

## Lakehead University's approach to Research and Innovation and the Annual Commercialization Plan

Lakehead University takes a strategic and specific approach towards research and innovation activities, guided primarily through its [Strategic Plan](#) and [Research Plan](#). One of the main initiatives within the Lakehead University Research Plan is "Supporting Innovation," as Lakehead strives to be a leader in innovation in Northwestern Ontario and Simcoe County. This is accomplished through the cultivation of local and global partnerships, providing research and innovation services, and supporting entrepreneurship and talent development. Each of these strategies are explored throughout the Annual Commercialization Plan, with the intention of showing how Lakehead sees itself within the research and innovation cycle, and where we can continue to grow in each of these areas.

As a guiding principle, Lakehead University is committed to serving the region, Ontario and Canada in terms of economic development, innovation and partnerships. Lakehead proactively engages and pursues partnerships with industry that align with the universities and the partnership organizations strengths and objectives. These initiatives are coordinated and supported by the *Office of Innovation, Partnerships and Economic Development* (IPED), which assists industry throughout the partnership process, including finding the right expertise and research facilities within the University, advising on leveraged-funding opportunities and providing guidance on relevant University partnership policies. One of Lakehead's Strategic Plan's themes is *Local and Global Partnerships*, with an objective to actively engage and partner with local and global communities, industry and other academic and research institutions. The goals of this theme include: increasing the number of research partnerships; developing long-term, sustainable relationships with small and medium enterprises through a focused and proactive engagement approach; and strengthening partnerships with local chambers of commerce, industry and community. IPED, along with other departments and faculty members within the University, actively reaches out to industry to build and sustain relationships. The main ways in which Lakehead currently engages with regional, Ontario-based and Canadian companies include: participating in industry and innovation networks to expand industry connections; being an active member in a number of industry-based groups; and providing expertise and analytical services to serve industry needs. In addition, developing global perspectives through ongoing internationalization of Lakehead's campuses, curricula, and increased experiential learning opportunities across disciplines has emerged as a central tenet of Lakehead's Strategic and Academic Plans. Our researchers are proud to be part of a global network of collaborators, and we currently have over 100 memoranda of understanding and agreements with institutions from approximately 30 countries to support research collaborations and student exchanges. Lakehead is committed to enhancing our international research reputation and understanding of global challenges through increased engagement with international partners, and by building and expanding our network of international research relationships. We will continue to maximize opportunities for our researchers to be engaged in international networks and funding programs, and our graduate students will have increased opportunities for international training. Lakehead will raise the global profile of our research activity and expertise by developing informed research strategies and opportunities with our international partners.

Lakehead's commitment to utilizing research and innovation intermediaries, as well as the resources now available at IPON, will continue to be an important priority and asset moving forward. Over the next year, Lakehead will work to ensure that our university communities are made aware of the resources available through IPON, through the use of our electronic Research and Innovation Bulletin, as well as through our website. We will also use a targeted approach to faculty members who are interested in entrepreneurship, who may be eligible to apply for IPON programming. In addition, IPED will continue to collaborate with the Regional Innovation Centre, the Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre, by partnering on events, sharing resources and clients, and holding an Executive seat on their Board.

*Ingenuity*, Lakehead's business incubator, fosters a thriving community of entrepreneurial thinkers, resulting in new businesses and jobs for people in our region. Through *Ingenuity*, students have the infrastructure and resources they need to take their ideas from ideation to innovation. Supporting Innovation also means increasing partnerships with industries in support of research and training. Lakehead facilitates social entrepreneurship and social innovation initiatives that will benefit and lead to positive social and environmental changes in communities. Lakehead is an active member in innovation clusters in Northwestern Ontario and Simcoe County that drive economic growth. We partner with Indigenous communities to support culturally appropriate innovation and economic development, and work with local partners to help develop economic opportunities that enable international students to remain in our communities after graduation. *Ingenuity* plans to continue to strengthen its relationships with all of its Community Partners, in order to best serve its entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Ingenuity's* eight Community Partners all work in collaboration with each other in order to generate a culture of client sharing, resource sharing, event collaboration and shared marketing. The more we utilize all of the resources within our regions, the better we serve our entrepreneurs, and the stronger the ecosystem becomes.

In an effort to show Lakehead's commitment to economic development, IPED has been pursuing the *Innovation & Economic Prosperity Designation* through the University Economic Development Association (UEDA). Lakehead has been working toward this designation for four years and ensuring its success will help implement goals and objectives related to the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems. One of the goals would help strengthen the communication strategy for Research and Innovation at the institution, and would directly enhance collaborations with industry, funders and partners. The second goal would help strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem and support talent development. The final goal directly relates to strengthening industry relations and ensuring that the institutional programming and education is aligned with the goals and needs of industry.

Lakehead champions innovative learning and research experiences through partnership development that help promote strong employment outcomes. Lakehead serves a unique role in our surrounding regions and is committed to making a difference in our communities through innovation that collaboratively develops understandings of social issues and inspires action for positive change. Our Commercialization Policy serves to strengthen this initiative and move our community forward in positive and prosperous ways.