EPI©entre ANNUAL REPORT

2022/2023

www.epicentreuwindsor.ca

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Windsor sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex peninsula and the straits – les détroits – of Detroit.

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A Message from EPICentre's Director

On behalf of the EPICentre Team, I am pleased to present the 2022-23 Annual Report for the Entrepreneurship, Practice, and Innovation Centre (EPICentre).

We had an incredible year serving students, entrepreneurs and community members through various engaging programs, events, and opportunities. Participation in EPICentre programming has increased significantly, which indicates a growing interest in entrepreneurship among University of Windsor students. Furthermore, attendance at our workshops and events has more than tripled from 1,047 to 3,877. We are proud to have ignited students' interest in entrepreneurship and delivered relevant training and programs that enabled our students and entrepreneurs to achieve their aspirations. We are transforming our students to be entrepreneurial leaders.

As part of the University of Windsor community and the broader entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Windsor-Essex region, EPICentre's mission and priorities align with the values of our community partners to advance social and economic well-being locally, nationally, and globally, all the while keeping diversity and inclusion as our main priority. We will continue to work towards securing funding and resources to achieve our goal of fostering an inclusive entrepreneurship and innovation culture on and off campus.

We couldn't have accomplished all these great feats without the support from our amazing community. I'd like to thank the University of Windsor, our board of advisors, mentors, partners, sponsors, and volunteers for your continued support. We would also like to give a shout out to students, entrepreneurs, and community members who have engaged with us. You are the reason we work hard everyday to ensure that we continuously pave the way for entrepreneurial thinkers to flourish and thrive within our community and beyond! Personally, I am grateful for my talented and dedicated team for always giving their best every day.

Finally, I look forward to the leadership of Dr. Shanthi Johnson, the new Vice-President of Research and Innovation, to bring EPICentre to the next level!



Vision

EPICentre's vision is to support the transformation of people into entrepreneurial thinkers, and innovative ideas into successful economic and social enterprises through training, mentorship, and networking.

Mission

To provide experiential entrepreneurial learning opportunities that enhance University of Windsor's mission regarding education and research.

To provide skills, tools, and network to entrepreneurs and professionals to launch and grow economic and social initiatives.

Values

- We hold ourselves accountable by performing our duties with passion and integrity.
- o We embrace a diverse and fun work environment through trust and respect.
- We achieve service excellence through teamwork, empathy, and continuous improvement.
- We shape the future with constant experimentation and innovation.

A Year in Review (22/23 Highlights)

2022-23 was an exceptional year for EPICentre. There was a significant increase in participation in our programs, events, and activities. Through class presentations, tours and networking events, our outreach efforts have reached 5,276 people, an increase of 330% from the previous year. 3,877 individuals participated in our workshops and webinars, representing an increase of 270% from the prior year. Our venture and startup programs also graduated 96 teams (122 participants), an increase of 63% from the previous year. Additionally, after being inactive for over two years, we were excited to reopen the MakerSpace to students and community members to learn, tinker and create prototypes, further fostering entrepreneurial thinking and innovation within our community. Our social media followers and subscribers gained a steady growth of 9.6%, with the most significant increase in the following of our YouTube channel – a 66% increase in subscribers!

Programs to Support Student Entrepreneurs and Startups

Supporting student entrepreneurs and startups remains our priority. EPICentre delivered four cohort-based programs in 2022-23, which included two RBC Founders programs in both summer (full-time) and fall (part-time) semesters, supporting 16 venture teams. As the funding from the Government of Ontario's Women Entrepreneurship Strategy ended, the fifth and final VentureWomen Program concluded with eight venture teams. We also launched a new program, VentureU, which trained 23 students in the essential skills of entrepreneurship, creative problem-solving and critical thinking. Our Coworking membership program continues to support startups and organizations to thrive and further their business and social impact by providing them with access to professional office space and a vibrant entrepreneurship environment. Since its launch in October 2020, the NextGen CTO program has seen a significant increase in participation from students in the foundations of intellectual property training module. The enrolment has increased from 49 participants in its first cohort (October 2020) to 309 participants in the latest cohort (March 2023).



Social Entrepreneurship

Our partnership with Libro Credit Union continued to grow with the **Social Enterprise Coaching Program** and the annual social entrepreneurship summit. The 2023 cohort consisted of nine social-purpose teams working to validate and launch their social enterprises, who were successfully guided and mentored on their path to creating positive social impact. This program provided invaluable support and expertise to these aspiring changemakers, equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge to develop sustainable business models that address pressing social issues. Furthermore, the Greenovation Event Series concluded the 2022-23 social entrepreneurship activities with a webinar on circular economy presented by Gurbeen Bhasin, Executive Director of Aangen and a sold out networking event/panel discussion with local "greenovators" event at the gorgeous Bloomin' Gardener, a tropical greenhouse in Oldcastle.



2023 Social Enterprise Coaching Program Cohort with judges & EPICentre staff



GREENnovation Social at the Bloomin' Gardener

University of Windsor Alumni Association This year, Patrick Lauzon, a senior mechanical EPICentre Founders Award

engineering student from the Faculty of Engineering, was the recipient of the **Alumni Association EPICentre Founders Award**. This \$1,000 annual scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate student who demonstrates good academic standing and involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Patrick participated in the VentureStart program working on an innovative idea with the hopes of conserving water usage. "The EPICentre has been an amazing resource. They've helped guide me through the essential components of starting a business and connected me with a network of experts and like-minded individuals. I look forward to continuing my entrepreneurial journey during and after my studies as I aspire to create or contribute to a company that solves an important problem," said Patrick.

Student Competitions

The RBC EPIC Business Model Canvas Competition was held virtually in November, inviting post-secondary students across Canada to compete for prizes over \$20,000. 26 teams from 8 post-secondary institutions participated in the 2022 competition. This exciting competition celebrates innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit on a national level. It challenges entrepreneurs to develop and present their business ideas using the Business Model Canvas framework. This competition provides participants with valuable feedback and exposure, and offers networking opportunities and potential resources to help bring their ideas to a new level.

Sponsored by the University of Windsor Alumni Association, the **Blue Sky Competition** was held during Lancer Care Week in January 2023. Three campus clubs competed in the competition bringing forward their best ideas for promoting healthy student lives in post-pandemic environments. Participants were encouraged to think beyond conventional boundaries and present groundbreaking ideas that have the potential to create a lasting impact. The Blue Sky Competition is a unique opportunity to foster entrepreneurial thinking in students who may not have considered this path.

Entrepreneurship SpeakHER Series

As we wrapped up the successful "Entrepreneurship SpeakHER Series"

funded by the U.S. Consulate General Toronto, we were pleased to continue the SpeakHER Series by partnering with Prof. Myra Tawfik, Don Rodzik Family Chair in Law and Entrepreneurship to continue amplifying our initiatives to support woman entrepreneurship.

The Law and Entrepreneurship SpeakHER Webinar Series is an empowering initiative that spotlights women in entrepreneurship and the legal aspects of starting and growing a business. We had the opportunity to highlight women entrepreneurs' unique obstacles and challenges, particularly in the legal and intellectual property areas.

Consul General of the U.S Consulate General in Toronto Susan R. Crystal, speaking with Zule Ankamah, founder of Zule Eats, during her tour to the University of Windsor on August 3rd, 2022.

Blue Sky competition winning teams, iudges & EPICentre staff

MakerSpace

We are excited to reopen our **MakerSpace** in the summer of 2022. In partnership with the Faculty of Engineering, the MakerSpace serves as a hub for creativity, collaboration, and hands-on learning. We continue our mission of providing a collaborative space, equipment, and consultation supporting students, entrepreneurs, and community members by providing them access to various equipment and a makers community to experiment, innovate and create. Since its reopening, MakerSpace has completed 72 3D printing projects.



Project with The Bridge Youth to design, print and assemble miniature replica models of their 3D-printed homes in Leamington, the first 3D-printed homes for residential use in Canada and the largest build of its kind in North America.

MakerSpace helped Engineering students with their cornerstone projects by 3D printing parts and components for their autonomous "egg ambulances."



EPICentre's Impact 2022 - 2023

Discover



96,930+

social media engagement



724,680+

social media reach



13,062+

social media & newsletter subscribers



Canada 37.6%

47 presentations & networking events

5,276 total attendees

2,270+ YouTube

video views

25,823+ website traffic

Learn



3,877 participants



6 competitions

243 participants



14 YouTube videos produced

1,380+ views



2 micro-credentialled programs

656 participants



81 speakers/experts/judges engaged

Start





96 venture teams & startups 122 participants

- 68 students
- 54 alumni & community



770+ mentorship & coaching hours

EPICentre Programming



Funded by RBC Foundation, the RBC EPIC Founders Program

is a 12-week accelerator program for startups and early-stage businesses founded by current students or recent graduates of the University of Windsor or other post-secondary institutions in Ontario looking to capture market and customer validation. Each participant received up to \$6,000 in participation awards, access to mentors and advisors, workshops, and networking events to help them validate ideas and to launch the business.

The program concluded with the Final Pitch Competition, where participants presented their business idea and what they had learned throughout the program to a panel of judges to win one of the top two prizes. This program provides participants support, resources, and mentorship to accelerate their entrepreneurial journey. The RBC EPIC Founders Program is a launchpad for entrepreneurial success, offering a nurturing environment where innovators can thrive, learn and make a significant impact. With the program's comprehensive support and guidance, participants are equipped with the necessary tools and connections to build sustainable and successful businesses.

Top Pitch (\$3,500) Winner

🔀 Spencer Montcalm, BSc Chemistry and Visual Arts | Montcalm Fine

Art Conservation

2nd Place (\$1,000) Winner

🕎 Ala Falaki, PhD Computer Science | Socialization





Acceptance rate: 41.1%

2 UWindsor alumni

5 UWindsor students

Academic disciplines: Business & Management | Computer Science |
Fine Arts | Chemistry | Engineering

Sectors: SAAS | Arts & Culture | Fitness Equipment | Gifting









RBC EPIC Founders Program – Fall Edition is a 12-week

part-time accelerator program specifically designed for early-stage startups founded by current students or recent graduates of the University of Windsor. Utilizing Lean Startup Methodology, startups learn how to conduct customer discovery and develop a minimum viable product (MVP) to rest their early-stage product/service. Each participant received mentorship, training, and up to \$2,000 in participation award.

The program concluded with the Final Pitch Competition where participants presented their business idea and how they validated their ideas through Lean Startup Methodology to a panel of judges to win one of the top two prizes.

Top Pitch (\$2,000) Winner



Mohammed Ehsan Ur Rahman, MSc Computer Science | WeCare4u

2nd Place (\$1,000) Winner



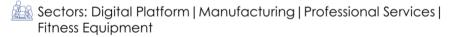
👱 David Osiri, Master of Management | The Mentormorphosis



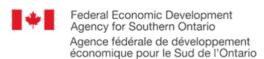


Acceptance rate: 56.2%

Academic disciplines: Business & Management | Computer Science | Engineering











The VentureWomen Program, funded by the

Government of Ontario in collaboration with Invest WindsorEssex and RISE, is a 4-mor accelerator program for women entrepreneurs in the Windsor-Essex region. Participants get access to dynamic expert mentors and advisors, exclusive and tailored workshops, special events, and funding to help them expand their network and take their business ideas to the next level.

This program recognizes the unique challenges faced by women in entrepreneurship and strives to provide them with the resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities necessary to succeed. Through the VentureWomen Program, participants gained access to a supportive community of like-minded women entrepreneurs, industry experts, and mentors who offered guidance, expertise, and valuable insight to all participants.

The program concluded with the Final Pitch Competition, where participants presented their business ideas to a panel of judges to win the Top Pitch, She Inspires (proudly sponsored by Logic Executive Search & Workplace Solutions, a graduate of this VentureWomen program in 2021), and People's Choice awards.

Top Pitch (\$3,000) Winner



🕎 Amy Saba | SoHum Candles Inc.

She Inspires (\$1,000) Winner



🟋 Zule Ankamah | Zule Eats





Acceptance rate: 50%

Sectors: Food & Beverages | Arts & Culture | eCommerce | Retail | Education | Gifting











Inspiring Female Founders: Women's Entrepreneurship Showcase

To celebrate the achievements of women entrepreneurs, we partnered with Windsor Essex Small Business and Entrepreneurship Centre to put on a showcase event celebrating women entrepreneurs in the region. This event was held at the Ciociaro Club and featured previous VentureWomen program members. 92 attendees from the Windsor-Essex area had the opportunity to network with entrepreneurs featured, learn more about their businesses and listen to a great panel discussion lead by Surria Fadel, Co-Founder of Cedar Valley Selections. This event was featured by local media outlets and received an overwhelming response from attendees who said they would be interested in attending more events celebrating women entrepreneurs.





















Funded by Libro Credit Union, the Libro Social Enterprise Coaching Program is a four-month program that provides aspiring early-stage social entrepreneurs with personalized coaching and guidance, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to build successful social enterprises. Through one-on-one coaching sessions, workshops, and networking opportunities, participants gain valuable insights into various aspects of social entrepreneurship.

The program culminated on the Final Pitch Day, where participants pitched to a panel of judges to win additional cash prizes.

1st Prize (\$5,000) Winner



🗶 Maryam Safarzadeh | Persian Arts & Cultural Centre

2nd Prize (\$1,000) Winner



🗶 Fuseinat Brimah | Cangro Agrifoods Inc.





Acceptance rate: 37.5%

These social entrepreneurs work towards addressing the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs):

















GREENnovation Event Series

The **Greenovation event series** aimed at providing social entrepreneurs and innovators their own stage to learn, connect and share ideas with each other for a more sustainable future. The event series started with a **webinar**, *Circular Economy*, held on June 8, 2023 with speaker Gurbeen Bhasin, Founder and Executive Director of Aangen. Participants of this webinar were able to gain insight into the circular economy concept to help them better understand/participate in the panel discussion at the Greenovation Social.



30 Attendees

21 Video views

The second part of the series, the **Greenovation Social** was held at the Bloomin' Gardener, a tropical greenhouse in Oldcastle. The event featured a panel discussion engaging the audience with conversations on sustainability and the opportunities and challenges they face working towards environmental causes. The event also included a mindful meditation session, delicious plant-based snacks and an engaging networking session.





8 Speakers and Panelists

39 Attendees

Special thanks to our speakers:

Gurbeen Bhasin | Founder & Executive Director of Aangen

Nadia Harduar | Sustainability Officer from University of Windsor

Dane Fader | Founder of Greener Farms

Niharika Bandaru | Co-Founder & Executive Director of Windsor of Change

Stepan Tuzlov | Co-Founder & Business Operations of Windsor of Change

Paul Mancini | Co-Founder of Green Future Growth

Lori Atkinson | Regional Manager of Libro Credit Union





VentureU

Newly launched in February 2023, **VentureU Skills Bootcamp** is an intensive 4-day "boot camp" for students looking to learn essential entrepreneurial skills, including problem identification, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Participants attended design thinking, business model canvas, customer discovery process and pitching workshops. They worked in teams to identify a real-world problem and worked collaboratively to develop a creative and feasible solution. Each participant received a \$200 participation award sponsored by the John Dobson Foundation.

On the final day of the boot camp, teams presented their solutions to a panel of judges for a chance to win one of two \$500 cash prizes:



Joseph Fawzy | BFA Visual Arts

Teagan Grinwis | MEng Civil Engineering

Richard Nonso | BSc Computer Science

Tarunkumar Trilochandra Gupta | MEng Electrical & Computer Engineering

Team Personal Support Plus

Varun Charavanan | MEng Industrial Engineering Nourin Ahmed | MSc Computer Science Eldridge Venantius Fernandes | MEng Electrical Engineering Madiha Shaikh





Acceptance rate: 60.5%



Computer Science | Management |
Engineering | Chemistry |
Human Kinetics | Psychology |
Visual Arts | Neuroscience |





Venture Start

VentureStart Program replaced the EPIC Discovery and EPIC Incubator Programs in 2022. The change was made to streamline the process and offer a more flexible structure and timeline catering to participants' varying needs and stages of their ideas, from ideation to launch. Through coaching, mentorship and access to EPICentre's digital tools and resources, participants learn how to validate, launch and grow their ideas confidently.

The program is available to all University of Windsor and St. Clair College students and alumni within 7 years of graduation. This program also fosters collaboration and networking among young entrepreneurs, enabling participants to connect with like-minded individuals, investors, and industry experts.



144

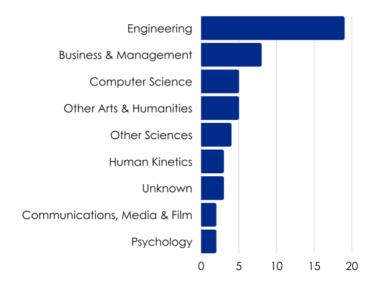
Mentorship & Coaching hours





27 Students

10 Community



CoWorking

Coworking Membership offers members access to EPICentre's collaborative and open concept coworking space, amenities, local entrepreneurial ecosystem and other resources to help them grow their businesses and integrate into our vibrant entrepreneurship community. This membership offers a flexible structure that caters to members' varying needs, especially in the post-pandemic hybrid work environment. EPICentre is proud to have created a symbiotic entrepreneurial ecosystem that benefits both our coworking members and student entrepreneurs as the space allows them plenty of opportunities to network, collide and collaborate.







supporting 11 companies working in:



Non-profit | Digital Platform | Software | Advanced Manufacturing | eCommerce | Professional Services | Biotech

















Alpha Drone Photography







The NextGen CTO Program provides foundations of intellectual property (IP) and intellectual property strategy training to future CTOs (Chief Technology/Technical Officers). Throughout the five-week program, participants learn key skills, competencies, and know-how through a combination of online learning modules provided by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), quizzes, and weekly virtual workshops and discussions. Participants receive a certificate of completion and micro-credential badge upon program completion.

The program was offered twice, in Fall 2022 and Winter 2023 semesters.



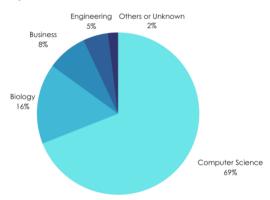
656 Participants



652 post-secondary students



in which 638 are UWindsor students







Centre for International Governance Innovation



The RBC Business Model Canvas Competition invites

student entrepreneurs from any post-secondary institution in Canada to demonstrate their understanding of business model validation through their entrepreneurial experience. The competition was held virtually via Zoom in two rounds. Semi-final rounds were held on November 10 and the final round was held on November 18, 2022.

Over \$20,000 in cash and in-kind prizes were awarded to semi-finalists and winners of the competition.

1st Prize (\$10,000) Winner



Arbre | University of Toronto

2nd Prize (\$2,500) Winner



Cloud Safari | University of Waterloo

Postmedia People's Choice (\$2,000 in-kind advertising) Winner



🕎 Si-13 | McMaster University

KPMG Financial Competency (\$750) Winner



X Arbre | University of Toronto











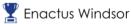




The 2022 **Blue Sky Competition**, sponsored by the University of Windsor Alumni Association, was held during the University of Windsor's Lancer Care Week, focusing on mental health and post-pandemic life. The competition was for campus clubs tasking them to present their ideas on engaging students in healthy lifestyles post-pandemic.

Congratulations to the winning campus clubs:

1st Prize (\$1,000 cash) Winner



2nd Prize (\$500 cash) Winner





Entrepreneurship Speak **HLK** series Creating crossborder connections

Funded by the U.S. Consulate General Toronto, the Entrepreneurship SpeakHER Series is a virtual speaker and networking series that empowers post-secondary students, especially women, to consider entrepreneurship a potential career path. The series consisted of 8 virtual webinars featuring American woman entrepreneurs from various industry sectors.

The Entrepreneurship SpeakHER Series was broken into two seasons: 1st season from January to April 2022 (Winter 2022 semester) and the 2nd season from September to November 2022 (Fall 2022 semester). To end each season, a virtual networking event was hosted on Remo, bringing together women founders, students and community members from both sides of the border to connect and network.







17 Women entrepreneurs engaged as speakers







480 Attendees

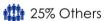


425+ Video views















Law & Speak HER Entrepreneurship series

As a continuance of the SpeakHER series to highlight women entrepreneurship, EPICentre partnered with Prof. Myra Tawfik, Don Rodzik Family Chair in Law and Entrepreneurship, EPICentre to deliver the Law & Entrepreneurship SpeakHER Series in Winter 2023 semester.

This webinar series featured conversations with accomplished woman entrepreneurs in various industries discussing the unique obstacles and challenges women entrepreneurs face, particularly in navigating legal matters and dealing with lawyers. Each session of this series was moderated by a University of Windsor Law student, allowing them to navigate the bridge between law and entrepreneurship.



3 Virtual sessions



89 Attendees



150+ Video views



66 Self-identified as women



26 UWindsor students



19 Alumni

Myra Tawfik, Don Rodzik Family Chair in Law & Entrepreneurship

Law & Entrepreneurship: Is Data the New Oil? Driving Automotive Entrepreneurs in the Innovation Economy

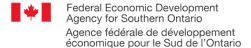
This half-day forum brought together academics, policy experts and community leaders to kickstart a conversation about automotive technologies and the innovation economy. The discussion explored how Windsor-Essex can position itself as a key player in the automotive sector's commercialization of intangibles (data and intellectual property). Data privacy, data ownership and sharing are among the themes discussed in the forum.



15 Speakers



92 Attendees



Myra Tawfik, Don Rodzik Family Chair in Law & Entrepreneurship











The **Connect For Networking Series** was launched in March of 2023 to create a space for students and community members to come together to learn and forge lasting connections. Each networking session will focus on a different topic of interest and feature an activity to keep attendees engaged and entertained.

Two events were held in March and April 2023. Mental health was the theme of the inaugural event, where a panel of speakers talked about the importance of mental health in our community, the challenges faced by those working in the sector and how organizations, entrepreneurs and community members can better work towards an intentional movement. The second event focused on e-commerce, where panelists shared their entrepreneurial journey and best practices in e-commerce.



2 Events



6 Speakers



125 Attendees

MakerSpace

After taking a hiatus throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, EPICentre reopened its **MakerSpace** in partnership with the Faculty of Engineering in June 2022 at a new location! Still in the Ed Lumley Centre for Engineering Innovation (CEI), the MakerSpace is now in a highly visible area near the main lobby in Room 1110.

The MakerSpace is a collaborative and interactive place providing a unique opportunity for students from all faculties, entrepreneurs, and community members to explore, learn, and create. It is an innovative playground and collaborative workplace equipped with cutting-edge tools, machinery, and technology including 3D Printers, laser cutters, and more. As a hub for hands-on learning, prototyping, and manufacturing, the MakerSpace lets its users bring their ideas to life and transform them into tangible prototypes or market-ready products. In addition to assisting students with their course-based projects, the MakerSpace also worked with faculty members, staff, entrepreneurs, and industry partners to help them conceptualize, design and produce their prototypes. Workshops were held regularly to teach attendees the fundamentals of 3D printing and 3D modeling.



15 Workshops

237 Attendees



18 3D Printing & Consulting projects



54 3D Printing projects



575+ Hours of 3D printing time



22+ Hours of laser cutter usage time



2+ Kilometers of 3D printer filament consumed





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