

Project Based Learning Annual Report

Land Acknowledgement

Western is located on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Peoples connected through four pre-confederation treaties: the London Township Treaty (Treaty 6), Longwoods Treaty (Treaty 21), Sombra Township Treaty (Treaty 7), McKee Purchase (Treaty 2), and the Dish With One Spoon Covenant Wampum. There is also a substantial amount of unceded land in the area we now call Southwestern Ontario. In the work that we do, we partner with communities within and beyond this area, and support students in engaging in experiential learning globally. We encourage students, faculty, and partners to research and understand the lands where they engage in experiences.

As an Experiential Learning team, we commit to working to dismantle colonialism by developing and honoring long-standing relationships with Indigenous community partners. We recognize that, historically, when universities have engaged with Indigenous communities for scholarly work, the process has been extractive and exploitative. We aim to support the disruption of the colonial relationship between Indigenous communities and our institution by focusing our work on partnerships and projects that are community-led and that prioritize reciprocity.

We commit to fostering a culture of inclusion for students in experiential learning, including taking action to remove systemic barriers that prevent or limit Indigenous students' engagement. We will create safe and positive experiences for Indigenous students by recognizing and respecting their diverse identities, cultures, languages, learning styles, and perspectives, as well as centering their interests and needs. We will support students in growing their understanding and appreciation of Indigenous communities through experiential learning, and by engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Introduction

Through Community Engaged Learning (CEL) courses and co-curricular programs, students partner with nonprofit organizations in the London region and beyond on projects that address societal issues. Additionally, students enrolled in Industry Project courses partner with small- to medium-sized businesses in the London region on existing challenges to help affect organizational change. Project Based Learning (PBL) allows students to engage in integrating disciplinary knowledge, reflective practice, and actionable outcomes through projects identified by partnering organizations, contributing to the economic and civic prosperity of their community. Last year, in the first annual PBL report, we reported on data from September 2024 to August 2025. To better align with reporting cycles across Western Student Experience, our reporting cycle is now May to April of each year.

This year, 5,765 Western students participated in Project Based Learning. They engaged in 1,975 projects and events developed across 207 partnerships from 113 organizations, both on and off campus. Most activities took place in person throughout the London area, with the incorporation of hybrid formats for accessibility and efficiency, and for extending student opportunities and Western's impact provincially and nationally. This flexible approach allowed our partners to choose which option worked best for them, whether out in the city, on campus, or online. Students and partners collaborated on semester and year-long projects that produced mutually beneficial outcomes and made a positive impact in London and beyond.

We are so grateful for our community and industry partners' support, enthusiasm, and dedication in mentoring our students and contributing to the next generation of leaders in London.

Community Partner Voices

"What speaks volumes is that some of the students continue to be involved with our volunteer work trying to make the world a better place for people with disabilities and their families. Having political science, Ivey, computer science, medical science students and others, have truly expanded our horizons.

It's been a total win, win. We look forward to continued collaboration."

Hubert Van Niekerk | *Every Canadian Counts*

Curricular CEL

Curricular CEL involves students collaborating on a project, or fulfilling a placement, developed collaboratively with a community partner to create mutually beneficial outcomes that align with course content. Students earn course credit while advancing the missions and goals of nonprofit organizations and social enterprises. This hands-on, practical experience in the community enables students to gain a deeper understanding of course content as it applies to local and global contexts.

CEL courses: 32 across 10 faculties

Projects: 1,925

Students: 3,141

Partnerships: 152

Hours of engagement: 56,870

Select 2025-26 Project Highlights

- In partnership with a residential treatment facility, students performed an in-depth evaluation to identify gaps in the continuity of care for addiction treatment and proposed recommendations to address these gaps.
Westover Treatment Centre | *Addictions: Theory and Research*
- To support fundraising initiatives, students researched and identified prospective organizations for outreach and developed sponsorship materials highlighting key programs to advance organizational growth.
Science Rendezvous | *Seminar in Biology*
- Students designed and facilitated weekly programs to support newcomer youth engage with music programs by creating accessible opportunities for them to explore music, develop new skills, and express themselves creatively.
YMCA of Southwestern Ontario | *Music Education in Community*
- By developing a strategic marketing plan, students helped build awareness of municipal recreational offerings and communicate and promote available programs, facilities, and opportunities for residents.
Municipality of Middlesex Centre | *Advanced Marketing Strategy*

Ongoing Initiatives

ImpactLab London

Following a successful pilot last year, ImpactLab London has continued to expand within the CEL portfolio. Students from select courses at Western University, Huron University, King's University College, and Fanshawe College gained insight into municipal processes, while contributing to local solutions by researching and proposing recommendations to the City. Students also explored diverse career pathways and developed practical, future-ready skills.

This year, students collaborated with the City of London on projects that align with current priorities. In the Fall, students co-created projects around the theme of *Shaping London's Competitive Edge*; and in the Winter, students co-created projects around the theme of *Strategic Growth Opportunities*. Student groups from each course shared midpoint progress updates with each other, fostering a cross-institutional and multidisciplinary feedback and insight exchange. Final outcomes were presented at Huron University's Centre for Undergraduate Research Learning conference in April, with projects collated into public reports on the [ImpactLab website](#).

At Western, 125 undergraduate students in the Social Science course *Public Administration* participated during the Fall term, while 27 graduate students in the *Local Economic Development Public Administration* course participated during the Winter term.

Innovation Works

The PBL team has maintained their on-site space at Innovation Works, where they are co-tenant members. It is a unique gathering space for us to meet as a team and with community members for collaborative events where we can share ideas, best practices, and experiences. We are very fortunate and appreciative to have Innovation Works and the Pillar Nonprofit Network as longstanding partners. y fortunate and appreciative to have Innovation Works and the Pillar Nonprofit Network as longstanding partners.

Western Awards for Excellence in Teaching

The PBL team is proud to share that three faculty members in the CEL portfolio were recognized for their excellence in teaching. Dr. Christina Booker, Dr. Denise Grafton, and Dr. Tara Mantler received awards in honour of their outstanding contributions to students' academic development, including mentorship and collaboration, innovative pedagogy, and deep commitment to education. They connect scholarship with public impact, enhancing student learning, while creating positive change in the community.

Community Partner Voices

"A huge thank you to you and your team for making OServes 2025 such an inspiring day. The STEM & Service Lab was a definite success, and it was wonderful to see first-year students connecting with STEM, teamwork, and community service right from the start of their Western journey."

Jeff Shen | Ontario Centre for Talent Development

"Thanks so much for another opportunity to work with your incredible incoming students. We were swamped with eager volunteers and successfully completed 16 cornhole boards which were painstakingly hand-painted. Boards will be donated to worthy non-profits serving youth around the community, as per our agreement."

David Vine | STEM2STERN

Co-Curricular CEL

Orientation Serves

As a part of Orientation Week, the CEL team collaborated with 11 community organizations to host the 9th annual Orientation Serves (OServes) event on Tuesday, September 2, 2025. Over 1,700 first-year students participated in volunteer activities that fostered their connection to the local community and facilitated meaningful relationships through collaborative short-term projects. This year, we expanded the program and hosted morning and afternoon sessions, enhancing student engagement. Participating in volunteer work during their first week at the university allowed students to establish a sense of belonging and recognize the significance of community involvement. We extend our gratitude to the exceptional organizations that

provided these enriching experiences, and to the more than 400 Orientation Volunteer Leaders (Sophs) for their excellent leadership during the event.

Partners: 11

Students: 1,734

Activities: 21

Hours of engagement: 4,335

Volunteer Fair

On October 14, our Volunteer Fair connected 28 community partners with over 300 students. This event highlighted the variety of volunteer opportunities available to students in the London region. A wide range of community partners showcased the unique volunteer opportunities at their organizations and provided education about their organizations' dedication to advancing positive social change. We would like to thank our community partners for not only enhancing the experiences of our students, but also for their contributions to community development.

Partners: 28

Students: 325

Western Serves Network

The main purpose of the Western Serves Network (WSN) is to connect over 1,500 passionate Western students with nonprofit organizations in the broader London community. In doing so, the WSN promotes an awareness of community needs and issues while emphasizing the practical importance of co-curricular experiential learning. Through the WSN newsletter, 11 volunteer opportunities in London and the surrounding area were showcased.

This past year, we introduced a new [online intake form](#) that allows community partners to easily submit volunteer opportunities for student engagement. This centralized process has improved clarity, consistency, and efficiency in how opportunities are shared, helping us better understand partner needs and more effectively connect students with meaningful community-based experiences. We are grateful for the valuable opportunities our partners continue to provide and look forward to building on this improved process together.

Students in Network: 1,508

Volunteer opportunities showcased: 11

Community Engagement Student Leadership

Our Community Engagement Student Coordinator is a student leader who assists with planning and executing Orientation Serves. They work closely with the CEL team to design, promote, research, and support year-long co-curricular CEL programming. We would like to thank this summer's Community Engagement Coordinator, Kate Radcliffe, for her leadership and contributions to fostering community engagement during her term.

Community Engaged Learning Partners

Thank you to our community partners, new and returning! Your mentorship, expertise, and enthusiasm are greatly appreciated. The incredible learning opportunities that we provide students would not be possible without your partnership and dedication. Partnering organizations are listed below, and those in **bold** partnered with more than one course, project, or event throughout the year.

519Pursuit

Agricom

Alex Urquiola Provincial Library

Alzheimer Society Southwest Partners

Anatomy and Cell Biology Cadaveric Anatomy Executive

Ark Aid Street Mission

Artist Anthony

Black Student Association, Western University

Calixto García Primary School

Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory Inc.

Canadian Cancer Society

Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging

Canadian Federation of University Women

Canadian Health Information Management Association (CHIMA)

Canadian Physiology Educators

Canadian Metal Health Association, Thames Valley

Capital Regional District, Environmental Protection Group

Carepoint Consumption and Treatment Service, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

Centre of Hope, Salvation Army

Changing Ways

Cheshire Independent Living Services

Childcan

Childlife Network International

Children's Health Research Institute

Community Living London

Computer Science, Western University

Crafting for a Cure

Dale Brain Injury Services

Dream Team, Western University

El Sistema Aeolian

Elgin Ontario Health Team

Epic Recovery

Every Canadian Counts

Faculty of Health Sciences, Western University (Storyhouse)

Families First

Gamespeed Data

Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario

GLOCAL

Housing Stability

Hutton House

Ignite Youth Centre

Ingersoll Services for Seniors

Kids Kicking Cancer

L'Arche London

La Edad de Oro Primary School

Learning Disabilities Association of London Region

Let's Talk Science

Lifespın

Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada

London Beefeaters Football Club

London Camera Club

London Children's Museum

London District Catholic School Board

London Health Sciences Centre

London Pro Musica Choir

London Village, Salvation Army

Louise Arbour French Immersion Public School

Love First International

Lucan Optimist Club

Mario Sánchez Vives Seniors' Home

Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre

Mission Services of London, Quintin Warner House

Motionball

Municipality of Middlesex Centre

Nokee Kwe

Ontario Centre for Talent Development

Ontario Institute for Cancer Research

Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists

PHSS Medical and Complex Care in the Community

Public Health Ontario

Quiet Communities

Recovery Addiction Awareness Day, Western University

CEL Resources

Faculty Community of Practice

To support the work of CEL faculty, the CEL team fosters a Faculty Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP connects throughout the year to discuss challenges and successes, share CEL resources, and explore themes related to CEL pedagogies, best practice, and learning outcomes.

Western University Open Repository

Students enrolled in CEL courses have the option to submit their final deliverables for publication on Western Library's open access repository. This platform freely disseminates scholarly works by members of Western's community, featuring students' articles, presentations, and reports from courses across all faculties on campus. The repository provides increased visibility of the valuable contributions that students made to our partnering organizations, the important work that our partners engage in, and possible achievements for future partnerships and projects.

Curricular CEL Faculty

The following is a list of the instructors who taught CEL courses in the 2025-2026 academic year, with their course titles.

We would like to express our thanks to the faculty members who integrated CEL into their teaching, creating opportunities for students to apply their learning and contribute to the important work of our community partners.

Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Dr. Barb Bruce – Arts & Humanities 4490X: Experiential Learning in the Arts & Humanities
Dr. Ana García-Allén – Spanish 1030: Beginner Spanish; Spanish 2200: Intermediate Spanish;
Spanish 3300: Advanced Spanish

Ivey Business School

Dr. Diane-Laure Arjaliès – Business 4620: Business Impact Assessment

Continuing Studies

Janis Wallace – Marketing 6013: Advanced Marketing Strategy

Faculty of Engineering

Dr. John Makaran – Mechanical & Materials Engineering 4499: Mechanical Engineering Design Project**

Faculty of Health Sciences

Dr. Tara Mantler – Health Sciences 2700A: Health Issues in Childhood and Adolescents
Dr. Denise Grafton – Health Sciences 3240B: Environmental Health Promotion
Dr. Anita Cramp – Health Sciences 4205: Health Promotion in Practice

Dr. Carri Hand – Occupational Therapy 9652: Engaging in Occupation: Community and Population Level Practice

Faculty of Health Sciences & Faculty of Information & Media Studies

Dr. Katelyn Esmonde – Health Sciences & Information and Media Studies 9100: Knowledge Synthesis*

Faculty of Information and Media Studies

Jeremy Copeland – Master of Media in Journalism and Communication 9503: Shoot for the Heart – Harnessing the Power of Video Storytelling

Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry

Rayyan Kamal – Biochemistry 4955E: Community Engaged Learning and Research Skills in Translational Cancer Biology

Dr. Sarah McLean – Medical Sciences 4995E: Community Engaged Learning and Research Skills in Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences

Dr. Nicole Campbell – Medical Sciences 9603: Community Engaged Learning Rotation

Don Wright Faculty of Music

Dr. Laura Curtis – Music 3812B: Music Education in Community

Faculty of Science

Dr. Graeme Taylor – Biology 4920F/G: Seminar in Biology

Laura Reid & Bryan Sarlo – Computer Science 1033A/B: Multimedia and Communication

Dr. Christina Booker & Kristen Zinger – Integrated Science 3002A: Science in Your Community

Faculty of Social Science

Ajit Unnithan & Abbas Alimorad – Management and Organizational Studies 9331: Applied Project Management

Ajit Unnithan – Master of Data Analytics 9950 & Master of Management of Applied Science 9950: Community Engaged Learning Experiential Learning Opportunity*

Dr. Dan Bousfield – Political Science 3201G: International Law; Political Science 3210F: Canada-US Relations; Political Science 3510G: Decolonizing Politics; Political Science 3390: Politics of AI

Dr. Riley Hinson – Psychology 4873E: Addictions: Theory and Research

Multidisciplinary

Associate Deans – Scholar's Electives Capstone 4400Y: Scholar's Electives Capstone

*New course

**Hybrid CEL-INP course

Community Partner Voices

“As an organization dedicated to supporting people with disabilities, the Community Engaged Learning program and its students have played a vital role in our growth and ability to serve our

participants. Through the dedication of the students, staff, and supportive professors, we have seen what a strong, meaningful community partnership can achieve. The innovation and creativity demonstrated through Community Engaged Learning projects have brought fresh perspectives and impactful ideas, further strengthening our ability to serve our community.”
Joe Gansevles | Hutton House

Student Voices

“This experience has taught me more about the importance of inclusion and diversity within [the] community of Western University. I am now more aware of my responsibility as a student to have an open mind and be willing to collaborate with others.”

Student Participant | *Orientation Serves*

“This experience has taught me that there are so many opportunities for me as a student to give back to the community. I have also become aware of how impactful every individual’s role is.”

First Year Student | Orientation Serves

Industry Projects

Industry Project courses connect students with small- to medium-sized businesses as consultants on existing challenges in order to affect organizational change. Through this work, students earn course credit while addressing the operational needs of local businesses. This hands-on, practical experience in an industry setting enables students to gain a deeper understanding of course content as it applies to local and global contexts.

Courses: 17 across 4 faculties

Projects: 18

Students: 2,198

Industry partners: 16

Hours of engagement: 17,277

Industry Partner Faculty

The following is a list of the instructors who taught Industry Project courses in the 2025-2026 academic year with their course titles.

We would like to express our thanks to the faculty members who incorporated industry projects into their teaching, creating opportunities for students to apply their learning and contribute to the important work of our industry partners.

Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Dr. Barbara Bruce – Arts & Humanities 3380Y: Introduction to Community and Professional Practices

Dr. Kate Stanley – English 9217B: Working Within and Beyond the University*

Dr. Laura Cayen – Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies 9459A: Professional Development*

Faculty of Engineering

Dr. Michael Boutilier – Chemical and Biochemical Engineering 2221B: Fluid Flow

Dr. HaoTian Harvey Shi – Mechanical and Materials Engineering 3348A: Manufacturing Processes

Dr. John Makaran – Mechanical & Materials Engineering 4499: Mechanical Engineering Design Project**

Dr. Abdelkader Ouda – Software Engineering 4450: Software Engineering Design II*

Faculty of Science

Dr. Ashley McAlpine – Statistical and Actuarial Sciences 4960F/9860A: Business Skills; Master of Data Analytics 9160: Business Skills

Faculty of Social Science

Dr. Lindsay Bell – Anthropology 2274B: Anthropology of Shopping*

Dr. Wes Kinghorn – Geography and Environment 2243: Foundations of the Geography of World Business*; Geography and Environment 2144A/B/Y: Geography of Tourism

Dr. Mike Dove – History 9808B: Digital Public History*

Dr. Jacqueline Book – Management & Organizational Studies 2330B: Contemporary Issues in Aviation Management*

Dr. Bonnie Simpson – Management & Organizational Studies 3395A: Global Sustainability Practices

*New Courses

**Hybrid CEL-INP Course

Industry Partners

Thank you to our industry partners—your time, mentorship, expertise, and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated. These incredible learning opportunities would not be possible without your partnership and dedication. Partnering organizations are listed below, and those in **bold** partnered with more than one course or project throughout the year.

Arva Flour Mills

Canadian Sheep Federation

Carmina Design Co.

Carriff Canada

Ceylon Select

Great Lakes Copper

Green Earth Café

GreenTech Painting

Hard Rock Hotel London

InterVISTAS Consulting

Little Wren Books

London Economic Development Corporation

Maglin Site Furniture

The London Bicycle Café
Ukrainian Pierogies Inc.
Vessl Prosthetics

Faculty Voices

“This has become a fundamental and irreplaceable part of my classroom experience, and I have enjoyed each and every collaboration that we have had. The Careers and Experience team makes this process smooth and meaningful for my students, and the partners have without exception been outstanding. This is a highlight every time that I teach these courses, one that has now been enjoyed by thousands of students who have passed through my classes. I look forward to many more years of meaningful experiential collaborations.”

Dr. Wes Kinghorn | *Foundations of the Geography of World Business & Geography of Tourism*

“My main takeaway from project based experiential learning is that it creates value for everyone involved. Students consistently highlight the opportunity to apply what they’re learning, gain real professional experience, and contribute meaningfully to the community. At the same time, partner organizations are genuinely energized by the perspectives students bring. As an instructor, it’s incredibly rewarding to help facilitate those connections between the classroom and the community.”

Dr. Bonnie Simpson | *Global Sustainability Practices*

Industry Partner Voices

“I was really impressed with the students’ ability to do quite a bit of advisory work without very much access to our data. They were able to provide valuable insights and also a really great plan going forward that we could truly implement, and that was actually tailored to us, our data, our platforms, and our specific situation.”

Sydney Robinson | Vessl Prosthetics

“The students brought fresh, data-driven perspectives that challenged us to think differently and strengthened our strategy as we prepare for growth. This type of experiential learning creates a powerful bridge between academia and industry, where real-world challenges meet innovative thinking. At GreenTech Painting, we believe this kind of collaboration is essential to building more sustainable and forward-thinking businesses.”

Yarinka Rojas | GreenTech Painting

Student Voices

“This industry project gave me the opportunity to apply real analytical skills, collaborate effectively with my team, and understand how classroom knowledge translates into real-world

value. And also a valuable chance to learn how to solve the difficulties that might really happen in your future work.”

Industry Project Student | *MDA 9160: Business Skills*

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

Each year, community partners identify which SDGs their projects addressed. These projects are then tagged across PBL based on their alignment with the SDGs, enabling us to track contributions towards campus sustainability targets. In support of Western’s strategic goals, we assess which sustainability targets PBL is addressing, where it is performing strongly, and where there are opportunities for improvement. These insights help inform priorities for the coming year.

The top three reported SDGs across PBL this year were:

10: Reduced Inequalities

3: Good Health & Well-being

4: Quality Education

We saw a notable increase in projects focused on SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, while the three least reported were SDG 15: Life on Land, SDG 7: Affordable & Clean Energy, and SDG 14: Life Below Water.

Looking ahead to 2026-27, we hope to source more projects that address under-represented sustainability targets to ensure we’re effectively contributing to Western’s future as a sustainability-focused institution.