

Future Ready Students

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ANNUAL REPORT



Western
StudentExperience

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee and the Lūnaapéewak, on lands connected with the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum between the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee and the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796.

With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

Student Experience is actively engaged in the ongoing work of decolonization and Indigenization by honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, and embedding them into our practices. In collaboration with Indigenous staff and faculty we are committed to supporting Indigenous student success by fostering inclusive spaces that honour Indigenous identities and support holistic well-being. This work is ongoing, and we approach it with humility and accountability.

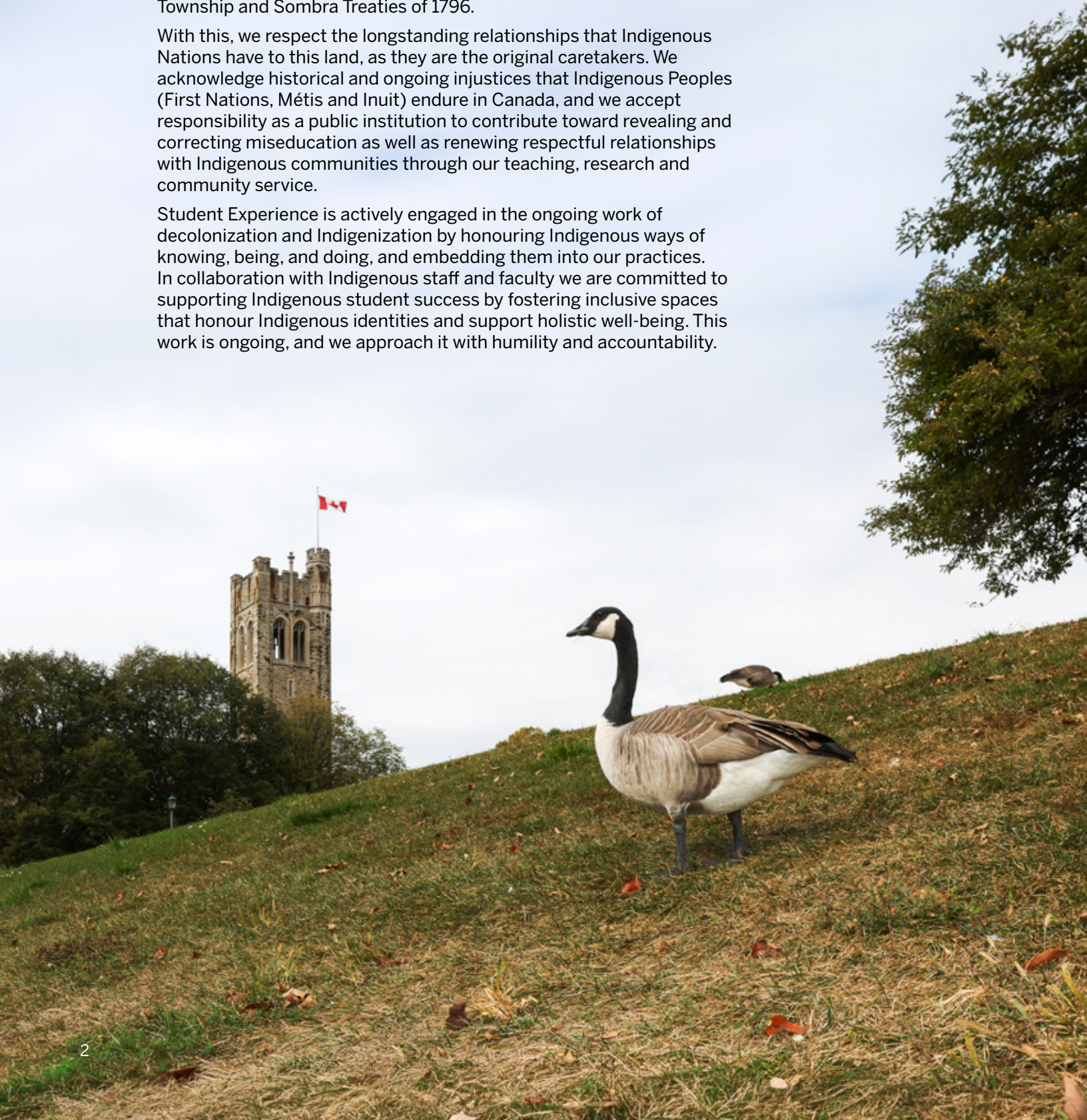




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VISION

All Western Students
Belong. Learn. Thrive.

MISSION

We partner with Western communities to deliver holistic and dynamic experiences, programming and services that **empower and support** students to realize their full potential.

GUIDING VALUES

Inclusion | Empathy | Collaboration | Innovation

STRATEGIC PLAN

Student impact drives everything we do at Student Experience, day in and day out. This commitment shapes the direction of our Student Experience 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, aligning with the University's strategic plan – *Towards Western at 150*.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Delivering Transformational & Impactful Student Experiences

Our goal is to cultivate an environment where students can thrive during their time at Western University. Achieving this requires creating holistic and dynamic experiences, seamless support and resources, and proactive services and advocacy across multiple facets of the student journey. From career support to equity and accessibility support to health and well-being services, our areas of service intersect to enrich a student's experience.

Creating Impact Through People

We are dedicated to ensuring that our team members are empowered and equipped to create impact for our students. By focusing on diversifying and educating our team and providing access to new technologies, tools and analytics, we are fostering a safe and trusting environment where our staff can engage, learn and grow.

Sustaining Our Impact

As our students' needs continuously evolve, we must adapt accordingly. With this comes a commitment to cultivating strategic partnerships and leveraging data to inform our decisions. We understand the importance of pushing beyond the status quo to create a broader and more profound impact.



**CHRISTINE
STAPLETON**
Director, Sports
& Recreation

**HEATHER
WAKELY**
Acting Director,
Leadership & Learning

**CHRISTOPHER
LENGYELL**
Director of Housing,
Student Experience Partner

**STEPHANIE
HAYNE BEATTY**
Acting Vice-
Provost, Students

**CAROLYN
TEMPLE**
Director, Student
Engagement

**VANESSA
DOLISHNY**
Director, Strategic
Communications
& Marketing

**RACHEL
STACK**
Director, Wellness
& Well-being

A Letter From the Student Experience Senior Leadership Team

Today's students are navigating a world shaped by rapid technological disruption, demographic change, economic uncertainty and evolving career pathways. Understandably, this can create anxiety about what comes next.

Students come to university seeking not only knowledge and a meaningful, discipline-related career when they graduate, but also a sense of belonging, opportunities for leadership development and experiences that help them build lifelong friendships and professional networks. Our role is both to support students in achieving their academic goals and ensure they leave Western prepared and confident in navigating their future.

Future readiness extends beyond career outcomes. It's about preparing students to adapt to change, embrace uncertainty and become thoughtful, engaged and resilient citizens. This includes developing critical human skills such as communication, empathy, teamwork and leadership alongside academic and technical expertise.

At Western, student learning happens everywhere. From classrooms and research labs to residences, wellness appointments, co-curricular opportunities and sport and recreation, these interconnected environments shape how students grow and prepare for their next steps. In close partnership with Faculties, Affiliated University Colleges and campus colleagues, and in support of Western's strategic plan, we create the conditions for students to belong, learn and thrive.

Students are best able to engage in their learning and prepare for the future when they feel safe, supported and part of a community. The relationships students build during their university experience are an important part of becoming future ready. Through peer-to-peer connection, campus engagement, student leadership and amplifying student voices, we create meaningful opportunities for students to connect, contribute and grow. This is why belonging remains a central priority for Student Experience, guiding the programs and services we offer across campus.

Throughout this report, we highlight how our work in Wellness & Well-being, Leadership & Learning, Sports & Recreation and Student Engagement are preparing students to become future ready.

We are proud of the ways we supported students in 2025-26 and look forward to continuing this work in partnership with you.

SINCERELY,

The Student Experience Senior Leadership Team

Division-Wide Impact

BY THE NUMBERS

51,134

students benefited from 1:1 connections with expert staff

51,256

students were reached through delivery of educational content

69,902

students attended Student Experience events

12,534

students engaged in peer-to-peer support programs

Stud



* The programs and services listed are provided as examples and do not represent an exhaustive list.

WELCOME



JULY/AUGUST

Preparing to welcome students – student leader and Soph training

Western Launch:

- 1-1 course advising
- Faculty Fridays
- Overnight Experience
- SmartStart

Varsity sport competition starts across multiple sports:

Western students get in free to all regular season home games on campus

Eligible new and returning students register for academic accommodations

Students register and transfer care to wellness & well-being services

Tri-Agency Scholarship Seminar Series for graduate students



6,300

students welcomed to campus

8,272

students attend Homecoming & Student Fan Festival

SEPTEMBER

Welcome new and returning students to campus:

- Orientation Week
- Equity Deserving Student Welcomes
- Fall Graduate Student Orientation

Homecoming & Student Fan Festival

Inclusive Recreation Programming:

- Women's only fitness hours
- Unified
- Inclu-swim

PAL Centre opens for peer learning support (WSSB 4139)

Wellness education events begin:

- ArtThrive
- Making Friends on Campus

Registration opens for Intramurals and Recreational Sports Clubs

National Day for Truth & Reconciliation Lacrosse Game and Event

Move Your Mood events begin:

- Glow Volleyball
- Learn to Lift
- SOGS Family & Friends Turf Yoga

Student Journey

5,180

Students attend
hirewesternu
Career Fair



559

Academic
All-Canadian
Student Athletes

OCTOBER

Fair season is in full swing:

Volunteer Fair
hirewesternu
Fall Career Fair
Graduate &
Professional School Fair
World Mental
Health Day Fair

Students may start accessing Student Experience services as they navigate coursework and mid-terms, helping them stay on track and thrive:

"ASE" Your Learning event
Peer 2 Peer
Wellness Program
1:1 Mental Health
appointments and
groups (year-round)
Therapy Dogs (monthly)
Appointments with
writing advisors and
learning specialists
Group study sessions

NOVEMBER

Soph recruitment

Vaccination Clinics

Fall playoff and championship games (including OUA and U SPORTS)

Fall Preview Day tours and information booths

Academic All-Canadian student athletes announced – Western #1 in Canada (2025)

Drop-in career peer advising at UCC 210



DECEMBER

Study in the Accessible Learning Lab in Weldon Library

Students with disabilities are supported with accommodated exams

Exam wellness initiatives and de-stress programming to students during final exam period:

Study Café
Art-based
activities
Puppy
Playtime/
Therapy Dogs
De-stress Fest

600

students attended
the Sexual Wellness Fair

FEBRUARY

hirewesternu Winter Career Fair
Sexual Wellness Fair

Learn2Thrive – six week program
for students to build new habits,
lead from their strengths and
focus on healthy living

Hiring underway for hundreds
of Western student staff:

Sophs

Campus Recreation staff

PAL Peer Leaders

Western Launch Peer Leaders

Students meet with prospective
employers for faculty-based
internships and co-ops

MARCH

Kicking off Soph
onboarding for fall

Support students
leading into final exams:

Mental health appointments

PAL Centre

Move Your Mood

Wellness education

Playoff and championship games
(including OUA and U SPORTS)

Learn to Lead Virtual Summit
for students to develop
leadership skills

Students meet with a Career
Coach to discuss future plans



JANUARY

Leadership Fair

Student Strengths Conference

Academic and Career workshops:

Note Taking

Reading Strategies

Hacking Your Study Space

Personal Branding

Networking

Wellness & Recreation Fair

Winter Graduate Student Orientation

Winter *Move Your Mood* Programming:

Glow and Flow Yoga

Glow Pickleball

Learn to Lift

2,000+
attendees at
the Wellness &
Recreation Fair





11,000

students supported through the Peer 2 Peer Wellness Program



1,000+

student leaders (Sophs) trained for Orientation support



APRIL

Final exam study supports:

- Study Café
- Accommodated Exams Prep Lounge
- Exam snack cart

Deadline to add items to Western Co-Curricular Record

Mustangs Student Athlete Major Awards

Year-end student staff and leadership recognition



3,467

students participated in Learn to Lead



MAY

I'm Graduating, What's Next? Career workshop

Summer intramurals launch

Student Experience services are open all summer!

GradWRITE seminar series



JUNE

hirewesternu Healthcare Day

Students enroll in project based learning courses



* The programs and services listed are provided as examples and do not represent an exhaustive list.

Experience to Impact: The Western Co-Curricular Record Prepares Students for What Comes Next

What students learn outside the classroom is just as important as what they learn within it – particularly as they prepare for a future shaped by rapid technological change, evolving career pathways and the growing influence of artificial intelligence. Through leadership roles, clubs, volunteering, work integrated learning and other co-curricular experiences, students develop transferable skills employers are seeking.

This year, the Careers & Experience team redesigned the Western Co-Curricular Record (WCCR), reimagining how these experiences are tracked, recognized and showcased. The redesign focused on two key goals: helping students translate their on-campus experiences into career impact and recognizing the rich and valuable learning experiences that take place outside of the classroom.

“At its core, the WCCR is about helping students translate their experiences into skills they can carry into their careers or further study,” says Jacob Clarke, Experiential Learning Coordinator, Co-Curricular Programs. “Increasingly, employers are prioritizing transferable skills alongside technical expertise. It’s a way of making that learning visible and meaningful while equipping students with the skills to succeed in an ever-changing world.”

The WCCR also incorporates the Conference Board of Canada’s Employability Skills Framework, aligning student experiences with in-demand competencies such as communication, teamwork, leadership and resilience. This creates a shared language that helps students clearly articulate their strengths while giving employers greater confidence in the skills they bring. Enhanced criteria including minimum participation thresholds also ensure that recognized experiences reflect meaningful engagement and a high standard of quality. It also incorporates the same principles and definitions of experiential learning that are used in curricular experiential learning.

This work supports Western’s strategic commitment to ensure every student graduates with at least one meaningful experiential learning opportunity. The WCCR provides a more complete picture of experiential learning at Western by tracking engagement in co-curricular experiences alongside experiential learning course tagging.

With an enhanced focus on the depth and intensity of experiences, the WCCR now reflects the quality, not just quantity, of student experiences offered by faculties and departments across Western, King’s and Huron. A newly expanded **Co-Curricular Directory** with over 500 opportunities further supports students in finding experiences that match their interests and goals.

The WCCR reflects a strong and intentional approach to recognizing student learning. By helping students translate their involvement into clearly articulated skills, it equips graduates with greater clarity and confidence as they take their next steps.



Co-curriculars had a significant impact on my growth as a leader and have truly helped prepare me for the real world. They provided me opportunities I never expected, and were parts of my most memorable moments at Western!

- Eesha Sharma, Western Engineering graduate (2026); Head Soph, Charity Soph Program; President, Western Undergraduate Engineering Society

Leading the Way

Scholarship Writing Day

The Writing Support Centre (WSC) collaborated with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to launch Scholarship Writing Day for PhD students. Participants received feedback on how they were messaging to those outside their research community, how effectively they were selling their ideas and how clearly and dynamically they were communicating their work.

The event followed a series of six new WSC presentations tailored for SSHRC, CIHR, and NSERC applicants that almost 1,000 graduate students attended.

Due to the high enrolment and excellent feedback, the WSC plans to make this scholarship-writing programming an annual event.



What's New?



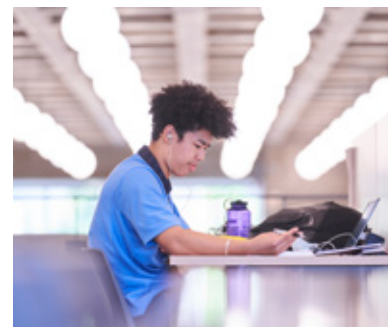
Accommodated Exams transition to Student Experience

Leadership & Learning welcomed the University's Accommodated Exams operation to Student Experience and supported 39,510 accommodated exams during 2025-26 for 3,909 students. Bringing the Accommodated Exams and Accessible Education teams together supports consistent accommodations, timely coordination and clear communication. Students benefit from a unified approach and holistic understanding of their needs.



Strengths Conference

On Saturday, January 10, 2026, Leadership & Learning hosted its first ever Strengths Conference. *Your Strengths, Your Story* was a high-impact professional development experience designed to help students better understand their talents, build practical career skills and level-up their confidence. The event delivered empowering insights through a dynamic fireside chat and diverse concurrent sessions all rooted in the power of CliftonStrengths. More than 100 students enjoyed a comprehensive day of learning and practical application to boost their academic journey and future career.



Learning Development & Success accessibility updates through OPAIP funding

The Learning Development & Success team leveraged Ontario Post-Secondary Access and Inclusion Program (OPAIP) funding to enhance learning supports for all students, including expanding **Smart Start: Academics** online modules to increase interactivity and incorporate accessibility features such as narration, alt-text, image descriptions and inclusive language.

These modules are available to all Western students and are heavily used by incoming students to help them refresh their knowledge of key high-school concepts and prepare for learning at Western.



92%

of 2025 graduates participated in intensive experiential learning



39,510

accommodated exams supported



6,558

students registered with Accessible Education

3,141

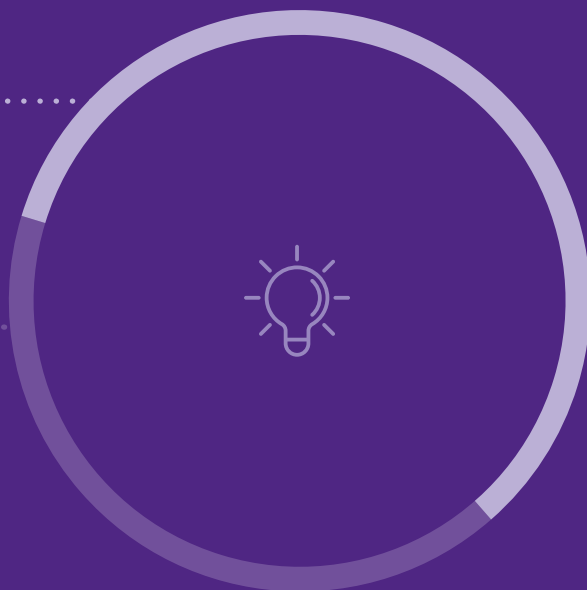
students in community engaged learning courses

2,198

students in industry project courses

5,339

total students participating in project based learning courses



1,324

unique employers posted a position and/or attended a recruitment event



8,437

students engaged in career education in the classroom



2,636

students engaged in peer learning



7,787

+193%

students involved in transition, leadership and enrichment mentorship programs



3,601

students received 1-1 writing support

Simu Liu Returns to Western to Foster Conversations on Mental Health and Resilience

Supporting student mental health is foundational to helping students succeed — both during their time at Western and as they navigate challenges ahead.

In October 2025, Western welcomed Simu Liu - filmmaker, producer, writer, actor and Western alumni (HBA '11) — to campus for an exclusive keynote event, *The Power of the Possible*.



“As a Western alumnus who walked the same campus, went to the same recreation centre, and was part of the same club system, students could genuinely see themselves in Simu. That connection made his reflections about his struggles with identity, family pressure and self-doubt resonate with students and reminded them that struggle isn't a detour from success, it's part of it, and that redefining what success looks like for you is part of the journey. This event opened up a larger conversation on campus for students to feel comfortable talking about mental health and, most importantly, seeking support. Above all, it reflected that Western and the USC recognize the real pressures students are facing, and are committed to creating a campus where students don't have to wait until they have it all figured out to ask for help.

In this candid discussion facilitated by Canadian psychiatrist Dr. David Goldbloom, Liu shared his reflections on mental health, cultural expectations and resilience from his unique lens as a Chinese-Canadian man from an immigrant family. Speaking openly about his experiences with self-doubt, family dynamics and navigating a competitive industry, he highlighted both the challenges and opportunities that shaped his path to success.

Supported by Western's 24th Chancellor, Kelly Meighen, the event was led by Student Experience (Wellness & Well-being and Sports & Recreation) in collaboration with the University Students' Council (USC), Housing & Ancillary Services and Office of the Registrar, reflecting a shared commitment to advancing student mental health and well-being across campus.

More than a keynote, the primary goal of the event was to normalize students' experiences with challenges and uncertainty, emphasizing that struggles are an inherent part of personal growth and development. The event created space for open and candid dialogue about the realities of navigating hardship and finding one's path. In sharing his own story, Liu reminded students that setbacks are not barriers to success, but part of the journey, reframing adversity as a catalyst for growth and possibility.

At its core, the event reinforced a simple but powerful message that students are not alone. We want students to leave Western not only academically prepared and career ready, but equipped with the resilience and confidence to navigate life's challenges, whatever they may be.

“

Through his candid and funny approach, Simu's story normalized the hardships that our students will inevitably face while also providing glimmers of hope. He shared of his challenging upbringing, his time at Western in Saugeen and in our Soph program, his experience of depression and his difficult journey finding his professional place, one rooted in his own passion rather than others' expectations. Simu kept us rapt and reminded us all of the power of the possible when we define success on our own terms.

- Dr. AnnaLise Trudell,
Manager, Wellness & Equity Education



Leading the Way

Peer 2 Peer Program

The Peer 2 Peer Wellness Program empowers trained student leaders to deliver practical mental health micro-skills, harm-reduction strategies and wellness education through classroom visits, events and campus outreach. The team of 16 Peer 2 Peer Wellness Leaders connected with 11,000 students in classrooms and events across campus.

By normalizing conversations about well-being and fostering connection, the program provides low barrier, preventative support that helps students build resilience and thrive.

What's New?

Strengthening Partnership with CMHA through the CICMH grant

Through funding from the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (CICMH) Campus-Community Partnership initiative, Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services and Western University strengthened their collaborative approach to supporting student mental health and well-being. The initiative improved crisis referral pathways and enhanced coordination between campus and community services. Investments in staff training also strengthened capacity to respond to complex student needs.



Gender-Based and Sexual Violence (GBSV) Training Policy

In the spring of 2026, Senate passed a new policy to make GBSV training mandatory for incoming undergraduate and graduate students. If students fail to complete this training, they will be unable to progress in their studies. This is a strong signal of the institution's commitment to fostering a safe and respectful campus environment.



Resolution Support Services

Resolution Support Services is a new program that was developed in response to a need for more proactive, non-punitive interventions and conflict resolution skill building as identified in the Student Code of Conduct review and the Student Mental Health Strategy. Resolution Support Services offers students supportive, non-disciplinary options to navigate conflict through one-on-one coaching, informal facilitated conversations and formal mediation.



41,255

student visits to Health
& Wellness Services

24,269

general practitioner/
physician visits

1,933

psychiatry visits

5,533

general practitioner/
physician mental health visits



15,121

students attended
wellness education
& outreach events



612

students received support
through Student Support
and Case Management

Up 31%

THE MOST COMMON MENTAL
HEALTH DIAGNOSES WERE:

Anxiety
Disorders

ADHD

Depressive
Disorders

GBSV PREVENTION
EDUCATION & TRAINING
COMPLETION RATES

6,369

 students

Consent 101
(incoming first years)
96% complete

4,906

 students

Undressing Consent
(incoming first years
living in residence)
95% complete

1,156

 students

Beyond the Locker Room
(student athletes)
95% complete

1,051

 students

**Supporting Safer
Professional Practice
Pilot** (graduate students)
96% complete



Developing Student Leaders Through Sport and Recreation

Sports & Recreation is committed to developing students not only as athletes and recreation participants, but as leaders, mentors, advocates and changemakers within the campus and broader community.

Across Varsity Sport and Campus Recreation, leadership development is intentionally embedded, aligning closely with the priorities outlined in Sports & Recreation's strategic plan: *Game Plan 2028*, Student Experience's strategic plan and Western University's strategic plan: *Towards Western at 150*.

Within Mustangs Sport, leadership development takes many forms. Team captains across Western's 46 varsity teams and clubs help shape team culture, mentor teammates, foster accountability and inclusion. With mentorship and training from the Sport team, they lead by example both on and off the field of play.

Student-athletes also gain valuable leadership experience through the Mustangs Athlete Student Council (MASC), which provides opportunities to influence the student-athlete experience while developing skills in advocacy, governance, teamwork, event planning and peer leadership.

Leadership skills extend beyond competition through initiatives such as *Mustangs Care* and *Mustangs Talk*. Through community outreach, fundraising, youth engagement, school presentations, peer mentorship and wellness leadership, student-athletes learn how to lead with empathy, build meaningful relationships, support others and contribute positively to their communities.

Supported by the Parr Centre for Thriving, *Mustangs Talk & Thrive* and its network of Mustangs Wellness Leads (MWLs) trains student-athlete leaders to act as trusted peer supports and connectors to wellness resources. In 2025-26, 40 MWLs represented 41 varsity teams, extending the program's reach to nearly all of Western's 1,200 student-athletes. MWLs participate in leadership and mental health training and help foster supportive team cultures.

The impact of these leadership experiences is reflected in continued recognition at both the provincial and national levels. Through their commitment to community service, mentorship, wellness leadership and community engagement, Mustangs student-athletes have earned numerous Ontario University Athletics (OUA) and U SPORTS community service awards. Most recently, Track & Field student-athlete Aaron Thompson was named the inaugural recipient of the OUA Community Service Award in 2025-26, adding to a growing tradition of Mustangs student-athletes being recognized for their leadership.

Leadership development also extends well beyond varsity sport at Western. More than 700 student staff members were employed across Sports & Recreation during the 2025-26 academic year.

Student staff in Campus Recreation, Sport Western, Mustangs Events, Ticketing and Sport and Facilities gain hands-on experiential leadership opportunities. Returning staff mentor peers, take initiative on programming and move into senior leadership roles, while ongoing coaching and reflective learning help all student staff strengthen transferable skills such as conflict resolution, teamwork, adaptability, time management and leadership under pressure.

Sports & Recreation's emphasis on inclusion, accountability, collaboration and well-being helps Western students build leadership skills, foster a sense of belonging and connection to the Western community, and develop the confidence and career-ready skills to make an impact both at Western and beyond.



I will cherish every laugh, memory and friendship I've had here at the rec centre. I don't think I'll ever experience anything like this job again, and if I could do it all over again, I 100% would.

- Campus Recreation
2025-26 Student Staff Member



Leading the Way

Western Continues to Lead Nationally in Student-Athlete Academic Excellence

Western ranked #1 in Canada for U SPORTS Academic All-Canadians. With 559 Mustangs recognized during the 2025-26 academic year – 41% earning an 80% average or higher – this achievement reflects a strong culture of academic excellence supported by a dedicated academic success program (in partnership with Learning, Development & Success) offering:

- One-on-one academic support
- Graduate student mentors
- Study skills workshops
- Time management support
- Peer-assisted learning
- Athlete-specific study spaces
- Mentorship programming



I have learned a lot and have been able to connect with my teammates on a deeper level just by understanding certain ways to approach situations within basketball or outside. I appreciate [the opportunities] these past years. It has really changed the way my university career has gone and I can't thank you enough.

- Milan "Tiny" John, Men's Basketball student-athlete and Mustangs Wellness Lead

What's New?



Growth of Wellness-Centred and Inclusive Recreation Programming

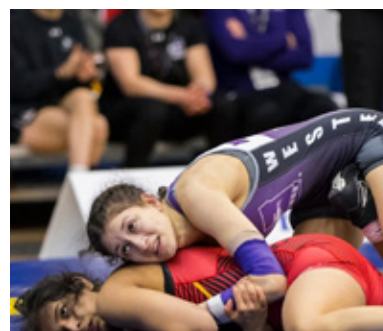
Campus Recreation expanded initiatives including:

- Free *Move Your Mood* programming and events for students
- Women's only fitness hours
- Adaptive and inclusive recreation opportunities like Inclu-Swim, Unified Basketball, and seated Volleyball
- Collaborations supporting student mental health and belonging including the Wellness and Recreation Fair, Wellness & Fitness Wednesdays (an educational initiative) and Prescription for Exercise
- Mustangs Gratitude Cards and Puppy Playtime events during exam-time

These initiatives continued to strengthen Sports & Recreation's role in supporting the whole student experience through physical activity, wellness and community connection.

Extended Student Fitness and Recreation Space

2025-26 marked the first full year of the expanded 4th floor fitness space at the Western Student Recreation Centre helping to address growing student demand for fitness and recreation opportunities. The expansion added 6,000 square feet of space, increased capacity by 125 students per hour and introduced new equipment and more inclusive workout opportunities, including designated women's and men's only hours. Programming growth also continued across group fitness, intramurals and wellness-focused recreation initiatives.



Hosted Ontario University Athletics (OUA) Wrestling Championships

In February 2026, Western Mustangs hosted the 2026 OUA Wrestling Championships at Alumni Hall, welcoming top university wrestling programs from across Ontario to Western's campus. The championship event showcased Western's continued leadership in hosting major provincial sport events while creating an exciting championship atmosphere for student-athletes, fans and the campus community. Competing on home mats, both the Mustangs men's and women's teams delivered standout performances, each earning second-place finishes.



16,845

intramural
participants



34,545

attendees at 2025
Mustangs football games



44,000+

pool fit lane
swimmers

804,734

student tap-ins to the Western
Student Recreation Centre

from Sept 1, 2025
to Apr 30, 2026

715,440

undergrad student visits

89,294

graduate student visits



8,500+

students participated in inclusive,
barrier-free recreation events,
classes and programming through
Move Your Mood



3,100

local youth participated in Wild
Western Days (fitness programming
for local elementary schools)



15,014

attendees at ticketed
Mustangs volleyball,
basketball & hockey events

Top Awards 2025-26

Inaugural OUA Community Service Award:

Aaron Thompson, Track & Field

Coach of the Year:

Becky Goudy: OUS (Ontario
University Softball) Coach of the Year

Caroline Ehrhardt: Bob Boucher Award,
U SPORTS Men's Team Coach of the Year

Rowing Canada President's Award:

Dan Bechard, Men's Rowing

Hall of Fame Inductions:

Caroline Ehrhardt, Track & Field

U SPORTS Awards:

Jim Weese: L.B. Mike Pearson Award

Vickie Croley: Jean-Marie de Koninck Award

First Friends, Future Leaders: Inside Western's Soph Training Program

Sophs are often a new student's first friend at Western. In those early moments, they help set the tone for a welcoming, inclusive campus environment where students feel as though they belong and are supported from the start.

Each year approximately 1,000 upper-year students take on this important responsibility. Behind this experience is a comprehensive training program that prepares student leaders for Orientation Week and beyond.

All Sophs are required to participate in a rigorous training program covering a wide range of topics including mental health and suicide prevention, gender-based and sexual violence prevention, supporting students in distress, conflict resolution, CPR, first aid and equity, diversity and inclusion training. These topics prepare students to navigate complex, real-world situations that they might encounter during OWeek or throughout the year in their ongoing mentorship roles. The Leadership Soph Team (LST) members undergo additional, in-depth training to support their responsibilities as team leaders.

At scale, providing this many students across campus with this level of training has a meaningful impact on our campus community, helping shape a culture of care, leadership and support.

"This is a truly holistic training experience," says Carolyn Temple, Director of Student Engagement. "We're equipping students with the tools to support others while building their confidence to lead and respond to complex situations on campus and in their future roles."

Throughout training, students build knowledge in a classroom setting before applying it through case-based learning. This approach provides a supportive environment where reflection is encouraged, mistakes are part of the learning process and students gain the confidence to act when it matters most.

Delivered in collaboration with partners across campus, the program reflects a shared commitment to student well-being and positions Western as a national leader in Orientation programming.

"It's a unique experience that offers a level of training and responsibility that students may not encounter elsewhere, which speaks to both the calibre of students we attract and the strength of the program," adds Temple.

Sophs leave with transferable skills developed through hands-on experience - adaptability, communication, leadership and empathy. These skills shape their academic journeys and carry forward into their future pathways.



6,300

approximate
participants in
2025 Orientation
Week activities

4,545

applications
were received for
850 main campus
Soph positions



Soph training helped me feel confident in stepping into a leadership position. Training helped connect me with community resources for student support both on Western's campus and in the greater London area. Each time I have completed Soph training I have stepped away with the understanding that I have many tools at my disposal for helping first year students. Additionally, these training weeks provide the chance for crucial team bonding time. Having the chance to build a sense of community on my team has allowed us to dig deep into communication and cooperation with one another."

- Charlotte Usprich, Head Soph, Music Soph Team



ORIENTATION WEEK PARTNERS

- Faculties
- Facilities Management
- Housing & Ancillary Services
- Huron University
- King's University College
- Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII)
- Student Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Student Experience
- University Students' Council (USC)
- Western International
- Western Special Constables

Leading the Way

Fostering a Culture of Support & Safety through Care Hubs

During Orientation Week and Homecoming, Western's Care Hubs reflect a coordinated, campus-wide commitment to student safety and well-being. Trained staff, faculty and student volunteers provide highly visible, welcoming spaces where students can access support, wayfinding, nourishment and crisis resources throughout periods of high campus activity.

This collaborative approach helps foster a safe, inclusive environment – laying the foundation for a campus culture grounded in support, connection and shared responsibility.



Number of Sophs



What's New?

Sensory Friendly Room

A sensory friendly room created a low-stimulation space for students during Orientation Week. Located near the main stage, it offered a quiet, supportive environment for students to decompress. Positive student feedback underscored the value of expanding accessible, inclusive spaces during OWeek.



Equity Deserving Group Student Welcomes

To strengthen a sense of belonging amongst students from equity deserving groups, Student Experience piloted a series of welcome events with the Office of EDI. These events connected incoming students with upper-year students who share their lived experiences. Welcomes were held for Black, 2SLGBTQIA+ and Muslim students, creating space for mentorship, resource sharing and belonging. This year, the program will continue to grow with additional welcomes for Jewish students and students with disabilities.



EDIDA Ambassadors

In response to student feedback, a new EDIDA Ambassador model was piloted to strengthen visibility and intentionality around equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility during Orientation Week. Designated LSTs received specialized training to better support student needs, with each team including both an accessibility and EDIDA ambassador. This work continues to evolve through cross-campus collaboration and ongoing efforts to centre student voices.



Together we can help students belong, learn and thrive, from admission to graduation – within and beyond the classroom.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

Inclusive resources and supports to build confidence and enhance learning.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Helping students discover their potential, explore career paths, and build the skills to design their future.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & LEADERSHIP

Skill-building experiences that prepare students for leadership and employment opportunities.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Mental and physical health supports to help students thrive through every step of their journey.

ORIENTATION & TRANSITION

Wayfinding and community building so all students feel at home from their first day at Western.

SPORTS & RECREATION

Opportunities to stay active, connect with others, and be part of the campus community through fitness, recreation, and varsity sport.

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