

**FOR INFORMATION**

**PUBLIC**

**OPEN SESSION**

<b>TO:</b>	UTSC Campus Affairs Committee
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<b>DATE:</b>	April 29, 2024 for May 6, 2024
<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	6

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

Annual Report: Community Partnerships and Engagement, UTSC, 2024

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

Sections 5.1 and 5.9 of the UTSC Campus Affairs Committee *Terms of Reference* states that the Committee receives annually, from the appropriate administrators, reports on services within its areas of responsibility, including relations with the campus's external community.

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

- 1. UTSC Campus Affairs Committee [For Information] (May 6, 2024)**

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

The 2023 Annual Report: Community Partnerships and Engagement, was received by the UTSC Campus Affairs Committee, on May 10, 2023.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

*Infinite Possibilities* signifies our unwavering commitment that U of T Scarborough has to nurturing deep-rooted relationships with our communities. As we explore the boundless aspects of community collaboration, we are guided by the campus' Partnership and Engagement Framework and Resource Guide—an approach that paints the process for the work many of us are doing. It centres relationships to ground us in a people-focused, purpose-driven process. This approach acknowledges that partnerships are full of life and vibrancy—embodying dynamic lived experiences, knowledges, and intersectionality.

Embodied by three themes: (1) Building a Foundation, (2) Engagement in Action and (3) Revisit, Rethink and Evolve, each story of impact serves as a reminder of how we can actively transform our world by centring relationships and fostering intentional collaborations.

### **U of T Scarborough’s Alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

As we aspire to build networks that heal instead of harm, we deepen our connections with communities at intersections of sustainability—spanning social justice, food sovereignty, climate action, and economic empowerment.

In our pursuit of co-creating equitable and enriching relationships for both campus and community partners, we further strengthen our alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At its heart, the SDGs encourage us to develop sustainable models for knowledge-sharing and growth that will actively contribute to making positive impacts in our world.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Not applicable.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Presented for information.

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### **DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

1. Annual Report – UTSC Community Partnerships and Engagement (PDF), 2024



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
SCARBOROUGH

**Community Partnerships  
& Engagement**

## **Infinite Possibilities - 2024 Annual Report Draft**

The Department of Community Partnerships & Engagement

### **Welcome to Infinite Possibilities (Introduction)**

At the crossroads of knowledge exploration are infinite possibilities that invite us to embark on a journey of discovery. When we, the University of Toronto Scarborough (U of T Scarborough), embrace all that is possible, we can free ourselves from the limitations of barriers and create thriving environments.

*Infinite Possibilities* signifies our unwavering commitment to nurturing deep-rooted relationships with our communities—embracing the expansive landscape of opportunity that unfolds before us in the Eastern Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and in our world.

Within the pages of *Infinite Possibilities*, we uncover the myriad of ways in which our collective efforts have manifested transformative change. Embodied by three themes: (1) Building a Foundation, (2) Engagement in Action and (3) Revisit, Rethink, and Evolve—each story of impact serves as a reminder of how we can actively transform our world by centring relationships and fostering intentional collaborations.

As we explore the boundless aspects of community collaboration, we are guided by the campus' Partnership & Engagement Framework and Resource Guide—an approach that embodies the work many of us are doing. It centres relationships to ground us in a people-focused, purpose-driven process. The framework acknowledges that partnerships are full of life and vibrancy—supporting dynamic lived experiences, knowledges, and intersectionality.



Pictured above, The University of Toronto Scarborough's Partnership & Engagement Framework is an innovative, community-informed, and relationship-driven model that fits the collective culture of the campus and our dedication to intentional inclusion, reciprocity, joint partnership with students, staff, faculty and community, and relational accountability.

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## U of T Scarborough's Alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Central to our campus' commitment to fostering a thriving ecosystem is the potential we all hold to be catalysts for change—both locally and globally. We recognize that our communities flourish through the ethical stewardship of the talent, resources, and influence we hold as an anchor institution.

As we aspire to build networks that heal instead of harm, we deepen our connections with communities at intersections of sustainability—spanning social justice, food sovereignty, environmental action, and economic empowerment.

In our pursuit of co-creating equitable and enriching relationships for both campus and community partners, we further strengthen our alignment with the United Nations' SDGs. At its heart, the SDGs encourage us to develop sustainable models for knowledge-sharing and growth that will actively contribute to making positive impacts in our world.

As you delve into each story in the pages ahead, you will uncover their links to the SDGs—underscoring our shared responsibility to champion change and respond to the calling to leave this world a little better than we found it.

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## **Building a Foundation**

We connect, inspire, and learn from one another in countless ways. Understanding and appreciating these differences is vital for any relationship to thrive organically. As we establish new connections, it's not just important, but essential, to ground our work in values, understanding, self-determination, and shared interests—the first four stages of the Partnership & Engagement Framework.

When forging new relationships and initiatives, it is essential that we anchor our discussions in these four key elements in order to promote cohesion and ensure all partnerships are genuine, and rooted in authenticity and shared purpose. We can pave the way for meaningful and sustainable relationships when we focus on building a foundation with clarity, purpose, and mutual benefit.

## **Global Field School: Indigenous Costa Rica**

### **Mapping our Steps**

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is recognized as the most extensive international agreement focused on safeguarding the rights of Indigenous communities. Students at U of T Scarborough receive the unique opportunity to explore the details of UNDRIP through a distinctive learning adventure that takes them to Indigenous territories beyond Canada's borders. The Global Field School enables knowledge exchange with and among Indigenous peers, providing a transformative educational experience for U of T Scarborough's sociology students.

### **Walking the Path**

The Global Field School was initiated by Professor Dani Kwan-Lafond in 2017 during her tenure at Centennial College. The project was relocated to the U of T Scarborough campus after her transition to our university, where she is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology. Students who participated in the Global Field School: Indigenous Costa Rica trip in 2022 gained a deeper understanding about settler colonialism and Indigeneity from a Costa Rican perspective through immersive activities and in-country travel.

U of T Scarborough students spent the first leg of the trip engaging in nation-to-nation learning and sharing with Indigenous students at the Costa Rica Institute of Technology (TEC

University). Their real adventure began when they journeyed through traditional territories, where students immersed themselves in land-based learning and explored Indigeneity in Costa Rica.

## Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

Learning about social issues and their impact on Indigenous communities in person allows students to see themselves—their similarities and their struggles—reflected in Indigenous groups from a different part of the world. As U of T Scarborough builds the capacity for recognizing and integrating traditional ways of teaching and knowing, experiential learning environments like the Global Field School will foster deeper connections and expand worldviews; taking learning beyond institutional walls and cultivating a broader, more inclusive, and culturally responsive academic community.

### **Featured Quote:**

“We faced challenges together that will always bond you. You all come into it with the same intention of learning.” - Angelica De La Cruz, Sociology and City Studies Student

## **Anchor Food Aggregator Table**

### Mapping our Steps

Local food matters. It supports economies, fosters sustainability, and can provide greater nutritional value for consumers. U of T Scarborough, joined by other anchor institutions and local organizations, is championing a local food initiative and strategy to support the Eastern GTA.

The collaboration, known as the Anchor Food Aggregator (AFA) Table, grew from a priority voiced by students seeking healthier food options on campus. Through collaborative discourse and engagement, the AFA has since developed a viable business model for sourcing, procuring, and providing local food to students and the wider community.

### Walking the Path

The AFA collaborators—U of T Scarborough, Centennial College, Durham College, Scarborough Health Network, Aramark Canada Ltd., and 100KM Foods—have leveraged their collective strengths to improve and promote a thriving local food economy in the Eastern GTA. The initiative’s foundation is bolstered by five themes that support the development of the group’s ongoing initiatives: pedagogy, production, processing, purchasing, and promotion. In 2023, the group introduced policy as a sixth theme as they reviewed and updated their data and

goals for food purchasing, also including insights from local groups on how best to support existing food programs.

## Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

Food accessibility and sustainability remain key priorities in communities within the Eastern GTA. The AFA is promoting more connected food systems in the region through awareness, education, and engagement. With plans to expand its online presence through the development of a website, the AFA aims to become a hub by amplifying community voices and highlighting the incredible strides toward food security within the region. As the initiative grows and partnerships with local farmers are strengthened, the group will also look at how technology can be used to create a centralized system for purchasing staple produce items and increasing buying power.

### Featured Quotes

“Since the very beginning of this forward-thinking project, Aramark has been eager to help our institutional partners leverage their unique place in the Scarborough community as positive change-makers.” - Steve Prisco, President and CEO, Aramark Canada

"The Anchor Food Aggregator Table has provided our food service/production and procurement with a unique and collaborative approach where everyone pools knowledge and shares benefits." - Frances Wdowczyk, Director, Business Development & Special Advisor to the CAO Operations and Special Projects, U of T Scarborough

## Law School Prep Program

### Mapping our Steps

The legal landscape in Canada is changing. U of T Scarborough is actively participating in its transformation through an initiative aimed at fostering greater representation within the legal profession, ensuring that it more accurately reflects the diverse communities it serves. In collaboration with the Academic Advising and Career Centre (AA&CC), U of T's Faculty of Law proudly spearheaded the Law School Prep Program (LSPP). This innovative initiative equips aspiring law students with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their LSATs, laying a solid foundation for their future careers in law.

### Walking the Path

The program was built upon the principle of inclusive excellence. BIPOC (Black/Brown, Indigenous, and other People of Colour) identifying applicants were strongly encouraged to participate.

Students were exposed to the real world of law with an “In the Field” visits to Osler Law Firm and U of T Faculty of Law. They learned from accomplished professionals such as Andrew McDougall, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Kristin Taylor, Chief Legal Officer at U of T’s Office of University Council, and the current law students panel. Students left with insight into the range of alternative legal careers they could pursue, such as legal research and career development counselling.

## Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

Each new cohort of the LSPP will contribute to sector-wide changes in the legal field. U of T Scarborough was pleased to learn from several LSPP alumni that they have received acceptance letters for law schools. This partnership's collaborative efforts will create pathways for more racialized lawyers to break barriers and pursue meaningful careers in the legal profession.

### Featured Quotes

"Thank you for opening up your law firm to the UTSC Law School Prep Program students. The time your team graciously offered to our group in sharing your collective lived experiences and valuable resources is much appreciated—thereby helping better forecast how dynamic a law career can be, including practical ways of working towards our future career goals within the industry." - Christopher Luongo, Political Science, Public Policy and Anthropology student

"I'm really grateful for the experiences from both the Law School Prep Program this past summer and Nava Wilson visit a few weeks ago. Both programs have given me more insight and exposure into law school and the legal profession that I otherwise wouldn't have had. Thank you so much to you personally and to AA&CC for helping to facilitate these programs for us!" - Justus Chan, Public Policy student

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## Engagement in Action

What does engagement look like in action? For us, it starts with acknowledging that partnerships aren't static; they require fluidity to support meaningful, reciprocal relationships. Whether independent ventures or multi-sector functions—coordination, collaboration, and collective action are the pillars that define not just the way we do the work, but the impact of our work. These three pillars build pathways, enhance processes, and uncover opportunities to harness each other's strengths for the common good of society.



## Health and Wellness Centre - Peer Support Program

### Mapping our Steps

Students have a right to feel acknowledged, validated, and understood within their school environment. U of T Scarborough's Peer Support Program intends to foster a flourishing community where open communication about mental health is not only welcomed but actively supported.

In 2018, the Peer Support Program was established to address students' mental health and academic priorities. The initiative is a joint effort in partnership with Hope + Me – Mood Disorders Association of Ontario and the Health and Wellness Centre at U of T Scarborough. Students voiced that they needed accessible mental health support from peers who they could relate to. To meet this priority, the program developed a peer-to-peer support model, where Peer Supporters with lived experiences in mental health and academic challenges were trained to facilitate weekly drop-in groups. This approach ensured students could access support in a community-driven environment focused on holistic well-being.

### Walking the Path

For the first time this year, one-to-one support sessions were offered, empowering students through personalized guidance and support. Furthermore, international students were matched with international Peer Supporters to provide them with tools and resources to achieve academic and personal success in Canada.

To ensure the program's continued success and impact, Peer Supporters regularly participated in Community of Practice meetings with Hope + Me. These meetings helped them enhance their skills and knowledge through collaborative learning and professional development.

### Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

As for the future of this program, U of T Scarborough is committed to expanding peer support to include various languages. This will ensure that students from diverse linguistic backgrounds can comfortably communicate with their peers about their experiences concerning mental health and well-being. There are also opportunities to explore deepening the partnership with Hope + Me through experiential field placements where students can gain practical experience in supporting youth across the broader community, which will serve to extend the program's impact beyond the university campus.

#### **Featured quote:**

"Everyone on the peer support team creates non-judgmental environments with genuinely safe and comforting spaces for people." - Peer Support Program Participant

## Scarbrite and Urban Just Transitions

### Mapping our Steps

We may all experience the impact of the changing climate, but we don't always talk about it. Urban Just Transitions (UJT)—a research cluster anchored at U of T Scarborough—is focused on uncovering the impact that climate change has on people's everyday lives. The initiative takes a participatory approach, working with community partners to build a more sustainable, thriving society. The UJT Listening Projects centre an equitable approach by providing safe spaces for members of marginalized communities to participate in these important conversations.

### Walking the Path

Recognizing an opportunity to engage in climate action in a new and artistic way, UJT partnered with Scarbrite. This arts collective seeks to brighten spaces through visual art, and has created an interactive and innovative program called *Makers in Motion*.

In the summer of 2023, Scarbrite's Sylvie Stojanovski, a U of T Scarborough alum, and Frannie Potts worked alongside UJT to ask thoughtful questions that challenged participants to use an art creation to share how climate change is impacting them. Participants knew they were in the right place when they saw the colourful and welcoming "Art Cart," which became a key feature as it travelled along the Scarborough Greenway.

### Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

Makers in Motion revealed a unique opportunity and safe space to share insights, art, and research. Besides submitting the data to create new resources and information for research papers, there are plans to expand the program to include even more members of the community in multiple workshops with the goal of producing fresh solutions to positively impact the climate.

#### **Featured Quote:**

"The six arts-based workshops attracted people from many walks of life, and demonstrated how affirming these kinds of community-engaged workshops can be, when led by partnering organizations and supported by scholars. This year's activities laid the groundwork for an ongoing set of relationships that we are really looking forward to building on together."

- Mary Elizabeth Luka, Assistant Professor, Arts & Media Management, Department of Arts, Culture, Media, U of T Scarborough & Faculty of Information, University of Toronto

## **The DISE Collective - ROSCA Network**

### Mapping our Steps

Feminism, equity, and the social economy are the pillars that make up the Diverse Solidarity Economies (DISE) Collective, a group committed to creating positive societal change by championing a cooperative and people-centred approach to financial development. The group (which shares a satellite office in Kerala, India) uses lectures, training, and writing to expand the notion of financial independence for women.

### Walking the Path

A group known as the Banker Ladies Council is a sub-group birthed from the DISE Collective. It is made up of Black and racialized women who are dedicated to facilitating alternative pathways to financial freedom. Thanks to the DISE Collective, the Banker Ladies Council was able to launch the Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA) network in 2023. ROSCA draws from cooperative economic models found in many racialized immigrant communities that rely on trust, reciprocity, and shared accountability. In May 2023, the Banker Ladies Council hosted their first-ever Africana Feminist Economics Symposium at U of T Scarborough.

### Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

The DISE Collective addresses the systematic exclusion of Black populations from the mainstream Canadian narrative of economic progress. Through scholarship, research, and publications, they will continue to amplify feminist-led economics and cooperative business practices. One of the ways they are centring scholarly impact is through The Diverse Economy Conversations for Youth Podcast. The podcast, which is led by students and alumni, features interviews with academics and leaders within the field of feminist political economies. The podcast aims to tackle systemic and racist barriers present in the economy and show young listeners that alternative economic futures are possible.

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## **Revisit, Rethink, and Evolve**

Revisit, Rethink, and Evolve embodies a journey of continuous growth and adaptation—allowing for ample opportunity to pause and reflect and, if needed, adapt. It encourages us to challenge assumptions, embrace learning, and champion community-led decision-making, ensuring inclusivity at every turn.

As we pause to reflect on our guiding principles, we invite introspection. By defusing power imbalances and fostering fluid partnerships, we create space for brave dialogues, nurturing a culture of authenticity and openness. From conception to culmination, we embrace conversations, enabling us to stay agile, responsive, accountable, and deeply attuned to the evolving landscape of our communities.

## **Malvern Urban Farm**

### Mapping our Steps

Established in 2021, the Malvern Family Resource Centre (MFRC), in partnership with community and governmental partners, has transformed two acres of hydro field into a thriving farmland in the heart of the community: the Malvern Urban Farm. The farm offers communal tools, equipment, and educational resources to support the community in growing their own crops. The Urban Farm hosts a seasonal Farmer's Market, which not only sells fresh produce but has also established strong and lasting connections among residents.

### Walking the Path

The Malvern Urban Farm has significantly alleviated previous concerns about food scarcity in Toronto. Through partnerships with the Malvern Food Bank, Muslim Welfare Centre, and other local entities, the farm actively supplies fresh produce to kitchen tables, community fridges, and pantries across the city. By growing fresh, culturally relevant foods to sell or donate, residents are empowered as they generate both the skills and income to support their goals.

In 2023, the farm introduced an innovative youth training program, broadening its impact by equipping young people with practical agricultural skills and knowledge to enable them to consider exploring agriculture as a viable career path.

### Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

The farm fosters a sustainable food ecosystem by linking community growers with local businesses and organizations, grocers, restaurants, and food banks. Local elementary schools have already been engaged in new programming, ensuring the next generation is informed and enlightened about food justice.

Béatrice Lego, Campus Farm Coordinator at U of T Scarborough, sits on the Malvern Urban Farm's Advisory Council. The Council meets four times yearly to discuss the farm's activities, including evaluating applications for new farmers and supporting marketing and outreach.

Dr. Marney Isaac, a Professor in the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences and the Department of Global Development Studies at U of T, collaborated with the Malvern Urban Farm to

conduct soil analysis research. U of T Scarborough also partnered with the Malvern Urban Farm on a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) grant. Submitted by Dr. Isaac and Scott MacIvor, Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, the proposal advocated for the exploration of peri-urban areas, urban agriculture, and climate benefits. The NSERC project involves interviewing farmers about crop types, climate resilience, plant breeding, desirable plant traits in urban agriculture, and the pollinators that are attracted to urban agriculture projects.

With food access at the forefront of Eastern GTA residents' concerns, we eagerly anticipate deepening our collaboration with Malvern Urban Farm. Together, we aim to strengthen local food security and champion sustainable food systems in the region.

## **Trade Apprenticeship Pathways**

### Mapping our Steps

Enduring collaborations with our community partners drive U of T Scarborough's exponential growth. Since 2014, we've co-created employment pathways with local partners to provide youth with hands-on training and work experiences at construction sites across our campus. By mandating that all new building contracts hire trade apprentices, U of T Scarborough reaffirms its commitment to nurturing meaningful career pathways for youth and investing back into our local economy.

Our network of skilled trades programs includes two pathways: Hammer Heads, a skill and employment-based training program within the construction industry for youth from underserved neighbourhoods, and East Scarborough Works, a local workforce development program through East Scarborough Storefront and the Labourers' International Union of North America (LiUNA).

### Walking the Path

Two of our latest endeavours—the Sam Ibrahim Building and Harmony Commons, our newest student residence—stand as testaments to the impact of these pathways.

The Sam Ibrahim Building, slated to open in late 2024, offered employment for six apprenticeships, including one skilled labourer brought on from East Scarborough Works. The apprentices were pivotal in constructing a cutting-edge, five-story student hub designed to meet rigorous sustainability targets and achieve energy efficiency performance at Toronto Green Standards levels.

Harmony Commons, which opened up to students in Fall 2023, was constructed in part with the skilled hands of Hammer Heads apprentices. The development boasts Passive House standards, setting a new benchmark for energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. In this project, apprentices gained a unique understanding of sustainable building practices and the future of ecological building techniques. Since Harmony Commons is the largest building in Canada to receive Passive House (classic) certification, the apprentices can add this remarkable milestone as a highlight to support their professional development.

## Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

Our apprenticeship pathways are strategically crafted to serve a dual mission: harnessing our resources as an anchor institution to empower young people while fostering economic growth within the Eastern GTA.

The achievements of the Sam Ibrahim Building and Harmony Commons serve as shining examples of effective workforce pathway development. The skilled trades continue to be a high-demand career and that can create meaningful, long-term employment opportunities for youth. We look ahead with optimism, knowing that our continued partnerships will pave the way for an even greater impact on our communities.

## **Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Garden Project**

### Mapping our Steps

Centring Indigenous wisdom and experiences within the community fosters culturally rich connections to the land, enhancing the experiences of Indigenous youth in the GTA. U of T Scarborough's Indigenous Entrepreneurship program is an initiative that cultivates these connections, both online and offline. What began as a series of virtual entrepreneurial workshops for Indigenous youth has developed into a partnership that addresses sustainable food security, bringing together brilliant minds from The Indigenous Network, Redbird Circle Inc., ICUBE U of T Mississauga, and the U of T Scarborough Department of Management.

### Walking the Path

A generous federal grant has provided funds to bolster the Indigenous Entrepreneurship program with a Garden Project. The project saw the creation of four fully accessible, all-season greenhouse domes powered by solar and geothermal energy, making year-round growing and sustainable food production possible.

Beyond growing food, the physical space is also a site for entrepreneurship training. In the spring of 2024, Redbird Circle led programming on venture and community project creation, specifically targeting food sovereignty and security for Indigenous communities. By offering programming on entrepreneurship, cultural heritage, and environmental stewardship, the Garden Project emerged as an innovative space empowering Indigenous youth to envision and grow businesses within their communities.

## Pursuing Infinite Possibilities

As the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Garden Project gains more community awareness, U of T Scarborough will engage with stakeholders across the U of T tri-campus network and with Indigenous communities to co-create the use of the domes and physical space. The project aims to be a model for sustainable enterprise and cultural revival within the community, creating long-lasting change for current and future generations.

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## Closing Thoughts: Infinite Possibilities

In our journey towards a brighter tomorrow, we collectively stand as architects of infinite possibilities. As we navigate the vast landscape of opportunities—from grassroots initiatives to international endeavours—we embed purpose and passion in our relationships each step of the way.

Reflecting on the stories shared in this report, we are reminded of the immense potential and responsibility that resides within each of us. In essence, this annual report serves as a call to action: an invitation to embrace the infinite possibilities that await when we come together with unity and purpose. It is our collective responsibility, as a university community and as citizens of the world, to realize our potential for growth and sow the seeds for partnerships that bloom with authenticity, depth, and sustainability.