in a real-world environment, where decisions have real consequences in terms of time, cost, and performance.

What advice would you have for other students getting involved in George Brown's Research & Innovation programs?

A big part of these projects is learning as you go and being willing to try new things. Ask questions, get involved in the hands-on work, and don't be afraid to make mistakes. The more effort you put into the experience, the more you'll get out of it. For me, the skills and confidence I gained through these projects have been just as valuable as what I learned in the classroom.

> **"Get involved in the hands-on work, and don't be afraid to make mistakes."**



Thien Tam Pham (Trist)

Supply Chain Management B429

Worked on: Developing A Scaffold Framework to Improve Real-World Skills for Business Students Through Experiential Learning

Can you give a brief description of the project(s) you worked on?

I worked on a research project that used the Leontief Input-Output model to analyze how students, professors, colleges, government, and industry work together to support student success. I developed stakeholder relationships, built the input matrix, applied the model, and analyzed different student scenarios to see how factors affect students more or less

Favourite lesson of the project?

Learning more about different models and how they can be applied. At first, I thought the models were quite simple, but after doing the research and analysis, I found them much more interesting. I learned that each model has its own strengths and purpose, and choosing the right model depends on the situation and the type of results we want to analyze.

How did your experience complement what you learned in the classroom?

I was able to apply what I learned in class to a real project. It helped me improve my research, analytical, and problem-solving skills. More importantly, I learned that the concepts we study in class can be applied in different ways depending on the situation. This experience gave me a better understanding of how to use what I learned in a real-world context.

What advice would you have for other students getting involved in George Brown's Research & Innovation programs?

My advice would be: don't be afraid to try and just take the opportunity. You just need to be consistent, patient, and resilient, especially when you are working through something you have never done before. Most importantly, don't worry about knowing everything from the beginning.

It's great opportunity to learn beyond the classroom. You get to do real research, explore new ideas, work through problems, and see how what you learn in class can be applied to a real project. Be willing to learn, ask questions, and enjoy the process.

> **"Don't be afraid to try and just take the opportunity. You just need to be consistent, patient, and resilient."**



Cymone Walters

Honours Bachelor of Technology (Construction Management) (T312)

Entering Master of Construction Management (T550) in September 2026.

Cymone was one of the participants in the Idea Lab during the Canadian-Caribbean Tourism Resilience Symposium.

Tell us about the project you presented.

My presentation examined the effectiveness of construction safety practices and their influence on workers' awareness, behaviour, and overall job-site safety, highlighting key findings from my research and identifying gaps between established safety policies and their practical application.

Favourite lesson?

That meaningful research can extend beyond the classroom and contribute to real improvements within the construction industry. I also feel that it expanded my learning on the importance of listening to different perspectives, analyzing evidence carefully, and presenting complex findings in a way that is clear, engaging, and relevant to industry professionals.

Tell us about participating in the Ideas Lab.

I was nervous, but participating in the symposium strengthened my confidence as both a researcher and a presenter and inspired me to continue expanding this research internationally, particularly throughout the Caribbean.

As a Black woman in a predominantly male-dominated industry, this opportunity also helped me recognize the importance of using my voice, sharing my perspective, and contributing meaningfully to the future of construction.

What advice would you have for other students getting involved in George Brown's Research & Innovation programs?

Take the opportunity, even if you feel nervous or unsure of yourself. Be open to feedback, ask questions, and choose a research topic that genuinely interests you.

> **"Take the opportunity, even if you feel nervous or unsure of yourself. "**



Feature

A women-led, community banking model with **Whole Woman Network**

Whole Woman Network came to George Brown to better align its community lending program to industry best practices

Project Team

Principal Investigator: William Pourmajidi
Student researchers: Joosung Ahn, Jason Ta, Junyong Choi

WWN is poised to grow and attract new members while fulfilling its mandate of building a SUSU Solidarity Economy, Rooted in Cooperative Principles and Values.

Whole Woman Network (WWN) is a Training, Coaching and Consulting Social Enterprise and Cooperative focused on delivering experiential Leadership, Entrepreneurial and Financial Literacy Programs to vulnerable, under-served Canadian Women and vulnerable Youth, with a special focus on BIIPOC demographic (Black, Immigrant, Indigenous, People of Colour and other under-represented groups).

WWN is the first women-led, SUSU (informal loan club)/Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA)/Accumulating Savings and Credit Association (ASCA)-based, community banking model in Canada, for under-resourced groups facing systemic barriers in accessing capital. Having grown from an informal networking collective to an established for-profit social enterprise, Whole Woman Network came to George Brown to better align its community lending program to industry best practices. Currently, its educational modules use a pre-existing Learning Management System (LMS) and its program relies on manual peer-to-peer lending and group-savings (i.e., a 'SUSU' loans club). This fragmented approach limits scalability, transparency, and automation, creating bottlenecks for both administrators and users. By centralizing authentication—that is, the process that users go through to access their digital systems—WWN would have better administrative oversight and room to grow.

After consulting with WWN to understand their needs and goals in creating a new website, the research team, led by Principal Investigator William Pourmajidi created wireframes, data-flow diagrams, static website templates, and migrated existing copy/content. The main challenge lay in developing the core authentication & backend, which involves developing a central user database and implementation of security features such as: sign up, password-based authentication, password reset, and multi-factor authentication, as well as integration hooks for future features. As well, the team developed a Member Dashboard Prototype, designed with modular widgets that can house future features.

The end result: a new, modern website which includes the implementation of crucial authentication features such as secure logins, password reset, multi-account support, session management, and email-based multi-factor authorization. With the creation of dashboard, WWN can display key metrics and platform activity to members.

This work was supported by thorough documentation, allowing the site to grow as future developers can carry on the work of maintaining and adding to the website as required. With better administrative oversight, a plan for digitization growth, and enhanced efficiency and user trust, WWN is poised to grow and attract new members while fulfilling its mandate of building a SUSU Solidarity Economy, Rooted in Cooperative Principles and Values.



Profile

Juliet Kego Ume-Onyido

Co-founder, Whole Woman Network

“Why not build something that puts people first?”

-Juliet Kego Ume-Onyido

Tell us a bit about the Whole Woman Network.

Whole Woman Network is a social enterprise and cooperative based in Richmond Hill. What we do is community-based finance - we use Afro-Indigenous frameworks to build culturally relevant financial literacy, peer-to-peer lending and cooperative education. The platform really decolonizes finance and makes it more accessible for people, especially BIPOC, new immigrant communities, newcomers, and other underrepresented and under-resourced groups to be economically independent and financially included.

WWN describes itself as being the first SUSU / ROSCA / ASCA-based community banking model in Canada for under-resourced groups facing barriers to accessing capital. What is that?

The SUSU is really a model of informal cooperative banking, lending and savings program. In academic terms it’s called ROSCA – rotating savings and credit associations – where a group of people, based on trust, a sense of community, and social cohesion come

together to contribute funds and lend to one another without interest.

So what we have done is we've iterated on the traditional ROSCA or SUSU model. It's common across different cultures. It originated from West Africa, but you find it in India, in China, Latin America, all across the world. What we did was we took this traditional model and said, "how can we use this to create wealth that's sustainable and that's structured?"

Because you really can't build wealth from just saving, you also have to invest. So, teaching people financial literacy in a language that they understand, in ways that are relatable and culturally relevant to them. What we've done is we've created a peer-to-peer lending model - a community-based investing framework where people can invest collectively in different asset classes and have the reporting, the regulatory and legal oversights, to scale this across different communities.

How did your partnership with George Brown came about? What kind of problem you were looking to solve?

The key problem was, okay, we've identified the market and they're there - they're coming to us - but we quickly found out you can't do a lot of things through emails and WhatsApp and text messages and e-mail transfers. So, the demand outstripped our capacity. We also have a capital problem because of the demand: we found a whole new market where people were actually defaulting to extracting loans with high interest, and then they get caught up in a cycle. So that need for financial literacy paired with practical capital that pulled people out of poverty was just so glaring.

The Center for Local Innovation and Collaboration, [took us on as a] cohort in 2024, then paired us with OCAD University to do a research piece.

[CLIC] said … we could go pitch to all these institutions and see if anyone was interested in us, in the project. So, we were able to do that pitch to Seneca, OCAD, George Brown.

But the George Brown team stood out for us.

Why did you choose George Brown?

First of all, Dr. William was very familiar with the SUSU model, and he understood community finance and the needs we were trying to address. The team was very representative in terms of the members: international students, diverse backgrounds, and local students too.

When they started working on [our website], we explained our vision, and somehow, they were able to take all the scattered dreams we had and come back to us with something very concise.

It was very clear in terms of product market fit, how to just create a website that would show our MVP, our offering, and a clear path on who we're serving, distinct customer segments.

So together, you built a custom website that catered to the needs of your clients and where they were.

The whole project was a membership platform and also a learning management system, and also a savings and peer-to-peer learning and investing portal. It was also very accessible. That was very important to us because of the demographic that we serve.

So, they created something that we're able to hand over the project to another group of developers for [next steps]: the automation, the peer-to-peer lending, the group investing, the financial literacy.

So, it's multiple things, but all centered around community… How do you give people the tools to transform their lives, giving them the agency? To build models that work for them? And we're really very excited and very happy at the outcome. It really exceeded our expectations, and we're looking forward to the launch, hopefully in the new year.

It's really the first time that a SUSU-based alternative banking and financial literacy model is being scaled to this extent.



Program Spotlight

Empowering Innovation through Strategic IP Support

Intellectual Property & Commercialization Services

With funding from Intellectual Property Ontario (IPON) and the support of our growing network of partners and experts, George Brown offers tailored services that accelerate the commercialization journey. Eligible projects may receive funding support for activities like audits, patent filings, and registration.

With approximately $104,000, George Brown supported 10 innovative Ontario companies in identifying and protecting their valuable intellectual property, while also delivering specialized IP workshops and knowledge sessions to strengthen their capacity for long-term innovation and commercialization.

This strategic support was directed towards bolstering innovation within key sectors crucial to Ontario's economic growth, including leading-edge developments in Health and Med Tech, transformative applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across various fields, and developments in Advanced Manufacturing.

Selected Clients

With a mission to teach, learn, and preserve over 2,000 African and Indigenous languages, this Black-owned language learning platform is a leader in language revitalization and community building. Yekola prioritizes social connection within the learning process, making the journey towards fluency a shared experience.

As a previous recipient of IPON funding, Yekola has made incredible strides towards protecting and scaling their intellectual property. With an additional $15,000 in funding this year, Yekola will be able to further expand their outreach and protection, helping African and Indigenous languages to thrive.

The Black Entrepreneurship Alliance is a Black-led initiative with a goal to amplify and advance the work of Black entrepreneurs and professionals. As a non-profit incubator, they provide space for innovation without compromise, and community-building through shared experience.

As a recipient of $6,000 in IPON funding, the BEA is working towards IP protection, allowing them to continue providing unique and tailored support to their community of Black entrepreneurs.

Eco System Informatics harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to monitor, sense, and analyze emissions and air quality. Their systems provide high-level analytics on the detection and identification of events, sources, and patterns that impact air quality. These actionable insights can then be used to promote immediate operational changes, as well as long-term public health planning.

Eco System Informatics had existing patents but connected with George Brown in 2025 as they wanted to further protect their intellectual property (IP). With $8,195 in IPON support, Eco System Informatics filed for another patent and continues their admirable work towards improved air quality for all.



Program Spotlight

Building interconnected partnerships with institutions, industry and community

Mitacs Research Internships

In 2022, George Brown became the first college in Canada to receive a Mitacs-Accelerate Umbrella award. Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization that provides support and funding to foster collaboration and innovation.

Mitacs-Accelerate supports collaborative research between for-profit or approved non-profit organizations, interns, and faculty supervisors at Canadian postsecondary institutions.

Under the Mitacs program, George Brown offers targeted research and innovation support to local industry and community partners, rapidly increasing their capacity across a range of areas including in product design, product and process development, product and operations digitalization, and production scale-up.

This program is open to:

- Businesses and approved not-for-profit organizations operating in Canada, including select Crown corporations and student-led start-ups
- For-profit businesses outside of Canada
- All sectors and academic disciplines
- Interns: students at colleges and polytechnics, and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows at universities

By the Numbers | The Mitacs Program

$2,085,000

36
Projects

27
Partners

139
Internships

Metrics representing the time period of January 1, 2026 to December 1, 2026









Program Spotlight

Your gateway to entrepreneurship at George Brown

Entrepreneurship services

Whether you are a current student or an alumnus, startGBC is the gateway to entrepreneurship at George Brown Polytechnic. startGBC is a physical and virtual hub that connects students, alumni and the community with resources, programs and support. Their goal is to foster a culture of entrepreneurship on campus and beyond.

By the Numbers | The startGBC Program

In 2025/26, startGBC supported

1,816
students

92
targeted events

496
hours of coaching



ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

Jex Paisley

Founder & Executive Chef,
Transcend by Jex Catering

George Brown The Chef School,
Culinary Management 2010

Chef Jex Paisley grew up in Jamaica with a simple, unshakeable belief: that food is the most powerful language on earth. It transcends borders, bridges cultures, and transforms a meal into a memory.

That belief became his calling - and it has taken him around the world. After formal culinary training, Chef Jex spent two decades honing his craft across four continents. He has cooked in five-star luxury resorts and aboard exclusive cruise lines. He has presided over the fairways of championship golf clubs and catered the most intimate celebrity gatherings. He has orchestrated grand events for over 800 guests and sat quietly with seniors, crafting menus that nourish not just the body but the spirit.

Transcend by Jex Catering provides catering services for private, corporate, and special events, as well as providing Caribbean fusion chef-inspired meal prep services.

What made you want to become an entrepreneur?
I was raised to think independently, be creative and use my skills to create room for opportunities.

Why did you create your business?
After working for over two decades and learning from a wide range of chefs, I wanted to share my experience with my clients and their guests at each event and create memorable experiences.

What successes have you enjoyed so far with building your company?
Watching a thought manifest into reality, hearing how it has improved customers' lives, and developing the future leaders on my team.

> "Find your passion, seek mentorship and stay focused as you build."



Remembering

Karen Sinotte

Researcher and Faculty, George Brown Polytechnic
1962-2025

We want to recognize and remember Karen Sinotte, George Brown researcher, faculty member, mentor and community builder, who died last November. Karen's career bridged technology, education and public service. Over more than three decades she brought deep expertise in data-driven business strategy and analytics, building enterprise data systems and leading research and analytics teams with rigor and imagination.

Karen combined industry experience with a commitment to applied learning and innovation, with work that consistently focused on how technology could improve access, engagement, and decision-making for organizations and communities. One of her most significant research initiatives was her partnership with the Ontario Museum Association to help guide Ontario's museums through digital transformation.

Karen approached innovation with humanity at the centre. She saw research not as an abstract exercise, but as a way to expand inclusion, strengthen institutions, and create meaningful public experiences. The three-year museum digitalization project she led reflected that vision and continues to influence conversations about the future of cultural organizations in Ontario. She brought together people from different disciplines and sectors, encouraged collaboration, and created opportunities for students, researchers, and community partners.`

While her passing last year is a profound loss, Karen's contributions continue to resonate through the students she taught, the colleagues she mentored, the research she advanced, and the communities she helped shape. We honour her memory with gratitude.



Our team

Ryan Billinger
Senior Manager, Mitacs Programs

Courtney Brooke Barr
Events, Workshop Facilitator and Digital Communications Coordinator, startGBC

Jillian Butler
Knowledge Transfer & Communications Specialist

Lorenza Carandang
Finance and Admin Coordinator, FIRSt

Daniel Caunter
Manager, Industry Liaison & Business Development

Garrett Chow
Research Program Coordinator

Nuvdeep Dhaliwal
Program Manager

Rosalina Declaro
Manager, Research Budget, Reporting & Asset Management

Ana Cristina Gigli
Program Manager

Heather Evans
Research Facilitator

Dr. Alexandra Hernandez
Program Manager

Dr. Krista Holmes
Associate Vice-President, Research & Innovation

Erin Jones
Information Architect

Arbab Khan
Manager, Industry Liaison & Business Development

Michelle Kienitz Henderson
Manager, Business Development & Industry Liaison

Vjola Konomi
Program Manager

Alexis Lau
Research Resource Coordinator

Neal Lilliott
Manager, startGBC

Baaba Lewis
Administrative Assistant

James Matsuoka
Research Project Coordinator

Michael Nguyen
Video Editor

Candace Mascarenhas
Lab Operations Manager

Tolu Olutunfese
Lead Food Scientist

Andrea Orazi
IP Commercialization Manager

Jahangir Qureshi
Research Partnerships Coordinator

Syeda Munzareen Rahman
Research Project Officer

Dr. Syed Naveed Rizvi
Lead Fabric Scientist

Caroline Rebello
Food Science Technologist

Dan Reilly
Director, FIRSt

Aurda Siddequa
Project Assistant

Kajani Sivasunthararasa
Research Operations, Finance, and Reporting Specialist

Yuchen Sun
Director, Research Programs

Walid Surve
Research Partnerships Coordinator

Victoria Trang
Interim Manager, Research Budget and Operations

Morgan Watts
Program Manager

Andrew Wright
Associate Producer and Post-Production Support

** course-based project*

Our partners

11463578 Canada Inc. (operating as Choose Life Foods)

3M *

3Shape *

AiDeal Technology

Algonquins of Greater Golden Lake First Nation

Algonquins of Ontario Consultation Office

Align *

Aliments Faita-Forgione (9355-9466 Quebec Inc.)

Alnoor's Fine Foods Ltd.

AlumaPower Corporation

Artha Learning

AXIBO Inc.

Bellwoods Centres for Community Living Inc.

Bizbridge.io

Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA)

Borrelli Crafters *

Brigid's Better Beverages Inc.

CAA (Canadian Automobile Association)

Centre Court (Pickering Town Centre) *

Centre for Connected Communities

Cherry Street Bar-B-Que (2472407 Ontario Inc.)

Children's Safety Village*

Commercial Xclusive

Communal Lunch Project *

Concordia Food Coalition

Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit, City of Toronto

Couth Studios

Crew Scope

CrucialLogics Inc.

Deep River Public Library

Devant Group

Digital Fire

Dript Gourmet

EcoTank Holdings Inc.

EdgeTech Developments Inc. (Axiom Group Inc.)

ELO Gaming Limited

Famous People Players *

Fenix Alma Solutions Inc.

Fibra Inc.

Fizzylyte Beverages Inc.

Food Secure Canada

Form Era Studio Ltd.

Get-Tech Innovative Solutions

Global DWS

GTAA (Greater Toronto Airports Authority)

H2CS Hydro Cool Systems Ltd.

Headache Sciences Inc.

Helius Originals

** course-based project*

Henry Schein *

Holland-Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital *

HotTakes Technologies Inc.

Infinite Harvest Technologies Inc.

INTOCHARGE

Juici Nutrition Inc.

kiloBryte Inc.

Kinectrics Inc.

Kiro and Bob

MAKE Digital Inc.

marketcityTO *

McMaster University *

Meaford Museum

Minimally Invasive Heart *

MLD Solutions Inc.

Montage Support Services

MS Falcon

newkid worldwide corp.

Noah Controls Inc.

NOIT International

Novus Tech Group

Ontario Power Generation (OPG)

Perfect Herbs Inc.

Protein Pack NG Incorporated

Reid's Distillery *

Rolph, Buchanan, Wylie and McKay Historical Society

S-Qubed Entertainment Inc.

Scispot.io Inc.

Sebastian Knox Woodwind Services

Smoovees

SNAP *

So Yumi

Sustain Ontario

SWAP Hamilton

The Crunch Club

The Grass Roots Kitchen Inc.

The Jester's Emporium *

Think! Wireless Solutions

Town of Deep River

Treehugger Naturals Inc.

Turolight Inc.

Unmodal

Upgraded Technologies Inc

Uprise Ascend

Uprise Impact Inc.

VCycene Inc.

Whole Woman Network

Wingmate

XpertVR *



About this report

This document features some of the many George Brown Office of Research & Innovation activities that took place in 2025 and 2026. We would love your feedback!

Email us at research@georgebrown.ca

Learn more at georgebrown.ca/research

Credits & Acknowledgments

Content, Editing & Design: Jillian Butler

Metric Collection and Distribution: Erin Jones

Transcription & Interviews: James Matsuoka

Photo Credits: Scott Murdoch, Gage Fletcher, Michael Nguyen, Jillian Butler

About George Brown Polytechnic

George Brown Polytechnic equips graduates with the career-ready skills and real-world experience to thrive in today's dynamic job market. With three campuses in downtown Toronto, we blend academic excellence with hands-on learning. Our students sharpen their skills in simulated work environments like The Chefs' House and WAVE Clinics, engage with 5,000+ industry partners through experiential learning and research, and access global opportunities across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. George Brown offers more than 200 career-focused programs, including degrees, diplomas and certificates, along with 175 continuing education certificates and designations. Each year, we welcome nearly 30,000 full-time students and receive more than 63,000 continuing education registrations.

Learn more at georgebrown.ca

georgebrown.ca/research **x.com/GBCResearch** **youtube.com/ResearchGBP**

Office of Research & Innovation

George Brown Polytechnic | Toronto, Ontario | 185 Queens Quay East

research@georgebrown.ca | georgebrown.ca/research