

Project Based Learning

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26



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

PROJECT BASED LEARNING ALLOWS STUDENTS TO TAKE THEIR SKILLS BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE CLASSROOM AND INTO LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES.

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.

"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 has truly expanded our horizons. It's been a total win, win. We look forward to continued collaboration."

Hubert Van Niekerk | *Every Canadian Counts*

"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*

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.



3,141
students

32 CEL courses
across



10
faculties

1,925
projects



56,870
hours of engagement

152
community
partners

SELECT 2025-26 CEL 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*

“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 & 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*

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.

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.

"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."

Student Participant | Orientation Serves

CO-CURRICULAR CEL

ORIENTATION SERVES

1,734 students **11** partners **21** activities **4,335** hours of engagement

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.

VOLUNTEER FAIR

325 students **28** partners

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.

WESTERN SERVES NETWORK

1,508 students in network **11** opportunities showcased

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.

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

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection - John Gordon Home
Rights and Responsibilities Awareness Initiative
Ronald McDonald House Southwestern Ontario
Salvation Army

Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University

Science Rendezvous

ScleroCare

South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre

South West Regional Cancer Program

Southpoint Klite Festival

STEAM Education Centre

Stem2Stern

Stroke Network Southwestern Ontario
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Sustainability, Western University

Thames Valley District School Board

The Research Information Outreach Team

University of Holguín, Celia Sánchez Manduley Campus

Urban Roots

University Student Federation

Waterloo Regional District School Board

Wellspring London

Westover Treatment Centre

YMCA of Southwestern Ontario

Youth Opportunities Unlimited

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.

“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*

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. Barbara Bruce	Arts & Humanities 4490X	Experiential Learning in the Arts & Humanities
	Spanish 1030	Beginner Spanish
Dr. Ana García-Allén	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 and 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 & 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		
Annas Alimorad & Ajit Unnithan	Management and Organizational Studies 9330	Applied Project Management
Ajit Unnithan	Master of Data Analytics 9950 Master of Management of Applied Science 9950	Community Engaged Learning Experiential Learning Opportunity*
	Political Science 3201G	International Law
Dr. Dan Bousfield	Political Science 3210F	Canada-US Relations
	Political Science 3390	Politics of AI
	Political Science 3510G	Decolonizing Politics
Dr. Riley Hinson	Psychology 4873E	Addictions: Theory and Research
MULTIDISCIPLINARY		
Associate Deans	Scholar's Electives 4400Y	Scholar's Electives Capstone

*New course

**Hybrid CEL-INP course

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.


2,198
students

17 courses
across
 **4**
faculties

 **17,277**
hours of engagement

18
projects
16
industry
partners

INDUSTRY PROJECT 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 Boutillier	Chemical and Biochemical Engineering 2221B	Fluid Flow
Dr. HaoTian Harvey Shi	Mechanical and Materials Engineering 3348A	Manufacturing Processes
Dr. John Makaran	Mechanical and Materials Engineering 4499	Mechanical Engineering Design Project**
Dr. Abdelkader Ouda	Software Engineering 4450	Software Engineering Design II*

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

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

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Dr. Lindsay Bell	Anthropology 2274B	Anthropology of Shopping*
Dr. Wes Kinghorn	Geography and Environment 2144A/B	Geography of Tourism
	Geography and Environment 2243	Foundations of the Geography of World Business*
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 3395	Global Sustainability Practices in Marketing

*New course

**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	Ceylon Select	InterVISTAS Consulting	The London Bicycle Café
Canadian Sheep Federation	Great Lakes Copper	Little Wren Books	Ukrainian Pierogies Inc.
Carmina Design Co.	Green Earth Café	London Economic Development Corporation	Vessl Prosthetics
Carriff Canada	GreenTech Painting	Maglin Site Furniture	
	Hard Rock Hotel London		

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:



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.

“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

“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*

“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