

ZONE LEARNING AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Academic Plan Implementation: Local Plan



Land Acknowledgement

As we embark on the Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives local plan in support of Toronto Metropolitan University's Academic Plan Transforming Futures 2025-2030, we begin by acknowledging the land on which our institution stands.

TMU's campuses in Toronto and Brampton operate on the Treaty Lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit. This land has been part of the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee. They are now home to many Inuit, Métis and First Nations Peoples from across Turtle Island. We honour and uphold the Dish With One Spoon Treaty, we commit to valuing the Two Row Wampum and we vow to treat the land and people of our community with understanding built on mutual respect.

This land acknowledgment reminds us of the ongoing need for education and action toward reconciliation and that there is more to be done on our campus. We each have a role in considering the impact of our work on the land and on the peoples with whom we share these lands. We encourage our community members to take time to recognize the lands on which we work and live and to educate themselves in the Indigenous histories and current realities of those lands.

As we advance our mission, we remain committed to creating pathways for meaningful engagement and partnerships with Indigenous communities, ensuring that our contributions reflect the values of respect, reciprocity and responsibility.

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Foreword



We are pleased to share the Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives local plan in support of the Toronto Metropolitan University Academic Plan Transforming Futures 2025-2030.

Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives includes several units in the portfolio of the office and the plan includes relevant details for each:

- The Zone Learning Network
- The Law Practice Program
- The Image Centre
- The Dais

Each of the units of this portfolio engage with the community, industry, professionals, artists and the general public outside of the university. This engagement creates a rich interface with the university, with the exchange of ideas and experience that enrich and diversify the learning and career pathways for TMU students, challenge researchers and staff, and bring innovation to the community. We actively collaborate with TMU faculties and other units to support and enhance their initiatives and programs with our unique services and networks.

The dedicated work of our staff, university partners, and the many community individuals and organizations we work with turn these plans into reality. We are grateful for their passion, energy and commitment to innovators and innovation.

JOHN MACRITCHIE
Assistant Vice-President, Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives

Introduction

Reporting to the Provost and Vice-President Academic, the portfolio of the Assistant Vice President Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives (AVP, ZLSI) is home to the TMU Zone Network and three units of strategic importance to the University.

We are a bridge between the university, industry and community, establishing TMU as Canada's innovation university, and the initiatives showcased in this document demonstrate how this is achieved.

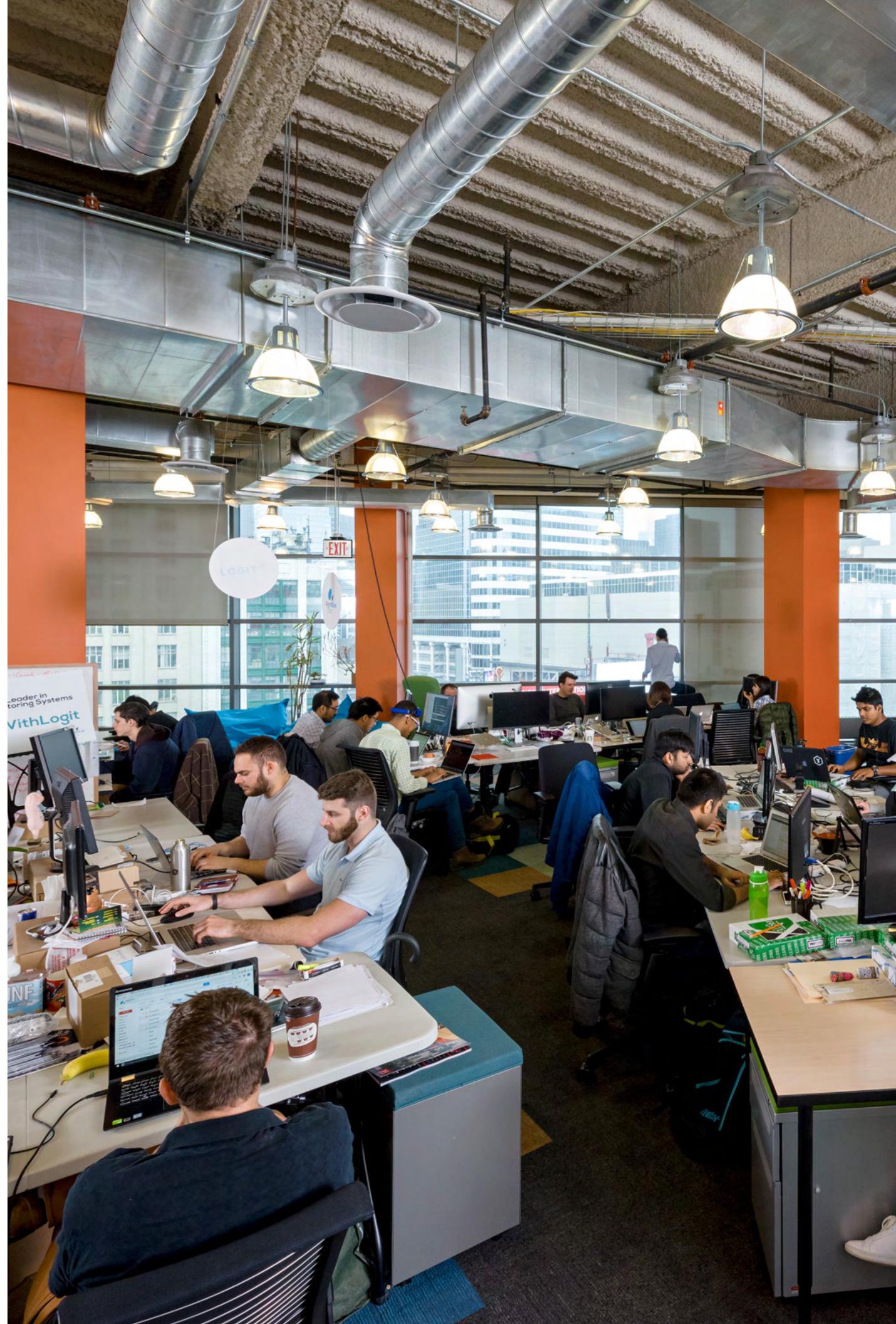
The information provided throughout the document highlights alignment between the Academic Plan *Transforming Futures 2025-2030* and priorities of the AVP's portfolio, along with local level plans for the achievement of goals and measures of success for each.

The first section of the document itemizes **Zone Learning Network** priorities and articulates their links to the individual priorities of the Academic Plan. Plans for the achievement of goals and metrics to be used in the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives are summarized in the tables presented.

The Zones plan is structured to show how each strategic initiative aligns with the Academic Plan's priorities, and how a range of programs and activities may support initiatives. Our KPIs are focused on the initiative level to evaluate meaningful progress. We provide example activities (many underway) that may be undertaken within a given initiative. This approach ensures we prioritize what delivers the greatest impact to an ever-changing student body and economic environment.

The second section of the document is assigned to the three units that report to the AVP, ZLSI. Each with distinct mandates and operating models these are:

- **The Law Practice Program**
- **The Image Centre**
- **The Dais**



Consultation Process

The AVP and OZLSI staff engaged leaders across the portfolio to ensure that their unit level objectives and initiatives are articulated in the plan. Through these discussions we were able to align unit level objectives with the Academic Plan priorities and summarize them across the portfolio as presented in the plan.

These discussions provided an opportunity to focus on the distinct mandate of each unit and its relevance to core TMU priorities as expressed in the Academic Plan.

We will develop appropriate tracking and reporting approaches which will facilitate on-going discussions with leaders and their teams on progress towards achieving our objectives and potentially identifying new areas of collaboration.

Zone Learning

Zone Learning at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) plays a critical role in fostering experiential learning and entrepreneurship across the university. As a central pillar of TMU's innovation ecosystem, Zone Learning oversees TMU's network of incubators (referred to as "Zones"), which collectively provide students, startups, and community members with access to mentorship, resources, and opportunities to transform ideas into impactful ventures.

Strategic purpose of Zone Learning:

Provide an optimal learning environment centered on the startup spectrum from idea exploration to venture growth that delivers measurable benefits to individual learners and meaningful social and economic value to the broader community.

Delivered through three areas of focus:

1. Learning and skills development: Creating environments that deliver concrete, measurable learning benefits for students engaging across the entrepreneurial and innovation spectrum;
2. Venture formation, operation, and success: Supporting startup creation and growth, and offering meaningful opportunities for students to explore ideas, work at ventures, or found their own.
3. Operational excellence: Maintaining an integrated structure that enables the above while remaining lean, adaptive, and effective.



Entrepreneurial and innovation skills are not optional extras — they are core to preparing students for a future where adaptability, problem-solving, and creativity determine career success.

These skills apply to every discipline and sector, and they are best developed experientially, through opportunities where students confront real problems, work with real stakeholders, and learn by doing.

This is not just about creating startups — it's about empowering every graduate to see opportunities, take initiative, and create value in any setting. If our students can adapt, innovate, and lead change, they will thrive — and so will our institution, economy, and society.

With the Zone Learning ecosystem as our principal mechanism for cultivating an "innovator's mindset," we can operationalize the tenets of the Academic Plan and position TMU as a vanguard in experiential learning and innovation.

Zone Learning operates at the intersection of academia and real-world innovation. It is dedicated to creating environments fostering thriving interdisciplinary collaboration, creating enhanced pathways where students and entrepreneurs can test and validate their ideas with the support of industry experts and university resources. By engaging as active participants, whether exploring early-stage ideas or passions, contributing to existing ventures, or launching their own, students develop critical skills through repeated, hands-on learning. Each interaction is designed to produce a tangible learning benefit, with the venture ecosystem serving as both a learning environment and a catalyst for impact.

The Zones serve a diverse array of sectors, including health, technology, social innovation, creative industries such as fashion and media, science, and the arts, making it one of the most dynamic innovation networks in Canada.



Zone Learning also plays a pivotal role in driving economic development by leveraging startup and venture creation to fuel innovation. Whether individuals are exploring entrepreneurship or seeking to enhance traditional career paths, Zone Learning offers pathways for both. Through experiential learning initiatives and interdisciplinary collaboration, members develop entrepreneurial mindsets and practical skills, enhancing their employability and fostering personal growth.

The Zones also work closely with external partners, including government agencies, private companies, and nonprofits, to secure funding and build strategic partnerships that enable the Zones to expand their offerings and impact to the external community, and bring community and industry expertise to the university and its students. Through these initiatives Zone Learning ensures TMU's entrepreneurship ecosystem remains aligned with broader industry trends and societal needs, equipping students and startups to address pressing challenges in their respective fields. These partnerships, alongside a lean and adaptive Zone Learning structure, support our ability to deliver high-impact programming at scale while ensuring efficiency and responsiveness to evolving needs.

The success of Zone Learning is evident in its track record: launching over 2,800 startups across various industries and securing significant funding, which totals over \$3.2 billion. Notable alumni startups like Mejuri, Knix, and PocketHealth underline the tangible impact of the ecosystem. At any time during the year, Zone Learning incubates more than 400 ventures.

The following sections outline the initiatives and activities of Zone Learning in support of the individual priorities of the academic plan:



PRIORITY 1

Enhance the learning journey for greater student success

At Zone Learning, we interpret "Enhancing the Student Learning Journey for Greater Student Success" as empowering students through innovative, experience-rich learning environments that cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets, practical skills, and holistic development.

Our goals and activities in this area focus on Learning and Skills Development.

Zone Learning plays a multifaceted role in supporting this priority: we lead initiatives focused on innovation and entrepreneurship directly conducted within our Zones and related programming; and we support/ enhance other activities by providing resources, expertise, and unique experiential learning opportunities that complement traditional academic learning. This includes co-curricular programming, such as supporting Master's programs, assisting the project-based learning of capstone courses, and providing modules that can be directly integrated into classrooms across campus. We offer extra-curricular programs such as the Zone Learning and the Esch awards, organize hackathons and design challenges, and facilitate student work placement programs. Our curricular programming includes dedicated courses and the Minor in Innovation and Zone Learning.

Zone Learning activities encompass a range of learning experiences that focus on the development of entrepreneurial and innovative skills, competencies and mindsets. Our approach to student engagement recognizes that innovation and entrepreneurship are non-linear journeys, with learning and skill development improving through repeated engagement, encouraging students to interact with us multiple times throughout their time at TMU and even after graduation to truly enhance their competencies and mindset. Internal collaborators include various academic departments and Deans, while external collaborators may include experienced professionals as mentors, industry partners, community organizations, and funding bodies.

1.A. - Support a holistic student experience

Our goals for supporting a holistic student experience are to provide diverse, flexible, and student-centered learning opportunities to ensure students have the tools and experiences needed for success. We aim to integrate practical, project-based, and experiential learning deeply into the student journey. In alignment with the Academic Plan and Action Plan expectations, we will define specific quantitative targets related to Zone Learning adoption, including learner participation in ZON-style courses and experiential programs, and report on these annually to guide strategic growth and resourcing decisions.

Goals:

- **Expand Curricular Integration of Zone Learning:**
Increase the number of students reached by inclusive Zone programming in a wide range of academic programs, particularly those who may not initially identify with traditional entrepreneurship. This will include curricular and co-curricular activities such as Zone Learning led courses, capstone opportunities, course modules, and course-required experiential learning opportunities.
- **Increase Opportunities for Transformational Experiences for Students:**
Provide unique, enriching, hands-on extra-curricular opportunities for students through student placement programs, student passion groups (e.g., Design Teams, Student League, STEM Pathways), and innovative competition formats, fostering truly transformative student experiences.



1.B. - Strengthen academic programming

Although we are a non-academic unit, Zone Learning is committed to innovating and expanding our educational offerings. This involves diversifying non-degree and professional development offerings to ensure market relevance and responsiveness to evolving societal needs. Our objective is to seamlessly connect academic knowledge with practical application and entrepreneurial pathways, often achieved through strategic collaborations to ensure our programs are accessible to a broad and evolving audience.

Goals:

- **Advance Professional and Hands-on Skill Development:**
Increase targeted opportunities for students and alumni to develop and refine their professional and technical skills by bridging academic knowledge with real-world application through experiential opportunities with industry and community. Activities include expanding options for individuals to build a professional practice and expanding access to Zone Learning maker spaces for hands-on exploration.
- **Support Research Activation and Audience-Responsive Entrepreneurship:**
Empower graduate students and researchers to activate their research, through specialized programs like Lab2Market and by complementing existing academic curriculum and graduate capstones, while continuously adapting and diversifying entrepreneurship programs to meet evolving market needs and ensure TMU's position as a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship.

PRIORITY 2

Create Positive Impact through SRC Excellence and Local and Global Collaboration

Zone Learning engages externally with the public, industry, non-profits and government agencies in the normal course of their activities and programming.

This engagement is necessary to effectively connect zone members with real world opportunities, funding and advice.

These engagements create opportunities to bring TMU scholarly research and creative activities to make an impact in Canada and beyond, contribute to addressing challenges in our local community and to share our experience globally.

Support of Priority 2 is achieved through both learning and skills development and venture formation and success.

2.A - Make impact through SRC and innovation

Support of SRC and innovation takes place through several main activity areas through Zone activities:

Goals:

- **Increase support of research commercialization pathways through Zone programming, services and networks.**
Programs begin by developing entrepreneurial curiosity in students, move to conducting market assessment and research, and finally to building an incubator-ready venture. Many of the programs include direct engagement with their research principal investigator or their academic program.

The Lab2Market program suite, developed by TMU zones specifically for research commercialization through ventures, offers opportunities for graduate students to explore the commercial potential of their research.

TMU Zones have been directly involved in the design and deployment of the national Lab2Market network programs and training trainers across Canada. The programming is adapted for offer internally at TMU zones.

Ventures spinning out from TMU research will be hosted by zones as incubator members.

- **Engage researchers with industry partners for research collaborations and talent opportunities.**
Industry collaboration opportunities exist through connection with Zone member companies and through industry mentors and advisors working with the zones. Over the coming 5 years, the connections with industry partners will be expanded through the zone connections and programming such as Zone Learning's Venture Match. This will expand funding opportunities with Mitacs, tri-councils, Ontario Centre of Innovation, CEWIL, Experience Ventures, and other agencies.

2.B - Engage globally for world perspective

The experience and reputation of the DMZ and the Image Centre, as well as the policy expertise of the Dais, has opened opportunities for TMU to engage internationally.

Goals:

- **Develop international presence through ecosystem development support:**
DMZ collaborates with international partners to establish DMZ-style incubator spaces and support economic development initiatives in their regions. Partners range from post-secondary institutions to government organizations, to other incubators, to corporations. Projects include service delivery to international partners and landing programs for international startups. Programming has been delivered on a cost-recovery basis and supports the base operations in Canada.

2.C - Lead as a city and community builder

Industry / Community Engagement through Zone activities - Community connections are an enabling requirement for successful Zone operation and deliver impact to the local communities:

Goals:

- **Increase students engaged in experiential opportunities addressing local challenges:**
Experiential project opportunities often convene and host collaborations in initiatives addressing local challenges. The projects supported in the Zones are about bringing sustainable ventures

to life that deliver innovation in their various domains, industries and communities. Zones are a place for purposeful experimentation with new ideas, technologies and knowledge.

- **Support local economic and community development through venture formation and talent opportunities**

The programming and operational experience from the zones are in demand for adaptation to other local communities. Past and current initiatives have supported economic and community development in Niagara Falls, Innisfil, Brampton and Caledon.

The Brampton Venture Zone, in its second 5-year collaboration with the City of Brampton has supported TMU's presence in the city, sharing its extensive local partner catalog for support of the TMU School of Medicine.

- **Scale programming beyond TMU for national impact**

Through collaboration with sponsors and partners, experience at TMU can be scaled nationally in Canada. With Dalhousie University, TMU leads the national Lab2Market network of over 50 institutions across Canada reaching graduate students across Canada with high quality commercialization training through direct experience. TMU will continue to partner with NSERC and other organizations to expand knowledge mobilization capacity through novel pilot programs.

With sponsors, online programming can also reach groups traditionally underserved with high quality programs as has been demonstrated with the Desjardins Launchpad series.

External adoption of programming enhances operational effectiveness for Zone Learning through external recognition and feedback, attracts external resources, and enhances reputation through community impact.

- **Increase external resources secured for programming**

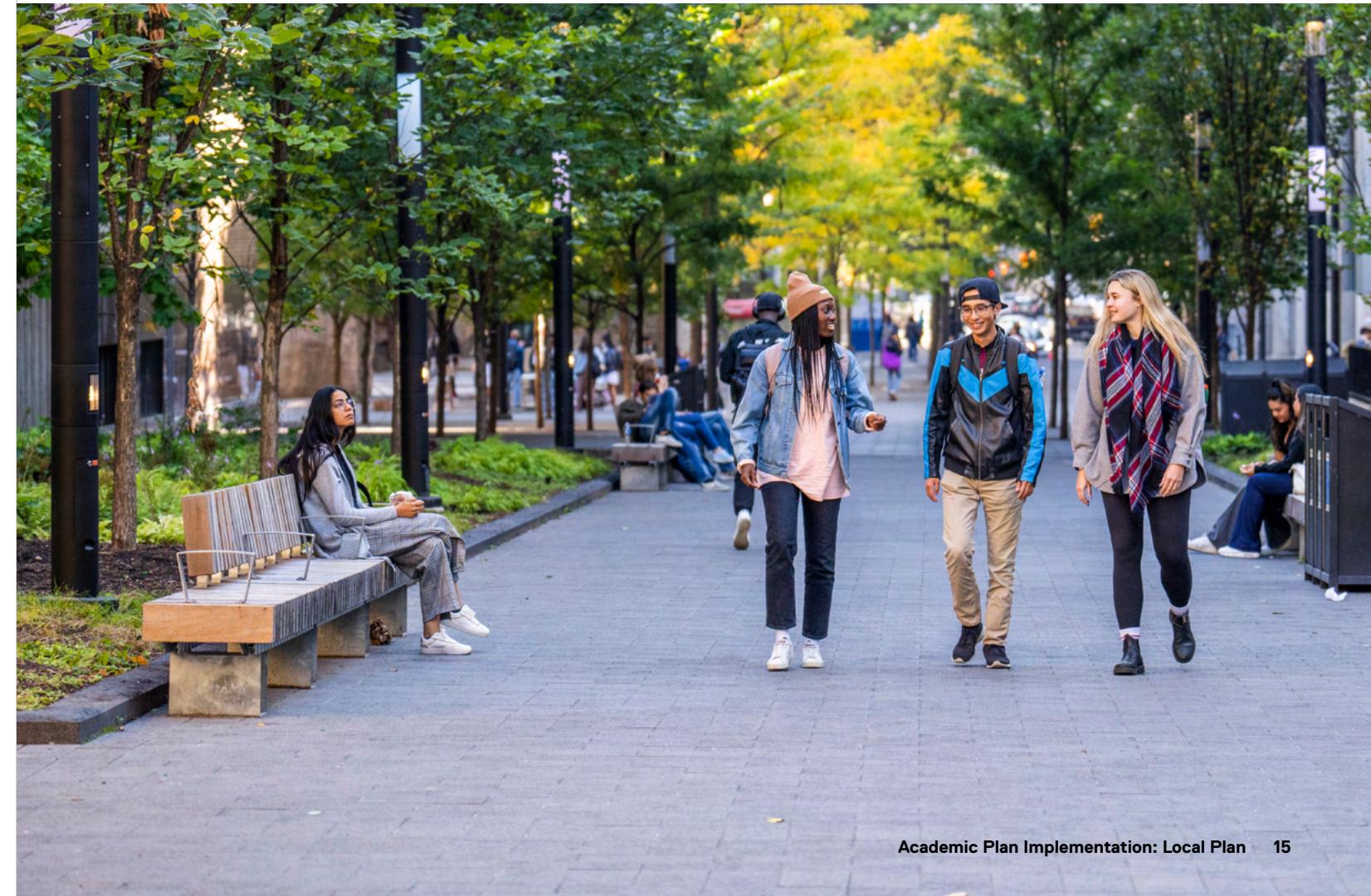
Attracting external resources in support of our programming endorses our approach and impact, and enhances the reputation of TMU, as well as increases our capacity to reach more learners and our impact in the community.

PRIORITY 3

Support People and Community

We recognize that Support People and Community is a broad and critical priority, primarily led by other key units within TMU. Our interpretation is that OZLSI will be an available and proactive partner, leveraging our unique expertise in innovation, entrepreneurship, and community and industry to support these efforts. We aim to enable partnership engagement, particularly where clear challenges can be addressed through collaborative problem solving. Making our resources and methodologies available to units that are leading initiatives related to health, well-being, safety, and inclusion, we hope, will complement and amplify the efforts of our colleagues.

Our support activities include providing innovation focused training (e.g., design thinking, ideation, clinical validation, research commercialization) and facilitating connections with industry for solutions or mentorship. We remain open to co-creating new initiatives when opportunities may arise.



3.A - Promote health, well-being and safety

We aim to contribute to enhancing supportive services and campus safety through collaborative engagement, particularly with emerging initiatives like the Integrated Health Clinics (IHCs), by offering innovation skills, training, and facilitating industry connections, leveraging zone experience.

Goals:

- **Support to Health Initiatives through targeted experiential learning opportunities for entrepreneurial and innovation skills development:**

Provide specialized innovation training and support to emerging health initiatives and clinics, enhancing their capacity for service delivery and operational innovation. This may include activations through the Brampton Venture or Biomedical Zones, or their industry and hospital network partners.

- **Facilitate Industry Engagement for Health Solutions:**

Act as a conduit to connect with health industry partners, fostering collaborations that can lead to innovative community solutions or student learning experiences.

3.B - Embrace community inclusion and belonging

In embracing community inclusion and belonging, OZLSI aims to foster an environment where all students feel represented and welcome in our programs. Our goals focus on ensuring that our participants see themselves represented in the staff, mentors, and program content offered to them, with the hope of lowering barriers to access entrepreneurship and promoting a strong sense of belonging.

Goals:

- **Enhance Diverse Representation:**
Continuously work to attract and retain diverse staff, advisors, mentors, and role models, ensuring that our programs and the individuals associated with them are representative of the broad community we aim to serve. This will be reported following TMU diversity reporting metrics extended to include mentors and advisors as well as staff and participants.

- **Cultivate Inclusive Environments:**
Design and promote programs that are explicitly open and welcoming to wide audiences, actively working to ensure that participants from all backgrounds see their personal identities reflected in marketing, content, and community. Where relevant or helpful, this can include offering formal programs like the Black Innovation Program, Women Founder Programs, and Newcomer Entrepreneurship Program and informal drop-in program such as identity-specific nights at DFZ Open Shop (e.g., BIPOC Creatives, 2SLGBTQ+ Creatives) which provide tailored spaces for diverse communities.

PRIORITY 4

Continue our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

The role of OZLSI in this priority is primarily in support of initiatives that may be led by other units. Our unique expertise in innovation, entrepreneurship, industry, and policy can be adapted to support these efforts. We will also welcome opportunities to bring indigenous approaches and learning to enhance our programming, adapting it to meet the needs of Indigenous communities.

4.A - Advance Indigenous scholarship and education

We will seek ways to work with Indigenous scholars to co-create experiential learning and Indigenous perspectives to our content and programs.

4.B - Build partnerships with Indigenous communities

With our extensive experience in collaborative, multi-party initiatives, OZLSI units can develop partnerships with Indigenous organizations on joint programming opportunities.

Goals:

- **Develop partnerships for the co-creation and delivery of entrepreneurial training programming for Indigenous people.**
Existing programming must be adapted to the needs and culture of indigenous communities and participants. This adaptation will require collaboration with organizations with Indigenous business experience and networks and their leadership in shaping the programming.



PRIORITY 5

Ensure Future Readiness

Among the OZLSI units, ensuring future readiness of TMU students mainly falls to Zone Learning in development of creative and entrepreneurial mindsets. Through the on-campus Zones and targeted initiatives, our approach builds skills and mindsets that complement academic learning and support individual growth.

The community of innovators we cultivate creates an active interdisciplinary innovation ecosystem on TMU's campus, bridging with industry and our wider community.

Together, the programming and community fosters the development of higher cognitive skills, emotional and social intelligence, adaptability, critical thinking and adaptability that are necessary to solve complex, ambiguous problems. These skills are more important for success and are in higher demand than technical skills.

Built around pursuing an entrepreneurial venture, zones provide the opportunity to work in a fast-paced environment to produce an innovative solution to a complex problem. Addressing a real-world program requires teamwork, interaction with "customers" and stakeholders, problem solving and a multitude of other skills. What better environment to learn how to work in a rapidly changing, intersectional, technology-driven economy?



5.A - Prepare our students for evolving careers

Core programming supporting students in developing skills and competencies for evolving careers fall within two main areas: Learning and skills development through co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, and venture creation activities.

Goals:

- **Strengthening Academic Programs through co-curricular experiential activities (learners involved in zone programming):** Enhancement of academic programming through opportunities for students to apply their learning in real-world opportunities drawn from zone ventures, zone operations or access to external industry and community networks.

Zone Learning supports several projects, capstones and courses across a variety of academic programs and faculties; examples include MBA, MDM, MEIE, Fashion Design, Business Management, and Entrepreneurship. This may range from offering supplementary materials to students and faculty members, to offering zone startups as case studies or capstone project sponsors, to teaching modules or replacing a lecture.

Zones Programming involves alumni, potential donors and influencers at the university in a meaningful way.

- **Enhancing and expanding skills development through extra-curricular experiential programming (learners involved in zone programming):**

In response to strong and growing student demand and the current availability of external funding, Zone Learning offers students innovative work-integrated learning options for students. These programs, as well as short-term and drop-in technical training programs offered through Zones, provide students with the means to not only develop skills in demand by job markets but to also explore their options within several job markets.

- **Increasing proportion of student and recent alumni involvement in venture and incubator programming:**

Zone ideation and incubator programs are offered throughout the year that offer students the opportunity to launch their own businesses. Applications for many of these programs are accepted on a rolling basis and we offer Startup Advisor services to allow students to help prepare themselves before entering one of these programs.

Traditional incubator programming focuses on scalable businesses. However, small to medium-sized businesses continue to represent most businesses started by entrepreneurs, including many student entrepreneurs.

In addition, TMU offers academic programs across a wide range of professional fields including business services, community services, creative industries, health, medicine, engineering, and law where professionals may operate their own practice or be part of a small group practice with other professionals. Complementing the academic training with experiential professional practice training will enhance graduates chances for success and overall professional satisfaction.

We will continue to welcome external ventures that bring important experience and perspectives to the zone community while increasing the proportion of student-base ventures in the community.

5.B - Reimagine learning and teaching

OZLSI units can act as a source and integrator of experiential learning resources. Working with faculties and the experiential learning office, this support can include help in applying for funding, identifying and inviting external speakers, and running activities such as panels, brainstorming sessions, and workshops.

OZLSI programs also offer the opportunity to rapidly develop and test new teaching and learning activities before integrating them into academic programs. This allows the learning outcomes and delivery format to be refined and demonstrated and evidence for the new approaches to be developed.

Goals:

- **Zone learning as a rapid test bed for new effective experiential learning and skills development programming:**

Working with Faculties and individual faculty members, zone learning can rapidly develop, deploy and test programming to enhance student learning experience.

In addition, to scale programming to reach a larger portion of the student body, new delivery approaches are required as resources are limited. These approaches may include use of technology such as artificial intelligence to automate parts of the program workflow or structural changes to program design such as increasing reliance on peer-to-peer support.

Collaborative activities with other units supporting this goal can include application and use of new technology such as AI, development of a student employability framework, work-integrated learning alternatives to co-op, and development of applicable learning assessment measures.

5.C - Cultivate sustainability

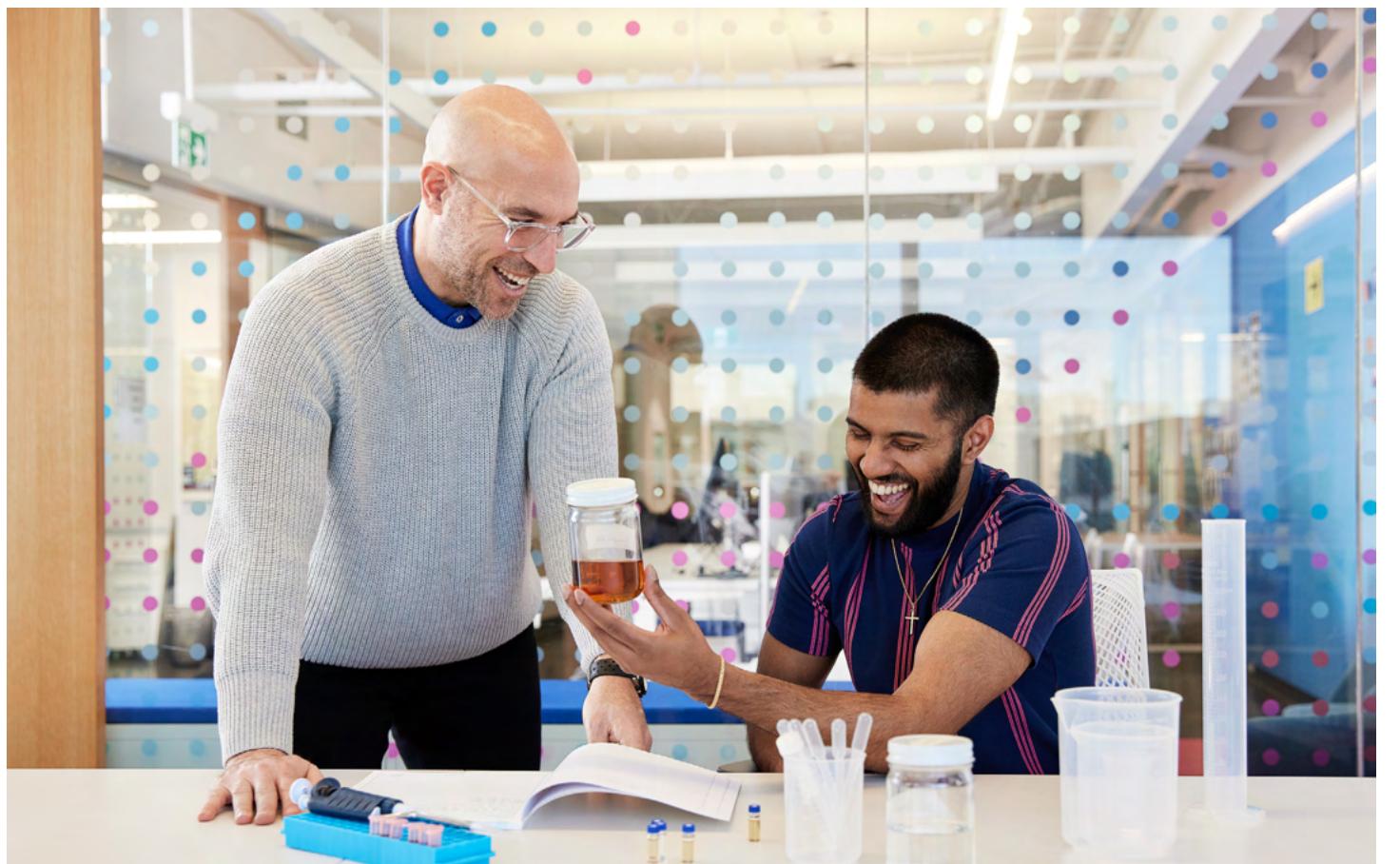
Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) related activities have been able to engage students in programs and experience opportunities as they fit with many students' priorities and concerns. The organizations and experts with which we interact may also be involved in addressing SDGs and be seeking opportunities to increase their impact in this area.

Goals:

- **Within learning and skills development and venture creation opportunities, identify, execute and report on SDG themed activities for student experience:**

SDG-themed activities are a strong draw for student engagement in experiential opportunities and provide an excellent opportunity to build entrepreneurial and innovation skills. Through activities such as Hack the World (6-month program for students from all disciplines to use technology to contribute to one of the SDG goals), students also discover areas where they can make an impact, empowering them to take on what can seem like intractable global problems.





Measuring Success

We need to be successful in three broad areas:

1. Learning and skills development:

We need that environment to deliver concrete and measurable learning benefits to those interacting with the venture spectrum.

2. Venture formation, operation and success:

We need to have successful ventures and an overall environment in which learners can explore ideas, work at ventures, or found their own startups.

3. Operational excellence:

We need an integrated structure, through Zone Learning, that makes (1) and (2) possible in a lean and effective manner.

How we tie this to Zone Learning KPIs:

Area	Purpose	Where we need to be successful	KPIs
1. Learning and skills development:	Zones provide a learning environment where students, alumni and community members come together to explore ideas, create startups, or gain practical experience by working at them.	The environment has to provide a measurably positive learning benefit for those who interact with it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of learners • Types of learning experience • Post-learning assessment of skills gained (e.g. resiliency scale, skills for future workplaces, etc.)
2. Venture formation, operation and success	Zone Learning provides an environment with ventures at the heart that allow learners to encounter a spectrum of entrepreneurial activity, from curiosity, creativity, idea exploration, startup formation, to success and scaling or working for a startup. Those startups then deliver social and economic benefits to the community.	We need successful venture formation and operation to immerse the students in a rich entrepreneurial learning environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of ventures • Number of founders and placements/ staff • Investment / revenue
3. Operational excellence of Zone Learning	Zone Learning has an integrated structure that supports an efficient and unique learning environment.	In order to further purposes (1) and (2), Zone Learning has to be efficient, effective and excellent in the way it operates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff numbers • Volunteers / community mentors • Funding raised • Community benefit delivered (\$\$ value) • Programs run and degree of success • External recognition and ranking • EDI measures as per TMU

Applying the KPIs to the Goals

The following table lists the goals for each academic plan priority and provides preliminary KPIs in the short, medium (3 years) and long term (5 years). Some KPIs support more than one goal:

Priority 1: Enhance the Learning Journey for Greater Student Success		
	1.A. - Support a holistic student experience	1.B. - Strengthen academic programming
Goals	1.Expand Curricular Integration of Zone Learning 2.Increase Opportunities for Transformational Experiences for Students	3. Advance Professional and Hands-on Skill Development 4.Support Research Activation and Audience-Responsive Entrepreneurship
Short Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain current total number of annual Zone Learners (9,565)¹ Maintain a diverse and relevant types of learning curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular learning experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Priority 1A for KPIs related to Zone learners and program types. Establish a baseline to track students learning experience from professional skills development, community & industry engagement activities to venture formation²
Medium Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a sustainable growth rate of total number of annual Zone Learners (5-15%) and a natural point of critical mass Define and benchmark a post-learning assessment of skills gained (e.g. resiliency scale, skills for future workplaces, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Priority 1A for KPIs related to Zone learners and program types.
Long Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the ideal proportion of total annual Zone Learners across curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities Partner with faculties to embed learning experiences Demonstrate ability to influence specific skills gained through targeted programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Priority 1A for KPIs related to Zone learners and program types.

¹ F24-SS25 OZL - [Zones Survey Dashboard](#)

² Where a KPI involves establishing a baseline, related forecasts for the Medium Term and Long Term, if included, may be revised based on findings of the baseline process and feedback from collaborators.

Priority 2: Create Positive Impact through SRC Excellence and Local and Global Collaboration			
	2.A - Make impact through SRC and innovation	2.B - Engage globally for world perspective	2.C - Lead as a city- and community-builder
Goals	1. Increase support of research commercialization pathways through Zone programming, services and networks. 2. Engage researchers with industry partners for research collaborations and talent opportunities. 3. Collaborating with OVPRI and the Deans in building a commercialization services framework that can support researchers who are interested in taking their ideas to market	4. Develop international presence through ecosystem development support	5. Increase students engaged in experiential opportunities addressing local challenges 6. Support local economic and community development through venture formation and talent opportunities 7. Scale programming beyond TMU for national impact 8. Increase external resources secured for programming
Short Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline of research commercialization ventures Establish baseline of students supported with research commercialization training Establish baseline of research collaborations supported with industry partners and talent Increase number of researchers (students and faculty members) applying to zone programs and funding programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain DMZ Global engagements Establish zone international engagement baseline and targets with TMU Global 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain current total number of annual Zone Learners (9,565) Establish baseline for zone learners engaged in local challenges to incorporate into zone learners and ventures Maintain diverse and relevant types of learning curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular learning experiences Apply for at least 5 external funding sources within 12 months

Priority 2: Create Positive Impact through SRC Excellence and Local and Global Collaboration			
	2.A	2.B	2.C
Medium Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercialization services framework in place Increase number of research commercialization ventures by 50% Increase number of students trained on research commercialization by 50% Hold regular activities in collaboration with ADRs and OVPRI to support collaborations with zone ventures, students, and industry network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Zone international engagements by 20% in collaboration with TMU Global 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure external program funding of at least \$250,000 per year Develop and benchmark a means for measuring positive community or economic impact Develop a strategy and assign resources toward external rankings and awards Improve average margin on project funding raised (10%)
Long Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase research commercialization ventures by 100% Increase number of students trained on research commercialization by 100% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Zone international engagements by 50% in collaboration with TMU Global 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success of BVZ and plan for ongoing operations in Brampton Renewal of Lab2Market funding Secure external program funding of at least \$500,000 per year

Priority 3: Support People and Community		
	3.A - Promote health, well-being and safety	3.B - Embrace community inclusion and belonging
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support to Health Initiatives through targeted experiential learning opportunities for entrepreneurial and innovation skills development Facilitate Industry Engagement for Health Solutions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance Diverse Representation Cultivate Inclusive Environments
Short Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore potential roles with IHC with School of Medicine, jointly develop goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline for targeted programming types
Medium Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with IHCs to connect industry and talent opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity self-id implemented for mentors, advisors and zone members
Long Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish commercialization training program available to IHC and non-teaching hospital staff and clinicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, mentors and advisors representative of TMU community

Priority 4: Continue our Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation	
	4.A - Advance Indigenous scholarship and education
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop partnerships for the co-creation and delivery of entrepreneurial training programming for Indigenous people.
Short Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure agreement with NACCA for DMZ support of entrepreneurial programming
Medium Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the activation of the City of Toronto's Indigenous Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
Long Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous co-creation of a Zone entrepreneurship program

Priority 5: Ensure Future Readiness			
	5.A - Prepare our students for evolving careers	5.B - Reimagine learning and teaching	5.C - Cultivate sustainability
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening Academic Programs through co-curricular experiential activities 2. Enhancing and expanding skills development through extra-curricular experiential programming 3. Increasing proportion of student and recent alumni involvement in venture and incubator programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Zone learning as a rapid test bed for new effective experiential learning and skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Within learning and skills development and venture creation opportunities, identify, execute and report on SDG themed activities for student experience.
Short Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the SMA count of ventures (401) within a 5% margin of variance • Maintain the number of ventures/founders per staff (5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing programming to launch targeted entrepreneurial program with a Faculty • Develop outline for commercialization training modules for graduate level course in collaboration with YSGPS 	
Medium Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the SMA count of ventures (401) within a 5% margin of variance • Grow the number of student placements per staff (2.2) • Measure and benchmark participant satisfaction and program performance • Maintain the number of advisors (293)³ • Develop and institute a means for consistently measuring program success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch at least 1 new pilot program each year to support a faculty or academic department partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and benchmark a means for measuring positive community or economic impact

	5.A	5.B	5.C
Long Term KPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the SMA count of ventures (401) within a 5% margin of variance • Grow the number of ventures / founders per staff (6) • Grow the number of advisor hours booked per semester (1,873)⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 2 pilot programs adopted into core academic programs and scaled by faculties. 	



³ SS25 OZL - [Zones Survey Dashboard](#)

⁴ SS25 OZL - [Zones Survey Dashboard](#)



Strategic Units Reporting to the Assistant Vice President

Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives

Three units with distinct mandates and funding models report to the AVP, Zone Learning and Strategic Initiatives. These include:

The Law Practice Program

The Image Centre

The Dais

The Law Practice Program at TMU

Established in 2014, the Law Practice Program is a project funded by the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) and delivered by TMU. Program deliverables are outlined in Provider Agreements between TMU and the LSO, and the current 3 year agreement covers the period June 2025 - June 2028.

The first of its kind in Ontario, this innovative eight-month program is an approved pathway to lawyer licensing in Ontario (equivalent to articling), offering simulated, virtual training and a one semester work placement experience. TMU works with the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) and the legal community including the Ontario Bar Association (OBA), to deliver a dynamic program that prepares candidates to succeed in their legal practice and careers. The LPP's focus is on development of skills and competencies that future lawyers need to be successful in their chosen fields of practice.

The LPP is managed by a small team of professionals, and the project engages subject matter experts within the legal community in a variety of roles that are core to the success of the program. Many of these individuals are practicing lawyers with considerable experience in their field of practice. Entering its 11th year, the LPP has developed an extensive network of law firms and private sector organizations that provide relevant, quality work placement opportunities for candidates. The LPP also engages various TMU units on a fee for service basis in areas such as: Student Accommodation Services; the Live Actor Simulation Program (The Creative School); and Computing and Communication Services.

As a stand-alone project, the LPP is outside of regular academic program's detailed programs. However, the overall design of the program and its strong links to the sector. It serves as an excellent example of a professional practice program that TMU is uniquely positioned to successfully deliver. The OZLSI will work with LPP leadership to identify examples of program deliverables that may be included in our reporting.

The Image Centre at TMU

The Image Centre (IMC) is Canada's leading institution dedicated to the exhibition, research and collecting of photography. Established in 2012, the IMC welcomes visitors to explore the intersection of photography and culture. Through compelling exhibitions and engaging public programming, the IMC showcases work by emerging, renowned, and anonymous photographers, past and present. With a growing collection of nearly 500,000 photographic objects and an innovative scholarly research program, the IMC is also a vibrant hub for the preservation and study of photography.

Research at the IMC

Research is a central part of The Image Centre's mandate. This research is focused on the study of photography and related media, with an emphasis on photojournalism and documentary media, from the nineteenth century to the present. The Image Centre also supports research through teaching, workshops, symposia, publications, scholarly and artist fellowships, as well as institutional partnerships. Through these endeavours, The Image Centre has become an international hub for research about photography, welcoming established and emerging academics, as well as students. These scholarly activities have provided the TMU community with the opportunity to benefit from the latest research on the role and impact of images in

our societies, to discuss and challenge ideas and to take advantage of an international network of researchers. Research fellows can study select areas of The Image Centre's photography collections first-hand.

The Image Centre's academic book series focuses on research activities. Published in partnership with the MIT Press, The Image Centre Books series aims to disseminate inquiries into histories, practices and reception of images in general, and photographs, in particular.

Priority 2 of the Academic Plan: Create Positive Impact through SRC Excellence and Local and Global Collaboration. The IMC research mandate differs from that of TMU Academic Units or Research Centres. However, its rich and diverse collections support TMU researchers and attract scholars from many countries. This creates opportunities for scholarly research and creative activities facilitated by the IMC to secure support to TMU researchers and to make an impact in Canada and internationally.

Priority 1: Enhance the learning journey for greater student success: At OZLSI we interpret "Enhancing the Student Learning Journey for Greater Student Success" as empowering students through innovative, experience-rich learning environments that cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets, practical skills, and holistic development.

Working closely with the School of Image Arts, which the IMC provides the unique opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in creating and exhibiting their work within an internationally recognized gallery, and to participate in funded opportunities, such as fellowships.

The OZLSI will work with IMC leadership to identify examples of program deliverables that may be included in our reporting.





The Dais at TMU

The Dais is a public policy and leadership think tank at Toronto Metropolitan University, working at the intersection of technology, education and democracy to build shared prosperity and citizenship for Canada. The following section highlights the alignment of the Academic Plan priorities with local level plans at the Dais.

The Dais Local Plan for TMU Academic Plan 2025-2030

The Dais is Canada's platform for bold policies and better leaders. A public policy and leadership think tank at Toronto Metropolitan University, the Dais works at the intersection of technology, education and democracy to build shared prosperity and citizenship for Canada.

We bring together people confronting big challenges, put our policy research and solutions into the hands of decision-makers, and equip leaders with practical knowledge and skills to address the complex issues of our time.

What We Work On

INNOVATION + TECH	EDUCATION + SKILLS	DEMOCRACY + TRUST
Growing a more inclusive economy and lasting prosperity through innovation, while harnessing technology responsibly.	Ensuring that our education and training systems are equitably preparing Canadians to thrive in a changing world.	Better equipping a broader set of leaders to advance positive policy change and rebuild trust in public institutions.
All public purpose institutions must address both reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the existential threat of climate change. For us, these cross-cutting topics influence everything we do.		

From our home at TMU, we have direct access to, and collaborate with, scholars, students, entrepreneurs, leaders, diverse networks and communities who can develop new ideas and challenge old assumptions — with national and global reach.

The Dais advances TMU's Academic Plan 2025-2030 by:

- Equipping students and leaders with future-ready skills (student experience + future readiness)
- Producing high-impact, policy-relevant research (SRC excellence)
- Promoting equity-centred leadership and amplifying diverse voices (inclusion + belonging)
- Fostering inclusive civic dialogue (community-building)
- Ensuring responsible and sustainable innovation in technology governance.

Dais Initiative	Strategies	KPIs
Policy Research & Insight		
PRIORITIES: 2 (Research Excellence) * 5 (Future Readiness) * 3 (People + Community) * 4 (Indigenous Scholarship)		
Artificial Intelligence	<p>Conduct and publish quantitative and qualitative policy research on the responsible use and adoption of AI in Canada.</p> <p>Focuses include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure (compute capacity) 2. Skills 3. Productivity 4. Adoption (in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and Magnet) 5. AI, Kids and Privacy 6. AI and Labelling Social Media Content 	<p>SHORT TERM (12 MONTHS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings are cited in media articles, publications and public forums. Funding partners are secured to support policy research priorities. At least one project features collaboration/co-authorship with Indigenous organizations and/or scholars. <p>MEDIUM TERM (3 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insights are reflected in government and industry commitments and investments. Multi-year funding agreements are established for two research projects. <p>LONG TERM (5 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TMU is viewed as a leading voice in Canada on policy research at the intersection of AI/tech, education and democracy.
Canada's Survey of Online Harms	Seek funding to conduct and publish the 7th Annual Survey of Online Harms in Canada , which polls Canadians annually to determine public exposure to mis/disinformation, hate speech and other harmful online content, as well as public sentiment regarding social media regulation.	
Canada's Next Democracy Moonshot	Seek funding and partners to author and publish a new white paper on how Canada can strengthen democratic resilience and reinvigorate public participation through a transformative systematic approach, especially in the face of rising authoritarianism, disinformation, and public distrust.	
Education	In partnership with the TMU CERC in Migration and Integration , conduct policy research on post-secondary education, including international education reform.	
Digital Literacy Lesson Plans in Schools	Continue to design practical resources for educators and schools to enable provincial governments to embed relevant policy insights on digital Higher tools and technologies into curriculum plans that help prepare students to thrive in a digital world.	

Dais Initiative	Strategies	KPIs
Learning Programs & Courses		
PRIORITIES: 1 (Student Experience) * 5 (Future Readiness) * 3 (People + Community) * 4 (Indigenous Partnership)		
Screen Break (Phone-free schools)	Develop two microcredential courses and two Master Classes to support students, parents, educators, and school boards with information, guidance and training on developing healthier tech habits and effectively implementing phone restriction policies in all Canadian provinces.	<p>SHORT TERM (12 MONTHS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 15 learners enrolled in each offering A 90%+ course satisfaction rate Survey feedback from courses and programs Peer evaluation of teaching (audits) Learners represent equity-deserving groups Secure the commitment of at least 10 additional organizations in adopting the Democracy @ Work initiative for their employees
Democracy at Work	Design and launch a non-partisan learning initiative to build civic skills and engagement, AI and media literacy at work, in partnership with employers and unions across Canada. For the pilot stage, enlisted TMU's Athletic and Recreation Department as a training testing partner.	<p>MEDIUM TERM (3 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure \$150K in funding to support the renewal of the CanStudyUS Fellowship Study Experience in 2026/27. Strengthen collaborative instructional design and learning opportunities across TMU.
RAISE (Responsible AI Use for Non-Profits)	Launch The Responsible AI Adoption for Social Impact (RAISE) pilot program, in partnership with the Human Feedback Foundation and Creative Destruction Lab at U of T . RAISE is a national initiative to help nonprofit organizations across Canada responsibly and effectively adopt artificial intelligence (AI). As part of RAISE, conduct targeted training for 500 nonprofit professionals to build AI literacy and integrate AI into roles like fundraising, data stewardship, policy, and service delivery.	<p>LONG TERM (5 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure multi-year funding for learning programs to ensure sustained offerings and enrolment. Expand the CanStudyUS Fellowship to Europe.
Secure and Responsible Technology Program (SRTP)	<p>Offer four courses to provide professional learners with practical, scenario-based knowledge and tools to analyze and address 'real-world' tech policy issues, with access to networks of leading experts in the field.</p> <p>Courses include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tech Policy Foundations 2. Cyber Security Policy 3. Policy for Digital Economy 4. CURV840: Secure and Responsible Tech Policy Microcredential (in partnership with the Chang School of Continuing Education) 	

Dais Initiative	Strategies	KPIs	Dais Initiative	Strategies	KPIs
Leading Through Policy Change	The intensive, two-day Masterclass in Influencing Public Policy is designed to equip participants with essential skills, knowledge and practical strategies for driving evidence-based policy change.		Community Building, Convening & Knowledge Mobilization	PRIORITIES: 1 (Student Experience) * 3 (People + Community)* 5 (Future Readiness) * 4 (Indigenous Partnership)	
CanStudyUS Fellowship *Currently not being offered	Reshape the CanStudyUS Fellowship, a study experience designed for young people with an active interest in policy and current affairs to learn from experts and leaders in the United States and Canada. Fellows have been drawn from TMU Faculties of Social Work, Arts, Law, Ted Rogers School of Business and the Creative School .		TMU Democracy Forum	Plan, support and deliver at least 6 public events in 2025-26, featuring high-profile leaders on the issues of the day. Secure sponsorship for the series for 2025/26. Host Canada's new AI Minister Evan Solomon, and the MP for the riding in which TMU resides. Co-host the next Toronto Mayoral Debate at TMU (Spring 2026) in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts / Democratic Engagement Exchange (<i>pending direction</i>). Live stream talks to generate broader national reach across Canada, via the Toronto Star website.	SHORT-TERM (12 MONTHS) <ul style="list-style-type: none">General media coverage of talks includes mentions of TMU.Students from at least 3 faculties attend events.Each event includes at least 50 attendees.Events include speakers from equity-deserving and under-represented groups, including Indigenous voicesDais name recognition across campus and TMU faculties and departments.Updated Dais presence on the TMU website via the Zone Learning Network.
GRAD Leaders	Partner with TMU's Graduate Leadership Institute to offer a changemaking and leadership development program specifically for graduate students.		DXC Summit <i>Canada's Democracy Conference</i>	In partnership with OCAD U and the Open Democracy Project, co-host the 7th Annual DemocracyXChange Summit in April 2026 at TMU, with advisory input from TMU's Jarislowsky Chair in Democracy Sanjay Ruparelia .	MEDIUM TERM (3 YEARS) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Grow audience reach by 20%.Launch a trial subscription-based, paid media/outreach product.Secure additional media partnerships to promote national and international reach.Secure multi-year funding to support DXC.Contribute discourse and instructional support to Public Policy and Administration programs.Become an affiliate of the School for Public Policy and Democratic Innovation.
Education Planning Pathways	Provide community education to help high school students and parents make informed decisions about educational pathways that can help them develop future-ready skills and prepare for the future of work.		The Global AI Summit at TMU	Join the The Global AI Summit at TMU in September 2025 to share relevant insights into AI's evolving role in society.	
Making the Future (CSSH-505) *Currently not being offered	In this Liberal Studies upper-level course via the Faculty of Arts , students are challenged to imagine how innovation and entrepreneurship, education, democracy, diversity, and public engagement present issues or opportunities for Canada in the future. Through presentations by experts in the field and weekly discussions, students will take up the challenge of making a future for Canada and themselves.		URL to IRL Summit at TMU	Design and host Ontario's first conference on healthier tech habits and digital wellbeing for young people by young people in September 2025.	
			Screen Break Youth Champions Network	Build and launch a network of student champions across Canada to support healthier tech habits and digital wellbeing in schools, nation-wide.	LONG TERM (5 YEARS) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Secure sustained funding for Dais Talks series to expand events portfolio and enable additional funder benefits (e.g., receptions, exclusive membership benefits, etc).
			Elections Ontario: Register to Vote Campaign	In partnership with TMU's Democratic Engagement Exchange , co-lead student ambassador training and on-campus activations across Ontario campuses to encourage students to better understand the voting process and register as voters.	

Dais Initiative	Strategies	KPIs
Other Initiatives		
PRIORITIES: 1 (Student Experience) * 3 (Community Building) * 4 (Indigenous Partnership) * 5 (Future Readiness)		
Career Boost Employer	In partnership with TMU's Career, Co-op & Student Success Centre , provide practical experience and opportunities for TMU students to gain practical knowledge and skills through job placements throughout winter, spring and summer terms.	<p>SHORT-TERM (12 MONTHS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire at least one TMU student each term, from September 2025 to September 2030. • Participate in at least 5 on-campus events • Participate in 10 additional public events/opportunities (e.g., Elevate conference, FWD50, etc.) • Citations and media mentions of thought leadership content produced by Fellows.
Dais on Campus	<p>Participate in the Zone Learning Fair and Lab2Market Summit alongside innovation peer units that provide hands-on experience, which allows students to bridge the gap between education and real-world problems. Build strong ties with space partner Innovation Boost Zone to share relevant insights and cross-promote events and opportunities relevant to both our audiences.</p> <p>Support the priorities of the Office of the Provost and President's Office, including supporting government relations, hosting government leaders and other officials, and creating engagement opportunities across local and global networks.</p> <p>Foster deeper ties with central teams such as University Relations, Communications/Marketing, and Human Resources to leverage their expertise and advance shared goals across TMU.</p> <p>Table at TMU's Orientation Week and seize other public opportunities to disseminate knowledge and information about Dais/TMU initiatives.</p>	<p>MEDIUM TERM (3 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Dais networks to assist student grads in finding employment in related fields such as public service and politics. • Participate in at least 25 public events on stage over the next 3 years. • New Youth Fellows program launched for at least 10 fellows. Fellows contribute to or lead projects aligned with institutional goals. <p>LONG TERM (5 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in at least 50 events on stage over the next 5 years. • Funding secured to enable an expansion of the Youth Fellows pilot program.
Dais Fellows	<p>Continue to attract high-profile Canadian and international leaders from across sectors to serve as Dais Senior Fellows on topics of study at the Dais.</p> <p>Create a pilot program for TMU students to participate as Dais Youth Fellows and gain practical experience on influencing public policy change in Canada. <i>(Pending funding)</i></p>	



