



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking

# 2024 – 2025 IMPACT REPORT





01. LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

02. EVOLUTION

03. OUR JOURNEY OF EVOLUTION

04. IMPACT: THEN & NOW

- 04. Launchpad
- 05. Map the System
- 06. Embedded Certificate
- 07. Cannon Lachapelle Award
- 08. Experience Ventures
- 09. Evolve 2 innovate
- 10. Business Playbook
- 11. Hunter Hub on the National Stage
- 12. At the Hunter Hub
- 13. Overview Stats
- 14. Spotlights on High Impact Stories

15. CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

16. LOOKING AHEAD

- 16. Closing thoughts from the Executive Director



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking

© 2025 Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking

All rights reserved. No part of this publication, including ideas and designs herein, may be reproduced by any means mechanically or electronically, without written permission from the publisher. No liability is assumed with respect to the use of the information herein, nor is endorsement of any product or service implied or intended.

[hunterhub.ucalgary.ca](http://hunterhub.ucalgary.ca) /// [hunterhub@ucalgary.ca](mailto:hunterhub@ucalgary.ca)

460 Campus Lane, Calgary AB T2N 1N4

# Letter from the President

Here at the University of Calgary, bold ideas thrive within a community of innovators, disruptors and changemakers. Looking to the future, we're guided by Ahead of Tomorrow, our institutional strategy that positions us to be Canada's most entrepreneurial university.

The Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking plays a pivotal role in bringing this vision to life. By cultivating entrepreneurial thinking across multiple disciplines, the Hub empowers students, faculty, staff, and alumni to *Start Something* here at the University of Calgary.

Now operating under the Office of the President, the Hunter Hub works as both the catalyst and the epicenter to scale this impact across faculties and into our broader innovation ecosystem. The Hunter Hub's influence reaches beyond our campus, strengthening Calgary's dynamic entrepreneurial community and contributing to a more prosperous and sustainable future.

This year's impact report celebrates these achievements. It highlights the creativity, connection, and collaboration that defines the Hunter Hub and people that it empowers. Importantly, this year's report illustrates the significant evolution of entrepreneurial thinking at the University of Calgary.

Together, we're building an environment where entrepreneurial thinking drives meaningful change and bold ideas become reality. I invite you to explore the report and join us in celebrating the momentum we're creating at UCalgary and beyond.

**Ed McCauley, PhD, FRSC,**  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
University of Calgary



# EVOLUTION

This year's Impact Report is centered around a simple but powerful idea: evolution.

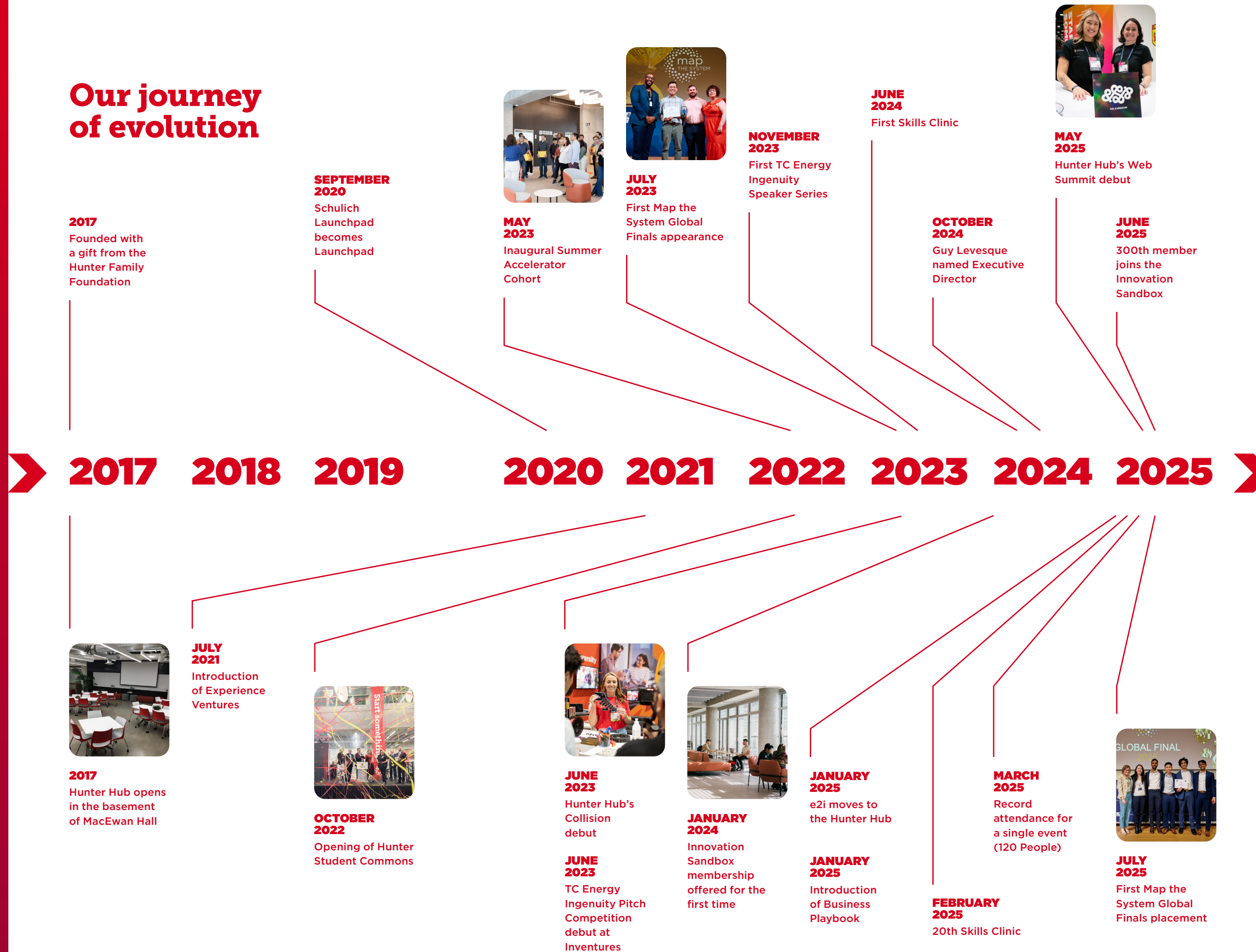
With a new Executive Director at the helm and a strategic move into the Office of the President, the Hunter Hub has entered a new era – one defined by clarity, adaptability, and ambition.

But this is more than structural change. It reflects a deliberate transformation, a response to the evolving needs of our students, our community, and the world around us.

Since its founding, the Hunter Hub has continually evolved, adapting to the needs of our community, responding to global challenges, and redefining what it means to be entrepreneurial. This report reflects on that journey, highlighting not only the impact we've made, but how we've changed along the way. Each step forward has helped us ignite, inspire, and empower everyone who walks through our doors, equipping them with the entrepreneurial tools they need to thrive in the new world of work.

And we're just getting started.

## Our journey of evolution





# IMPACT: THEN & NOW

## Launchpad

If you look around the world, places that have really effective entrepreneurial ecosystems always have a research university at the heart of it, which means that the University of Calgary is really important to this effort.”

» Derrick Hunter

Launchpad began in 2019 as a bold idea from Dr. Bill Rosehart, Dean Emeritus of the Schulich School of Engineering. Originally introduced as Schulich Launchpad, the program was a partnership between Engineering and the Hunter Hub. That first year, 24 students from five faculties joined the small but ambitious pilot.

Not long after, the program evolved. Rebranded simply as Launchpad, it embraced a broader mission: to make entrepreneurial thinking accessible to students across all disciplines. The Hunter Hub stepped into a larger leadership role, expanding the program’s scope, reach, and impact. By 2025, participation had grown to 176 students from 12 faculties – a clear indication that entrepreneurial thinking was spreading across faculties.

And no Launchpad journey is complete without Liftoff.

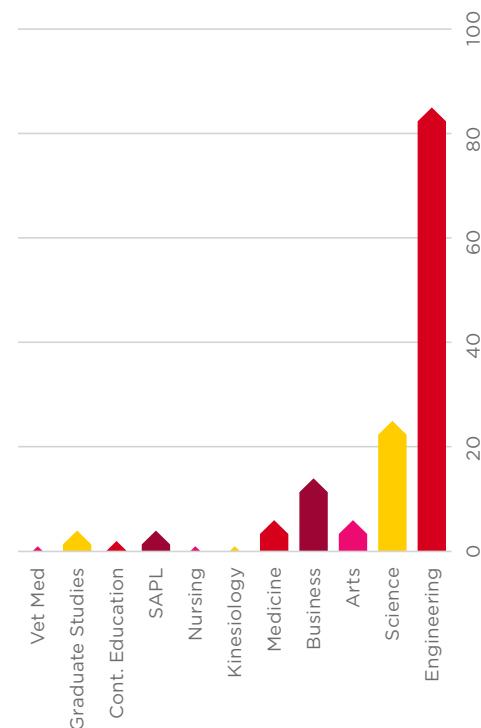
What began as a modest showcase of six tables and 39 students in the basement of MacEwan Student Centre has since rocketed into a campus-wide celebration of entrepreneurship. In 2025, Liftoff took over the Hunter Hub foyer, drawing near 120 guests for a full evening of pitches and storytelling. Notable guests included Derrick Hunter and Dr. Anders Nygren, Dean of the Schulich School of Engineering, who both delivered inspiring remarks to the crowd. The evening also marked the debut of the Liftoff Cup, a new trophy designed to commemorate the winning team for years to come.

## THE BREAKDOWN



■ Undergraduate: 113 ■ Alumni: 5  
■ Graduate: 60 ■ Staff: 1

## 176 PARTICIPANTS ACROSS 12 FACULTIES



24 PARTICIPANTS IN 2019-2020 ACROSS 5 FACULTIES



FIRST PLACE  
**COLOKICK**  
RUNNER UP  
**NEURASENSE**  
PEOPLE’S CHOICE  
**DNADETECT**



## HUNTER HUB 2024-25 IMPACT REPORT

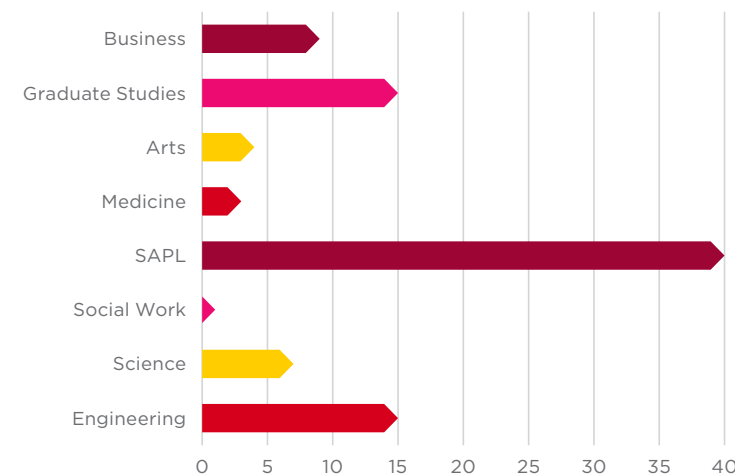
## Map the System: Embedded in faculties

This program is a great way to meet changemakers who think about social issues and how to solve them — that’s what drew us to Map the System.”

» Howard Leong

The Hunter Hub began hosting Map the System in 2022, offering students from all faculties the opportunity to explore complex challenges through systems thinking. But the program truly began to evolve when the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) recognized its value as a tool for academic exploration.

## 2024-2025 FACULTIES REPRESENTED



22 TEAMS IN 2022-2023

197 STUDENTS & 82 TEAMS IN 2024-2025

In 2024, SAPL embedded Map the System into its undergraduate curriculum, making it a core part of how students learn to analyze, design, and address complex issues. This integration marked a turning point: a shift from Map the System as just a global competition, to an educational experience stemming from UCalgary’s student needs. In 2025, the program reached a new milestone: for the first time, a UCalgary team placed in the global top three with a compelling investigation into the systemic causes behind hip and knee surgery wait times in Alberta.

Looking ahead, the Hunter Hub is working to bring this model to more faculties, transforming Map the System from a University of Oxford initiative into something uniquely UCalgary.



2025 WINNER  
**DISJOINTED**

Hip & Knee Surgical Wait Times Crisis in Alberta by Dr. Amy Chen, MD, BHSc’19, Sunand Kannappan, BHSc’21, Dr. Kapilan Panchendrabose, MD, MSc’20, Taro Lakra, Howard Leong, BA’25





# Cannon Lachapelle Award

“When I first started as a student here, I wasn’t sure if I was going to find the path that I was meant to be on. But this award helps validate that entrepreneurship is the right thing for me.”  
» Sydney Gilliss, Undergraduate Winner

What began as an undergraduate award has evolved into a marker of cultural change. Since 2021, nominations have quadrupled, growing from 63 to 288 in 2025—a clear sign of rising awareness and the growing importance of entrepreneurial thinking across the university.

As applications surged and the calibre of student impact deepened, it became clear that the award had outgrown its original scope. Entrepreneurial thinking was no longer limited to a few faculties or programs—it was becoming a defining feature of the UCalgary student experience.

In 2025, the Hunter Hub and the Faculty of Graduate Studies came together to spotlight both streams of the Cannon Lachapelle Award—undergraduate and graduate—under one banner. This ambitious collaboration elevated the visibility of both awards and reflected a broader, more inclusive view of entrepreneurial excellence.

To mark this evolution, all past and present recipients gathered in person with Dr. Elizabeth Cannon and Dr. Gérard Lachapelle—celebrating not just their individual accomplishments, but how far the culture of innovation at UCalgary has come.



## 2025 UNDERGRADUATE WINNERS



SUNAND  
KANNAPPAN



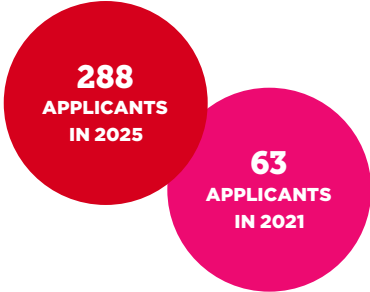
TANIA  
RIZWAN



ZAKY  
QASIMI



SYDNEY  
GILLISS



# Experience Ventures

“[The program] gave me tangible insights into where I see myself headed post-university. But also, it taught me a lot about myself and helped me get out of my comfort zone.”  
» Tolu Sami, University of Ottawa

Since its inception in 2021, Experience Ventures has scaled its impact, not only at the University of Calgary, but across the country.

## YEAR 1



9

POST-SECONDARY  
PARTNERS

## YEAR 5



14

POST-SECONDARY  
PARTNERS



8,368

PLACEMENTS



Collaboration is the hallmark of the program’s growth. As Experience Ventures grew its partner network, so did the opportunity to expand and have a greater impact in the larger innovation ecosystem. From nine partner institutions in year one to 14 today, the program has scaled and evolved. Community is a key pillar to the Hunter Hub, and through this national program, we fulfill our mission time and time again.

Today, delivered in partnership with 14 post-secondary institutions across Canada, Experience Ventures empowers students to work alongside industry pioneers through entrepreneurial thinking placements. Funded in part by the Government of Canada’s Innovative Work-Integrated Learning Initiative (I-WIL) and powered by the Hunter Hub, Experience Ventures is a shining example of the Hub’s national reach.

Front and centre are the students and ventures Experience Ventures serves. In telling these stories, we showcase the impact of this program and the doors it unlocks.

Entering its fifth year, Experience Ventures has delivered 8,368 placements across Canada thus far.



# Evolve 2 Innovate (e2i)

The e2i program helped me shift from thinking like an academic to thinking like an innovator. It made me feel empowered and seen.”

» SNiloorfar Pourjafari, PhD Student

Evolve to Innovate (e2i) originated under the Vice President – Research portfolio, delivered by Innovate Calgary, offering graduate students and postdocs hands-on experience in innovation and commercialization. In 2024, the program transitioned to the Hunter Hub, where it entered a new chapter.

In keeping with its original vision, the Hunter Hub adapted the program and introduced new elements including structured learning modules and opportunities to earn micro credentials. What began as a bridge between research and real-world application continues to evolve as a dynamic platform, now equipping innovators with the mindset, skills, and tools to ignite their ideas into impact beyond academia.

e2i is an eye-opening experience that challenges the rigid academic mindset many researchers, myself included, often hold.”

» Dr. Wagdi Almishri



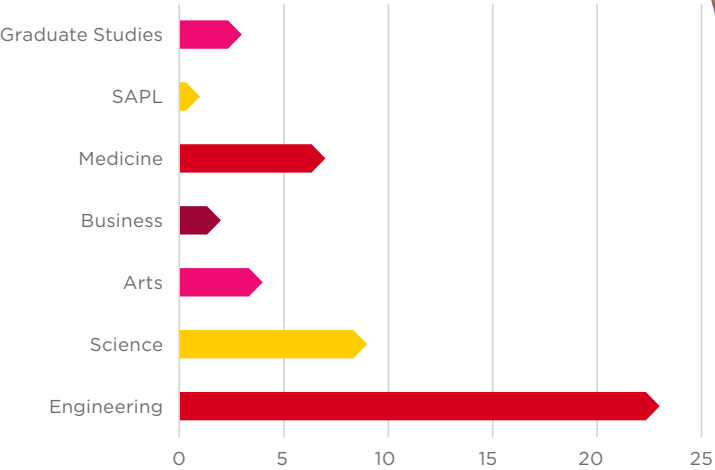
50  
PARTICIPANTS  
IN 2024-2025

## GENDER BREAKDOWN



Women: 25  
Men: 23  
Prefer not to say: 2

## 7 FACULTIES REPRESENTED



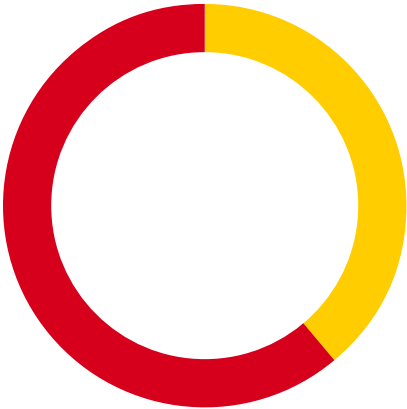
# Business Playbook

Business Playbook was created in response to a growing trend we observed within our Launchpad applicants: an increasing number of students and alumni wanting to build a traditional small business. While Launchpad remains focused on technology- and research-based ventures, Business Playbook was intentionally designed to serve entrepreneurs whose goals are rooted in community.

Launched in the Winter 2025 semester, the program offers tailored support for founders starting and growing service- or product-based businesses. Its goal is to provide clear, actionable guidance on everything from business models and pricing to customer discovery and marketing; all delivered in a collaborative, peer-supported environment.

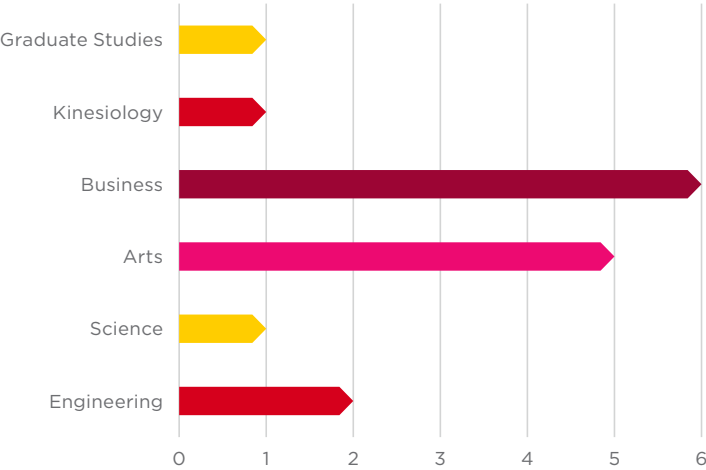
Demand for the program was immediate and overwhelming, with 60 applications almost immediately. After a rigorous interview and selection process, 18 businesses were welcomed into the inaugural cohort. The small group size was intentional, designed to foster a supportive community where participants could be open about their challenges and learn from one another. It's entrepreneurship with a human focus: practical, honest, and built on shared experience.

## GENDER BREAKDOWN



Men: 11  
Women: 7

## 6 FACULTIES REPRESENTED





# Hunter Hub on the National Stage

Over the past year, the Hunter Hub expanded its presence far beyond campus—taking the stage at major provincial and international events.

**At Inventures, we proudly hosted the TC Energy Ingenuity Pitch Competition for the third consecutive year.**

With a \$50,000 prize pool, it remained the largest pitch prize for Alberta’s signature innovation conference. But this year marked a shift in how we spotlight emerging talent; rather than an open call, we curated the competition by inviting the top teams from Launchpad, e2i, and Business Playbook, giving our homegrown ventures a bigger platform and the opportunity to continue moving forward.

**Web Summit Vancouver represented another milestone.**

We brought eight UCalgary startups to the international stage, demonstrating not only the strength of their ventures but the depth of entrepreneurial support available at UCalgary. This presence also marked a shift in our role. In 2023, our international debut was a collaborative effort alongside UCalgary, Innovate Calgary, UCeed, and CDL-Rockies. By 2025, the Hunter Hub stepped forward as the lead organizer, transitioning from participant to champion. We’re no longer just part of the conversation—we’re driving it.

**Our global reach continued at the University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN) Conference in Amsterdam, where Hunter Hub leaders presented on best practices in academic innovation.**

Paul Berton, Specialist, Academic Programs, presented a session titled “Mentoring Academic Entrepreneurs at the University of Calgary.” Dr. Alice de Koning, Academic Director, also took the stage with her session, “Scale Up Entrepreneurial Thinking with a Teaching and Assessing Certificate for Professors.” Together, these presentations highlighted the Hunter Hub’s growing role in shaping the future of entrepreneurship education on a global scale.



# At the Hunter Hub

As the Hunter Hub continues to grow, so does its role as a gathering place for Calgary’s innovation community. Over the past year, we hosted 147 events that brought together students, faculty, founders, industry leaders, and global partners. Among the many highlights:

147  
EVENT BOOKINGS

Plug and Play Alberta Screening, where the Hunter Hub served as Calgary’s host site for a province-wide pitch showcase. The event featured top startups from the alumni communities of the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, and Concordia University, each pitching live to Plug and Play’s investment leadership and global VC network.

**Our TC Energy Ingenuity Speaker Series also reached new heights, with four events throughout the year.**

A major highlight was our session with FJ Yang, co-founder and CEO of Silicon Valley-based Imphy, which drew a record-breaking 248 registrants. Other featured speakers included Jason Ribeiro of the Calgary Surge—where we brought in a half basketball court for the occasion—as well as Danielle Gifford of PwC, and Phil & Sebastian Coffee Roasters.



**We also proudly hosted the XPRIZE Canada Hub Launch, a multi-day celebration that brought together over 180 attendees for panels, pitches, and collaborative discussions on the future of innovation in Canada.**

The launch marked Canada’s official entry into the global XPRIZE network and positioned UCalgary—and the Hunter Hub—as a key part in a fast-growing global ecosystem.

These events reflect more than just a busy calendar. They highlight the Hunter Hub’s continued evolution into a central hub for entrepreneurship and innovation, where campus meets community.

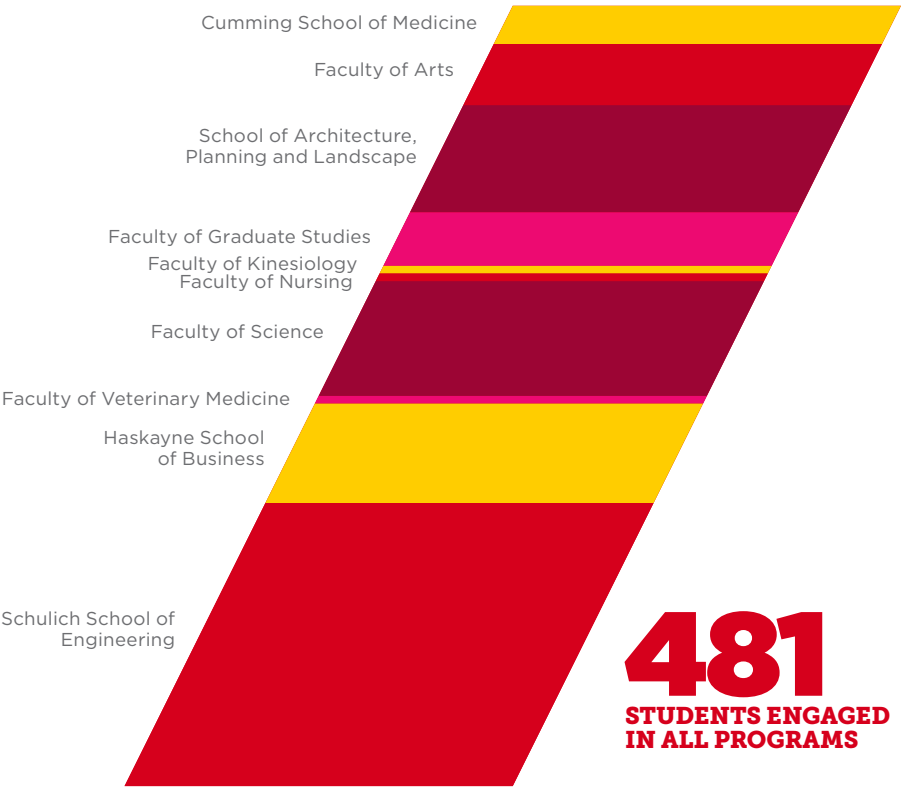




Overview  
stats

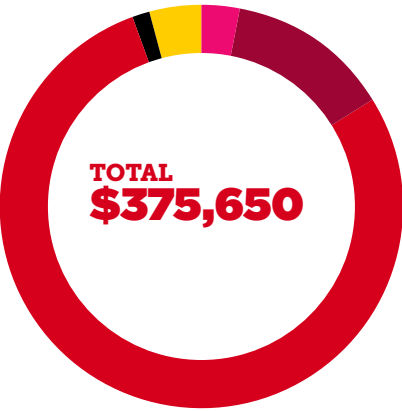
149  
MICRO-CREDENTIALS  
EARNED

EMBEDDED  
CERTIFICATE  
2024-2025  
40  
STUDENTS  
ACROSS 6  
FACULTIES



481  
STUDENTS ENGAGED  
IN ALL PROGRAMS

FUNDING  
PROVIDED



- Launchpad: \$11,500
- TC Energy Ingenuity Pitch Competition: \$50,000
- e2i Stipends: \$294,000
- Map the System: \$4,500
- Hunter Hub Startup Fund: \$15.65K

FACILITIES  
AND EVENTS



147  
event  
bookings

MARKETING  
AND COMMS



2,061  
newsletter  
subscribers



9,242  
social media  
followers  
on all platforms  
combined



322  
Innovation  
Sandbox members



32  
newsletters  
sent



our most  
popular social  
media post



2,056  
Innovation  
Sandbox checkins



27  
UToday stories  
published

- > 41,298 views
- > 21,844 accounts reached
- > 854 total reactions
- > 590 likes
- > 10 comments
- > 47 saves
- > 207 shares

Spotlights  
on high  
impact  
stories

At the heart of the Hunter Hub is the people we work with. Their ambitions drive us to do what we do. This year, we just as eagerly celebrated a few key milestones, spotlighting our programming and events.

Below, you'll find a few stories from the past year that continue to showcase the evolution of the Hunter Hub.



SASHA  
IVANOV



Sasha Ivanov launches Maple Scan, an app created to help shoppers identify Canadian products. Ivanov participated in the Hunter Hub's Summer Accelerator program back in 2023.



E2I



This year was our first offering e2i under the Hunter Hub. The program empowered participants to apply innovation thinking to their research practice, sharpen their communication skills, and dig deep to problem solve.

MAP THE  
SYSTEM



A team of five UCalgary students and graduates travelled to the University of Oxford to compete in the Map the System global finals, ultimately placing third. This marks UCalgary's first-ever podium finish.

BILL  
ZHENG



Through RadiCare Ventures, Bill Zheng is advocating for the city's vulnerable populations. Bill was a 2024 Cannon Lachapelle undergraduate award winner and also participated in Map the System.



MADDISON  
TORY



Health sciences student Maddison Tory created an IV-friendly hoodie that blends utility and comfort, backed by the support of the Hunter Hub.

BONDR



Bondr was one of 10 promising startups we brought with us to Web Summit, North America's fastest growing tech conference. Led by Leon Pluns, Bondr is on a mission to help students and young professionals build real-world connections through shared activities.





# ➤ CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Much of the Hunter Hub's momentum can be attributed to intentional evolution. These internal drivers highlight the leadership, talent, and collaborations that makes the Hunter Hub shine.

01. ➤

A new Executive Director brings renewed focus, strategic alignment, and a bold vision for growth that reflects the ambitions of Ahead of Tomorrow.
02. ➤

The expansion of our growing team is creating a stronger foundation for impact.
03. ➤

Partnerships with units such as the Alumni Office, Office of Partnerships, and SAPL are deepening, creating new opportunities for collaboration and reach.
04. ➤

The introduction of new programs, such as Business Playbook, expands the range of entrepreneurial opportunities available to students, alumni, faculty, and staff.
05. ➤

The growth and diversity seen across Innovation Sandbox, our expanding and maturing entrepreneurial community.
06. ➤

e2i's move to the Hunter Hub demonstrates UCalgary's commitment to our role as a driver of entrepreneurial innovation.

Simultaneously, significant external forces are shaping the environment around us. These drivers reflect the cultural, institutional, and ecosystem-wide momentum propelling entrepreneurial thinking forward.

07. ➤

Now under the Office of the President, the Hunter Hub is positioned at the heart of UCalgary's institutional priorities.
08. ➤

A cultural shift toward entrepreneurship, especially student-driven demand to "Start Something," is increasing engagement and participation.
09. ➤

The University's Ahead of Tomorrow strategy reinforces entrepreneurial thinking as a core pillar for UCalgary's future.
10. ➤

Growing collaboration with other faculties, schools, and teams strengthens transdisciplinary opportunities and innovation.
11. ➤

The broader innovation ecosystem continues to expand, with supportive local and national policies fueling growth:

➤ The City of Calgary's Innovation Strategy Innovation Strategy further elevates the city as a hub for entrepreneurial activity and talent

➤ Canada's investments in innovative work-integrated learning networks highlight the national commitment to developing entrepreneurial skills and capacity

# ➤ LOOKING AHEAD

## Closing thoughts from the Executive Director



At the Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking, we believe that when you bring the right people together—students, researchers, alumni, industry partners, and community builders—ideas don't just grow, they ignite. Guided by the University of Calgary's Ahead of Tomorrow strategy, the Hunter Hub exists to inspire changemakers who are sparking ideas, growing Canada's best entrepreneurial talent pipeline, so that ideas and solutions born here shape the future of Calgary, Canada, and the world.

None of this would be possible without the visionary support of the Hunter Family Foundation, the steadfast commitment of the University of Calgary, and the dedication of our staff and community who bring entrepreneurial thinking to life every day.

Over the past year, we've seen what happens when entrepreneurial thinking is woven into the fabric of a university. A health sciences student designs adaptive clothing that changes the patient experience. A team of researchers turns a lab discovery into a market-ready solution. Alumni return to mentor the next generation, creating a virtuous circle that keeps giving back. These aren't isolated successes; they're signs of a culture that's shifting.

As you've read through these pages, our role is to meet entrepreneurs exactly where they are in their journey, whether they're exploring an idea for the first time or building a venture to reach global markets, and equipping them with the mindset, skills, and network to turn their vision into reality.

We encourage them and ourselves to take that leap, to experiment boldly, and to see every setback as a stepping stone toward breakthrough solutions. It's why our programs are scaling, our partnerships are multiplying, and our community is growing faster than ever.

When we unite efforts across faculties and schools, disciplines and sectors, we're not just building startups; we're strengthening Calgary's position as one of the world's top emerging entrepreneurial ecosystems. We're fueling the most dynamic entrepreneurial talent pipeline, ready to tackle challenges, from local community needs to global market demands. And the results will be felt everywhere: in new companies and community organizations, in groundbreaking research, in stronger industries, and in more resilient communities.

This report is a snapshot of what's possible. You've read stories of creativity, resilience, and collaboration, and see the potential that comes from empowering people with ideas worth pursuing. With the right resources, partnerships, and alignment with the University of Calgary's Strategic Plan *Ahead of Tomorrow*, the Hunter Hub will not only grow its impact on campus but help shape the future of Canada's innovation economy.

Igniting. Inspiring. Empowering. Equipping.  
Start something? You bet we have.

**Guy Levesque**  
Executive Director



WARDS

Shine On

SUPPORT EVERY STAGE

Connection

STORY TELLING

HUNTER HUB

FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL THINKING



JOURNEY

INSPIRING

CHANGEMAKERS!

Start SOMETHING

TRUST IN OUTCOMES RESULTS

PROCESS

SUCCESS PRACTICING FAILURE

BETTER

TOGETHER

flexibility is key

FIND YOUR

GROOVE

ADAPT Resilience

SUPPORT CANADIAN



coffee & TENACITY

PUSH FORWARD

Live art mural at Web Summit 2025.  
Artwork by Mike Hooves.

STOP CREATING

ART BY MIKE HOOVES

FIND YOUR

GROOVE

SUPPORT CANADIAN







**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**

Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking

**HUNTERHUB.UCALGARY.CA**



@Hunterhubbyc



linkedin.com/showcase  
/hunterhubbyc

