

**FOR
INFORMATION****PUBLIC****OPEN SESSION**

TO: Academic Board

SPONSOR: Trevor Young, Vice-President & Provost
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PRESENTER: See above
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DATE: January 21, 2025 for January 30, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Faculty of Information's *Academic Plan 2025-2029: Nurturing, Transforming, and Impacting our World with Information*

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Divisional academic plans are considered by the Committee for Planning and Budget and the Academic Board for information and feedback. Prior to approval by the Provost and presentation to the Committee and Board, it is expected that the relevant divisional Council will have endorsed the academic plan in principle. (*Planning & Budget Committee, Terms of Reference, Section 4.1*)

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. Planning and Budget Committee [for information and feedback] January 8, 2025
2. **Academic Board [for information and feedback] January 30, 2025**

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The Academic Plan was endorsed in principle by the Faculty of Information's Council on November 7, 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The *Faculty of Information Academic Plan 2025-2029: Nurturing, Transforming, and Impacting our World with Information* is the result of a broad consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and industry partners. During the academic year 2023-24, the Dean engaged in informal conversations and consultations, and assessed strategic plans from the University of

Toronto and other peer iSchools. In Summer 2024 an initial round of formal consultations took place involving staff, faculty, and alumni; a second round of consultations was held in September 2024 with faculty, students, and industry partners. Consultation feedback has been incorporated into the Plan.

This plan was created in line with the Guidelines on Divisional Academic Planning, which were confirmed by the Executive Committee on February 9, 2015. The Faculty of Information's current plan ended in 2017, and this will be the first plan under the current dean.

The Academic Plan identifies four high-level themes with related initiatives:

1. Building Bridges:

- Foster cross-program and cross-faculty collaboration across all three campuses
- Enhance extra-departmental units and research hubs for interdisciplinary collaboration
- Provide compelling continuing education for industry and the community
- Strategically develop international education opportunities

2. Practicing Impact

- Focus research efforts on addressing global challenges
- Translate scholarly concepts into actionable strategies that address societal challenges and enhance community engagement
- Commit to knowledge equity by incorporating diverse perspectives and advancing social justice in knowledge production
- Advance the ethics and methods of responsible information collection and governance

3. Fostering Leadership

- Promote student opportunities for networking and mentorship with faculty, alumni, and industry professionals
- Enhance communication and clarity regarding the role of PhD students
- Develop a diverse and inclusive faculty recruitment strategy
- Offer ample opportunities for faculty career development and mentorship
- Cultivate professional development opportunities for staff
- Create more frequent opportunities for staff and faculty to collaborate
- Expand opportunities for meaningful alumni mentorship and continuing professional development
- Support the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) strategic planning process
- Collaborate with the Indigenous Actions and Anti-Colonialism Committee (IAACC) to shape strategic initiatives and build partnerships with Indigenous groups

4. "Intersections"

- ***Fostering Leadership + Building Bridges: Renovating & revitalizing the Bissell Building***
- ***Practicing Impact + Fostering Leadership: Launching the Direct-Entry 4-year B.I.***

The Academic Plan was considered by the Provost's Advisory Group on October 23, 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no immediate financial implications at the point of adopting a new academic plan. As the plan moves into the implementation phase, new initiatives will be brought forward and financial implications will be reviewed as part of the University's established budget planning and approval processes.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is *for information and feedback only*.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

- Item Cover Sheet - Faculty of Information *Academic Plan 2025-2029*
- Item - Faculty of Information *Academic Plan 2025-2029*



Academic Plan
2025-2029

Nurturing, Transforming,
and Impacting our World
with Information

Outline

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All photos provided by the Faculty of Information unless otherwise stated, with acknowledgment to: Dewey Chang (p.2, 11, 17), John Packman (p.5, 12, 15), Gustavo Toledo (p.9), Johnny Guatto, (p.10, 12, 21).

Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on this land.

At the Faculty of Information, we recognize the social and structural systems that have and continue to create inequities and injustices that disproportionately impact Indigenous Peoples, and the powerful role of information in creating and redressing those inequities and injustices. We commit to the learning and unlearning needed to move forward on the path of reconciliation.

I. What is the Faculty of Information

The Faculty of Information advances understanding of how humans engage with the world through information, how that relationship has changed through history, and how it can evolve in the future.

We are deeply interdisciplinary. Our scholars come from backgrounds in Anthropology, Computer Science, Engineering, Library and Information Science, Literary Studies, Archives, Museum Studies, Communication, Public Health, Experience Design, AI, and many others. With a built-in human-centred lens, we leverage similarities and differences across our fields to equip emerging and current leaders to ethically understand and harness the power of information for meaningful social impact.

We explore fundamental questions such as:

- What are the opportunities for critical and creative approaches to today's information world, and how can past approaches better position us for a more productive future?
- How can we leverage human-centred insights to design more inclusive, inspiring, and sustainable digital technologies?
- How can we strengthen archives, libraries, and museums to better support an equitable society?
- How does an individual's relationship with information affect their sense of identity, autonomy, and agency?
- How can we combat the intentional weaponization of misinformation and its role in deepening societal inequities?
- What is the future of information professions and how can we prepare students for leadership roles in business, the nonprofit sector, public service, research, and education?



The iSchool Movement

The University of Toronto's Faculty of Information is part of the "iSchool" movement, which includes over 130 universities worldwide. With roots in the academic pursuit of information science originally found in library schools, iSchools share a common perspective on the importance of how intelligent creatures and machines understand the universe.

II. Why Information Matters Now

Information is power. It can either help address humanity's greatest challenges or exacerbate them.

Humanity is confronting several tectonic shifts at once. How we navigate these shifts depends on our approach to collecting, preserving, organizing, using, and sharing information.



Climate change threatens every living being on our planet. Humanity's ability to confront climate change, make responsible decisions about it, mitigate its effects, prepare for imminent weather events, and adapt to a changing environment depend on information. Misinformation and a misinformed populace have the ability to make the scale of damage much worse.



Pervasive technology is reshaping how we make decisions and interact with our environment and each other. This shift is accelerating exponentially with AI. Properly designed and managed, technology can unlock the power of information to address challenges; conversely, it can be used to weaponize misinformation for personal or political gain, enable surveillance and the invasion of privacy, and manipulate human behaviour. Information ethics, frameworks, practices, policies, and standards, as well as novel forms of information systems, can ensure we benefit from rapidly advancing technologies, rather than abandon ourselves to harm.

Ensuring information is used for good, rather than harm, will require different levels of creativity in the field of information studies, practices, and design. This in turn will fuel the celebration, nurturing, and advancement of human creativity and collective engagement that is so critical to a flourishing planet.



Mass migration will continue to increase in the coming decades, due to a confluence of factors including climate change. Humanity's ability to organize such movement, rather than merely resist it, depends on information. It will be central to peoples' ability to navigate different cultures, re-build their lives, and find acceptance in new places. Simultaneously, the field of information can address how to preserve equitable access to information and ensure diverse experiences, cultures, and histories are preserved and valued.



Systemic inequity maintains itself through asymmetries of information. Indeed, questions such as access to information, control of information, and whose stories are preserved and elevated plays a central role in addressing questions of social justice. At the same time, information can be used ethically or unethically, in ways that help advance social good or act to suppress different social, economic, cultural, gender, LGBTQIA+, and other groups.

III. Dean's Message

In an era where information is both a potent tool and a potential threat, our role as educators, researchers, and practitioners in the information field has never been more critical. We stand at the intersection of rapidly evolving technologies, pressing global issues, and the fundamental human need to understand and interact with our world.

Through extensive consultation and engagement with all our different communities, we are proud to launch an academic plan designed to make the most of our unique position. For the next five years, this plan calls for us to focus on three key pillars: Building Bridges, Practising Impact, and Fostering Leadership.

By **Building Bridges**, we aim to break down silos and encourage collaborations across disciplines, institutions, and borders. This interdisciplinary approach is essential for the creativity needed to tackle complex global challenges that no single field can address alone.

Our commitment to **Practising Impact** ensures that our research and education translate into real-world solutions, equipping our graduates with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to make an impact. At the same time, we are also committed to advancing research and scholarship that equitably address societal challenges.

By **Fostering Leadership**, we will not only nurture the next generation of diverse information professionals and scholars, who will shape the ethical use of information in society, but also increase opportunities for our faculty, staff and alumni to develop and lead.

While we see this new academic plan as a bold declaration of our commitment to addressing humanity's greatest challenges through the power of information, it has also been conceived as a practical document and a meta-embodiment of the values we espouse. I am particularly excited about three transformative initiatives outlined in our plan.

The **Revitalization of the Bissell Building** will position the Faculty of Information as a highly visible, welcoming, and attractive place for our community members to gather. Not only will the new design let in more light. The renovated space will include new areas for exhibitions, career services, design studios, and multimedia content development to encourage more collaborative learning engagements and reach a much wider and diverse audience.

The **Reconstitution of the iSchool Institute** will strengthen our ties with industry and community partners, helping us to form a multi-faceted and diverse learning community, and creating a dynamic platform for applied research and life-long learning continuing education.

The **Launch of our Direct-Entry Bachelor of Information** program represents a significant step in preparing future leaders who understand both the technical and social dimensions of information.

As we implement this plan, we will continue to champion equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility recognizing that diverse perspectives are crucial for innovation and social justice in the information field. We will also deepen our commitment to Indigenous reconciliation, acknowledging the role of information in both perpetuating and dismantling systemic inequities.

The challenges ahead are significant, but so are the opportunities. With this plan, we are poised to realize our vision and make meaningful contributions to an informed world for a flourishing planet. I invite all members of our community—faculty, students, staff, alumni, and partners—to join us on this important journey as we work together to harness the power of information and create lasting change.



Javed Mostafa
Professor and Dean
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto

IV. Why We Exist

Our appreciation of the depth of the challenges facing humanity shapes both our vision for the future and the work we are called to do each day.



Vision

An informed world for a flourishing planet



Mission

To creatively address humanity's greatest challenges by unlocking the power of information



V. Our Plan for the Future / Overview

To advance our Mission, in the next five years the Faculty of Information will focus on Building Bridges, Practising Impact, and Fostering Leadership.



Building Bridges

Collaboration across disciplines, domains, and borders



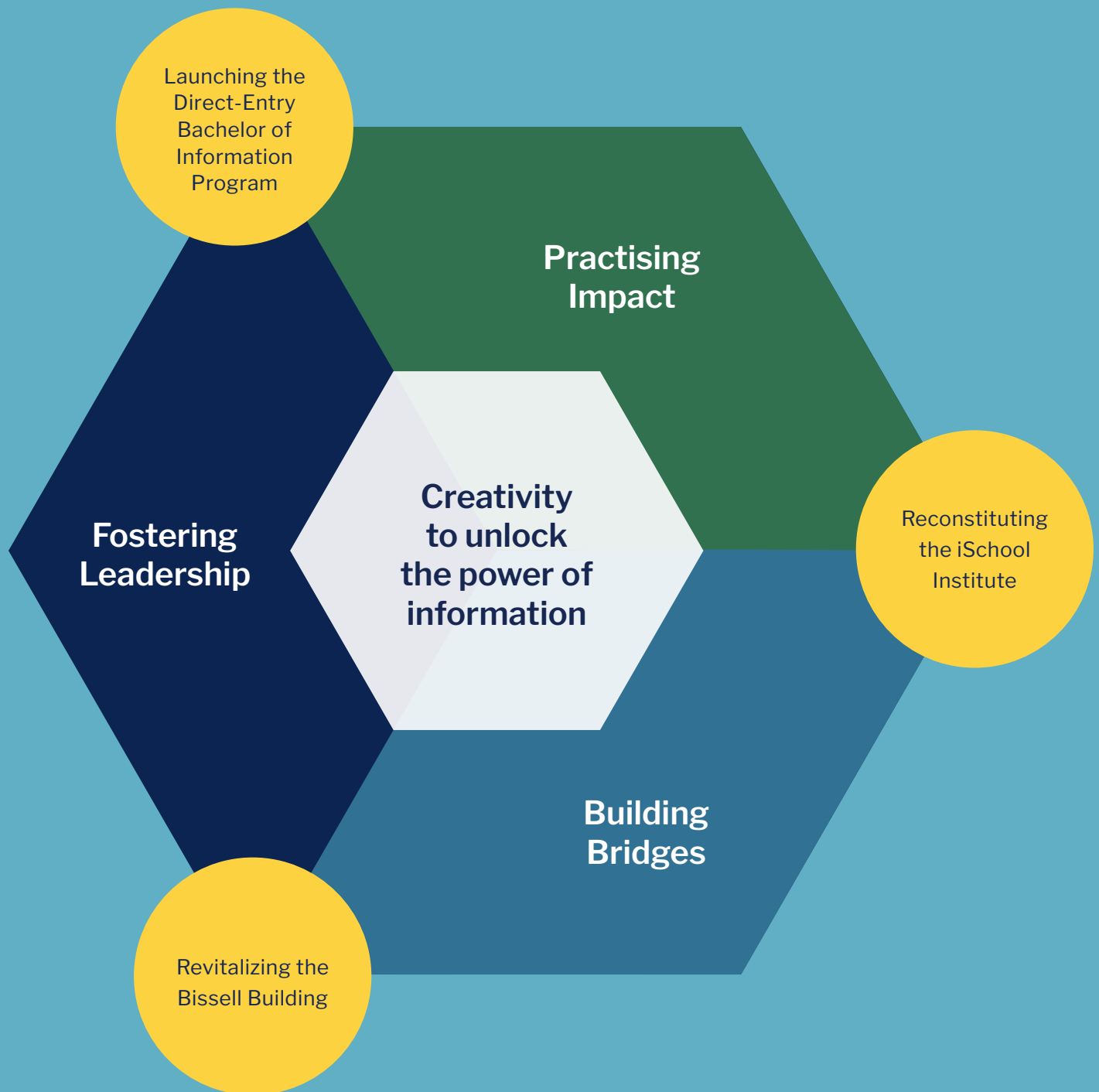
Practising Impact

Applied expertise to meet real-world challenges



Fostering Leadership

Support for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and our institution to engender leadership



Building Bridges

Information is a bridge. It allows knowledge from one domain to enrich another.

Tackling complex challenges requires the coordination of many fields and disciplines. The study of information represents a meeting place, translating diverse perspectives into common ground. In this way, information enables outcomes that are greater than the sum of their parts.

To grow our scholars' impact and catalyze solutions to complex global challenges, the Faculty of Information will lead collaborations across disciplines, institutions, diverse communities, and borders.

Across U of T

- Foster cross-program and cross-faculty collaboration across all three campuses of the University of Toronto, through faculty and student participation in Institutional Strategic Initiatives such as the Critical Digital Humanities Initiative (CDHI), the Data Sciences Institute (DSI), the Schwartz Reisman Institute for Technology and Society (SRI), and the Jackman Humanities Institute, and others
- Empower students to explore beyond their field of study by taking electives and participating in events organized by other units
- Create grant programs and awards that recognize and reward cross-disciplinary research activities
- Enhance extra-departmental units and research hubs for interdisciplinary collaboration, including the Knowledge

Media Design Institute (KDMI), the Centre for Culture and Technology (CCT), the Digital Curation Institute, and the iSchool Institute

- Establish goals, support grant writing and management, and create processes of assessment to emphasize the impact of strategic interdisciplinary research

With Industry & Community

- Foster long-term partnerships with diverse industry and community organizations
- Increase engagement of community and industry partners in research
- Partner with industry to provide relevant experiences and expertise that support student development
- Expand work-integrated learning to provide students with practical, real-world experience through co-ops, internships, and practicums
- Provide compelling continuing education and professional development opportunities for industry and the community

Across Borders

- Strategically develop international education opportunities
- Cultivate international research opportunities
- Support international entrepreneurial activities for our students and those at partner institutions abroad



At the Intersection of Building Bridges and Practising Impact

Reconstituting the iSchool Institute

To translate between academic research and applied practice, a newly reconstituted iSchool Institute will deliver leading continuing professional development programs, engage industry partnerships, and mount projects that apply Faculty of Information research to relevant private and public sector contexts.

- Launch and fund innovative translational research projects that engage students and faculty in applied work with real-world impact
- Promote and facilitate partnerships between academia and industry
- Design and deliver new continuing professional development programs and flexible pathways, such as online options offering micro-credentials or certifications
- Launch a high school bootcamp in information studies to raise early awareness of the field and attract students from diverse backgrounds

Practising Impact

Information is a discipline. It combines theory with practical expertise.

The mechanisms by which humans and technology collect, preserve, organize, and disseminate information are central to how we interact with the world. These mechanisms are changing more quickly than at any point in human history.

To ensure our graduates have the professional skills they need and enhance our ability to make an impact, the Faculty of Information will guarantee its programs include applied skills and advance research and scholarship that equitably address real-world challenges.

Focus on Impact

- Focus research efforts on addressing global challenges, with an emphasis on advancing socially impactful scholarship
- Translate scholarly concepts into actionable strategies that address societal challenges and enhance community engagement
- Commit to knowledge equity by incorporating diverse perspectives and advancing social justice in knowledge production

Advance the Practice

- Revise and enhance course syllabi, content accessibility, teaching methods, and evaluation guidelines to integrate academic theory with applied, practical skills that align with market needs and incorporate real-world insights

- Through our Learning Hub, enhance impact by embracing leadership in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in both research and teaching practices
- Prepare graduates for an evolving career landscape and strengthen professional skill development
- Advance the ethics, accessibility, and methods of responsible information collection and governance



At the Intersection of Practising Impact and Fostering Leadership

Launching the Direct-Entry Bachelor of Information Program

With a uniquely human-centred and cross-disciplinary approach to information's role in how people interact with one another and with machines, a new four-year, direct-entry Bachelor of Information Degree will combine a strong academic foundation with applied practice. The program is designed to meet increasing demand for graduates who possess both technical expertise and a deep understanding of the social, ethical, and cultural implications of data and information systems..

- Provide a strong academic foundation that combines computer and information science, social sciences, and humanities approaches
- Teach essential skills to foster technical proficiency across areas such as information technologies, data analysis, cybersecurity, and system design
- Cultivate ethical decision-making and inclusive approaches to societal and organizational challenges.
- Emphasize experiential learning and opportunities to engage with real-world projects, industry collaborations, and community-based initiatives

Fostering Leadership

Information is changing. It requires leadership, grounded in humanistic values, to flourish.

As the volume of information grows exponentially and AI-driven information technologies advance, the next generation of information scholarship and information professionals will help ensure healthier communities and a healthier planet.

To increase opportunities for our faculty and students to make an impact around the world, the Faculty of Information will support our faculty, students, staff, and alumni to engender leadership.

For Our Students

- Offer clear pathways for course selection that align with career aspirations
- Promote student opportunities for networking and mentorship with faculty, alumni, and industry professionals
- Enhance communication and clarity regarding the role of PhD students, including addressing imbalances in teaching assistant workload
- Provide diverse pathways for learners to succeed, including leveraging Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and integrating accessibility into course planning
- Ensure all students have access to practical learning experiences and comprehensive career guidance
- Offer holistic support that balances student advocacy with fair application of academic policies

For Our Faculty

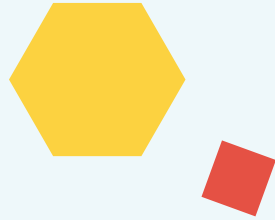
- Develop a diverse and inclusive faculty recruitment strategy that aligns with research clusters, while addressing academic gaps
- Offer ample opportunities for career development among scholars, including mentorship, to foster faculty growth
- Enhance academic leadership by recognizing faculty achievements through the promotion of research outputs and awards
- Support grant submissions and knowledge translation efforts
- Foster a collaborative teaching framework by supporting and recognizing the role of sessional instructors

For Our Staff

- Cultivate professional development opportunities for staff to support their growth and career advancement
- Develop a comprehensive strategic enrollment plan for staff
- Design an onboarding plan to support staff integration and development
- Create more frequent opportunities for staff and faculty to collaborate

For Our Alumni

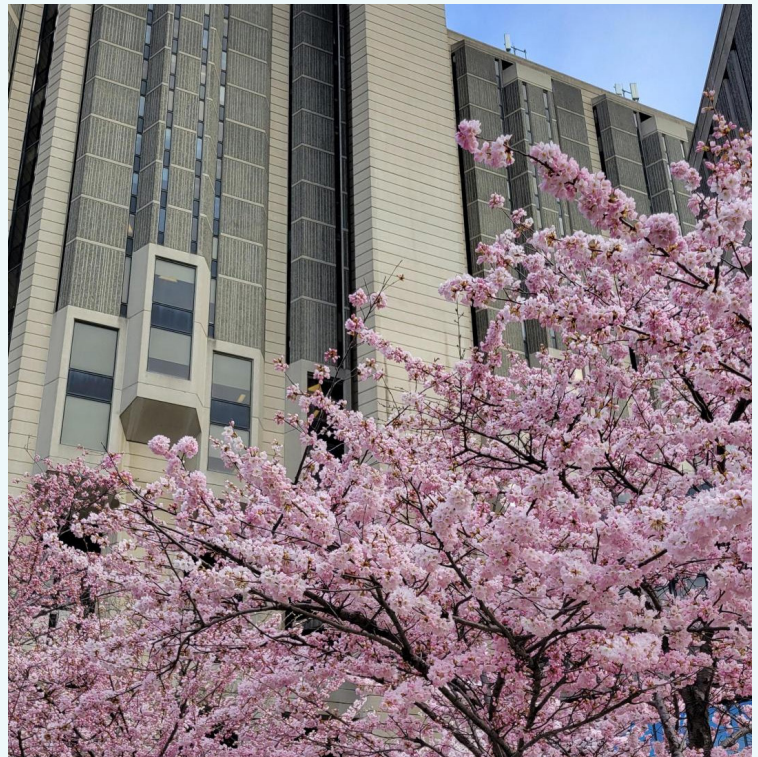
- Strengthen the alumni network and expand efforts to identify and engage alumni on a global scale



- Expand opportunities for meaningful alumni mentorship and continuing professional development, including through the iSchool Institute
- Leverage the alumni network to connect with funding opportunities and encourage contributions to strategic initiatives

For Our Institution

- Support the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) strategic planning process and collaborate with the unit on ongoing and new initiatives
- Collaborate with the Indigenous Actions and Anti-Colonialism Committee (IAACC) to shape strategic initiatives and build sustainable relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy to increase visibility, position educational programs, amplify research, improve rankings, and strengthen donor engagement
- Expand outreach through events, conferences, publications, and social media to showcase interdisciplinary work
- Upgrade technological infrastructure



At the Intersection of Fostering Leadership and Building Bridges

Revitalizing the Bissell Building

To support the growth in both the faculty and student body and create a more open, accessible, flexible hub for leadership, the Bissell Building, a protected classic of Brutalist architecture which opened in 1971, will be renovated.

- Create a welcoming hub for students, faculty, and the community that can accommodate future research and educational needs
- Create public-facing areas, social spaces, and classrooms that encourage interaction and collaboration, including exhibition and gallery spaces, experimentation labs, and maker spaces
- Enhance accessibility and inclusivity while designing the building with a focus on environmental sustainability
- Upgrade classroom technologies and the technical infrastructure of the building

Milestones

● Reconstituting the iSchool Institute

● Winter 2025

Launch series of educational and research translation events and evaluate

● Spring 2025

Develop staffing and resourcing plan

● Winter 2026

Build educational offerings and expand applied research partnerships

● Fall 2027

Launch catalogue and partnership model

● Launching the Direct-Entry Bachelor of Information Program

● Winter 2025

Proposal draft submission and consultations

● Spring 2025

Provost Advisory Group meeting, Decanal and Provostial sign-off

● Fall 2025

External reviewers visit

● Winter 2026

Faculty Governance, Academic Policy & Programs, and Academic Board approvals

● Spring 2026

Quality Council decision and MCU funding approval (if applicable)

● Fall 2027

Program launch

● Revitalizing the Bissell Building

● Summer/Fall 2025

Faculty moves to staging site

● Fall 2025/Winter 2026

Site preparation and building abatement

● Winter/Spring 2026

Construction begins

● Winter/Spring 2028

Building commissioning





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