

MOBILIZE FOR IMPACT!

Western Research Strategic Plan :: 2022-2027

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Western
Research

INTRODUCING ***MOBILIZE FOR IMPACT!***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEVELOPING *MOBILIZE FOR IMPACT!*

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

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

Throughout this process, we worked closely with the research, scholarship, and creative activity theme group of the university's strategic planning steering committee to share findings and gain additional insight from consultations with students, alumni, government, industry, and community organizations. Overall, the strategic planning steering committee received more than 3,700 inputs.

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

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

HAVING GREATER IMPACT

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

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

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

These contributions advance the public good.

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

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

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

ABOUT US

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

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

These supports begin at the idea stage.

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

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

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

We look forward to working with you.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

CATALYZE RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

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

ADVANCE EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND DECOLONIZATION

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

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.

BALANCE RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

STRATEGIC GOALS

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

ENHANCE RESEARCH SUPPORT

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

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

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

Strategies to enhance research support include:

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

STRATEGIC GOALS

FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

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

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

Strategies to foster relationships include:

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

STRATEGIC GOALS

CONNECT OUR WORK TO THE WORLD

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

Strategies to connect our work to the world include:

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

STRATEGIC GOALS

TACKLE THE GRAND CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

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

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

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

Strategies to tackle the grand challenges of our time include:

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

Western Research is here to support you.

Together, we can mobilize for impact.