




# DEFY GRAVITY

The Campaign for  
the University of Toronto



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO





“At the University of Toronto, we see the impossible as a challenge, the unknown as an invitation, and every obstacle or setback as motivation to push onward.”

• **Meric Gertler**, President of the University of Toronto



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Nothing great in art, science,  
or culture is ever accomplished  
without questioning received  
wisdom or testing the limits  
of what can be done.



# A Community that Defies Gravity

For close to 200 years, UofT has been a catalyst for discovery, innovation, and progress.



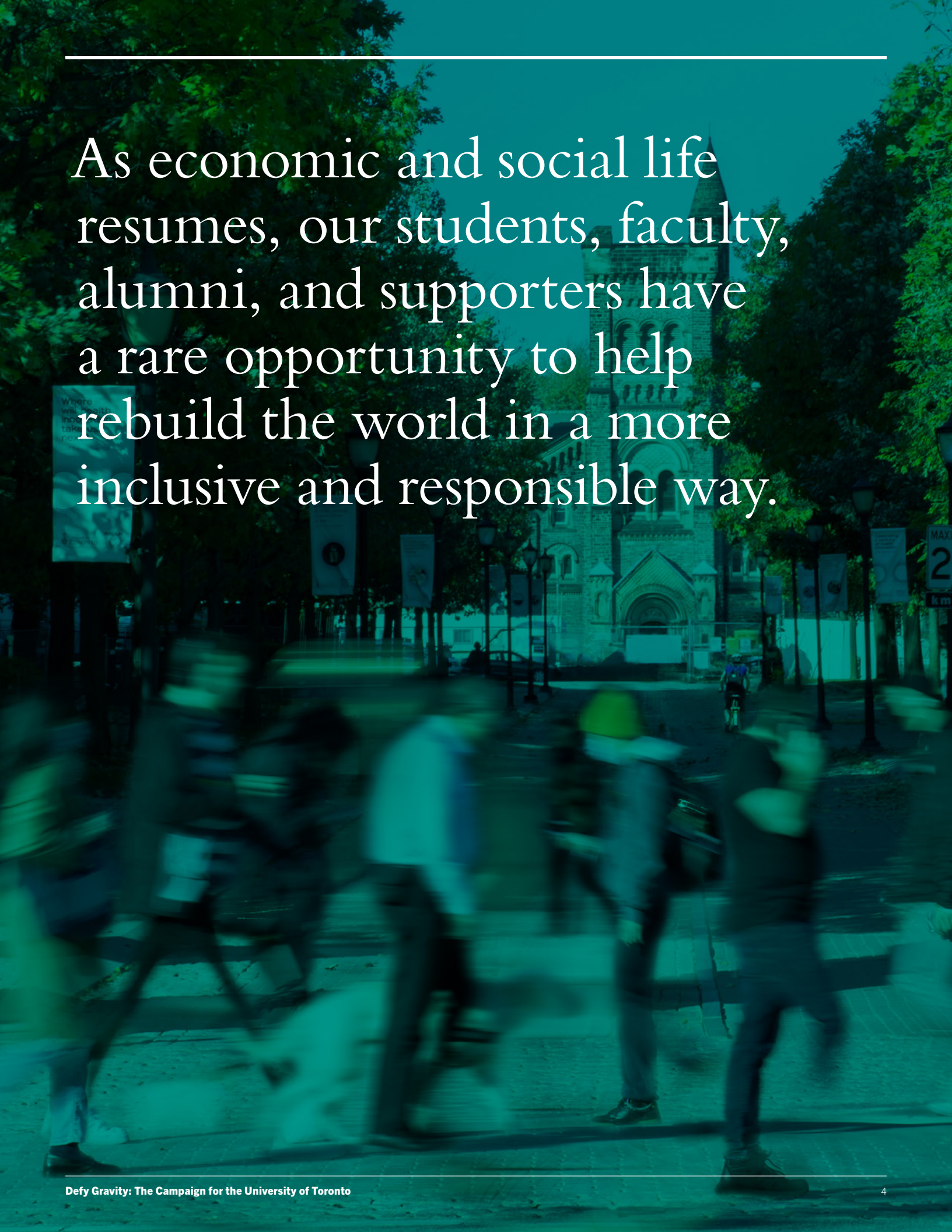
The University of Toronto has a long history of challenging the impossible and transforming society through the ingenuity and resolve of its faculty, students, alumni, and supporters. We revolutionized the world's understanding of mass media. We uncovered cyber-espionage networks, reinvented literary criticism, unearthed ancient civilizations, and helped preserve ancient and modern languages. We reimagined artificial intelligence, paving the way for new frontiers in science, technology, culture, and medicine. And, together with our hospital partners, we brought insulin to the world, helped conquer polio and smallpox, revolutionized transplant surgery, and pioneered stem-cell therapies.

Our graduates are trailblazers who question boundaries and challenge limits across every conceivable field of endeavour. They include award-winning authors, musicians, architects, and filmmakers. Frontline health professionals, public health experts, social workers, and educators. Groundbreaking scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs. Nobel laureates, Supreme Court Justices, Olympic athletes, and business leaders. Community volunteers and thousands of others who are the backbone of their communities. Together, they constitute a global family of more than 640,000 alumni who are setting new standards of excellence and making invaluable contributions worldwide.

For close to 200 years, U of T has been a catalyst for discovery, innovation, and progress. We are a community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors that transcends disciplines and borders to create knowledge and solutions that make a tangible difference around the globe. A diverse and inclusive community that emboldens students to think big. A community that accomplishes things no one else believed possible. A community that defies gravity.





A photograph of a busy university campus scene, likely at the University of Toronto, featuring a large Gothic-style building in the background and many people walking in the foreground. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color.

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As economic and social life resumes, our students, faculty, alumni, and supporters have a rare opportunity to help rebuild the world in a more inclusive and responsible way.





## Defy Gravity: The Campaign for the University of Toronto

With remarkable strengths across a broad range of disciplines, U of T is one of the few universities worldwide that can leverage a comprehensive approach to solve the most complex social, economic, and health issues.

The pandemic revealed just how indispensable U of T can be in times of crisis and recovery. As economic and social life resumes, our students, faculty, alumni, and supporters have a rare opportunity to help rebuild the world in a more inclusive and responsible way. This is why we are launching a new campaign for the University of Toronto.

Together, we can shape a recovery that not only delivers economic growth and innovation but also addresses issues of inequity, systemic racism, and eroding trust in democratic institutions. We can help power a clean-tech revolution to head off catastrophic climate change. We can help support the artistic and cultural communities that sustain us and educate the next generation of creative, engaged, and caring citizens to drive social progress. And, together with our hospital partners, we can strengthen our public health and health-care systems and leverage breakthroughs in AI, data science, and biology to address chronic disease and mental health and prevent future pandemics.

The University's three strategic priorities—city building, strengthening international partnerships, and reinventing undergraduate education—will guide every aspect of our campaign and advance our vision for a just, sustainable, and prosperous future.

Working together, our community will have an opportunity to tackle society's highest priorities, capitalizing on the strengths and advantages that exist only at the University of Toronto.

**Defy Gravity: The Campaign for the University of Toronto** will allow us to fully realize our aspirations for transformation and impact.



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“From revolutionary ideas to life-saving discoveries to game-changing innovations, our community has made an indelible mark on the world. As we prepare to embark on our third century, it is incredibly exciting to imagine what else we can achieve, together, for the good of the city around us, our country, and the planet we share with all humanity.”

**Rose Patten**, Chancellor of the University of Toronto





# Together, We Can Rise to Any Challenge



We know from our history that when the University of Toronto and its supporters rally together, we can be a beacon of optimism and positive change for the world.



Defy Gravity: The Campaign for the University of Toronto will channel the excellence, leadership, diversity, generosity, and compassion of our worldwide community, including 640,000 alumni, 95,000 students, and 23,000 faculty and staff, to help us meet the exciting challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

**Our campaign will have two ambitious goals.** For the first time ever, we have set our sights on a bold alumni engagement target. During the campaign, we will **inspire 225,000 alumni to engage with us** as volunteers, mentors, donors, participants, and leaders across a broad range of activities. We will also encourage them to **contribute their time and talent to U of T one million times** collectively. This effort will have a powerful and lasting effect on our institution, especially our students as they prepare for success out in the world.

**The campaign will also seek to raise \$4 billion for the University's highest priorities.** It will bring vital support for scholarships and bursaries that will open up worlds of opportunity for students. New programs that build on our efforts to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion. Interdisciplinary research that will break new ground and transform entire fields. Incubators and accelerators that fuel innovation and train the next generation of entrepreneurs. And new facilities that will enhance teaching and research for generations. Investments in these priorities will support the University's commitment to inclusive excellence and generate much-needed solutions to critical challenges.

While our campaign goals are ambitious, we believe they are commensurate with the scale of the global challenges we face and the immense capacity of our community to enact change. For as we know from experience, when the University of Toronto community comes together, we can achieve impossible things.



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“Our ability to bring together so many perspectives, domains, and cultures—in so many profound ways—is what makes us unique. It enables us to take on the most vexing challenges. It empowers us to provide talented students from every financial circumstance with a world-class education. It inspires us to become a more caring community where smart, compassionate people are working together to generate greater health, prosperity, equity, and sustainability—for everyone.”

**David Palmer**, Vice-President, Advancement, University of Toronto





## A Framework for Inclusive Excellence



By embracing the broadest range of ideas, cultures, experiences, and perspectives, Uof T generates bold solutions for today's challenges.

As one of the world's great public universities, we recognize that game-changing talent and ideas can come from anywhere. That's why we believe that bright students—no matter their financial circumstance—belong at U of T. And it's why we aim to provide a rigorous, equitable, and supportive environment where everyone can discover, learn, create, collaborate, and thrive.

For us, excellence is *inclusive excellence*. For embracing the broadest range of ideas, cultures, experiences, and perspectives results in bold and compassionate thinking. Thinking that disrupts conformity and shakes the foundation of things. Thinking that shifts the calculus of what's possible. Thinking that defies gravity.

This is what the world needs most right now. Thinkers who are willing to challenge orthodoxy, ask big questions, and push boundaries. People who want to rise above division, cynicism, and narrow-mindedness. People who never cease to believe that we can overcome the toughest barriers when we work together.

**Defy Gravity:** The Campaign for the University of Toronto has seven priorities that capture the University's highest ambitions and provide a robust framework for supporting inclusive excellence across our three campuses. They speak to the immense contributions we can make to improving health, sustainability, and equity in our society through our creativity, exploration, innovation, and support for the next generation of students.







#### Campaign Priority

## Build Equitable Cities and Societies

The COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and the uncovering of mass graves at residential schools revealed —once again—the deep divisions and inequities in our society. As the largest post-secondary institution in the country, we know that truth must come before reconciliation and that reflection is meaningless without action. That’s why we’re examining our own practices, policies, and processes to embed equity and promote belonging across our three campuses. We’re also engaging our vast network of multidisciplinary scholars in world-leading research and teaching on race, gender, and sexual identity to address inequity and drive social change. This work is not only a moral imperative. It’s indispensable to excellence. The campaign will support research that helps us eliminate systemic barriers to build stronger, more inclusive cities and societies, where everyone can thrive.

I am from Nigeria, so I understand the complex role that energy plays in countries around the world. But I believe that done ethically and equitably, energy can help to develop nations and lift people out of poverty. This is how I want to create positive change in the world.”

**Kelenna Amadi**, Master’s student in Mechanical Engineering, focusing on sustainability and analytics





U of T works closely with our affiliated hospital partners on so many levels—from the education of nurses, doctors, and other health professionals to groundbreaking scientific collaborations and valuable leadership initiatives. It is a powerful partnership, and our goal is to strengthen the impact the Toronto Academic Health Science Network can have on human health and well-being.”

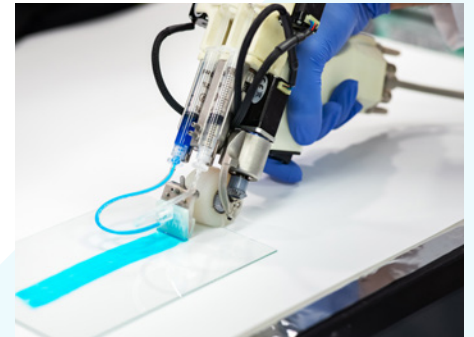
**Lisa Robinson** (MD 1991), Vice-Dean, Strategy and Operations, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, U of T Senior Scientist, Cell Biology Program, and Staff Physician, Division of Nephrology, SickKids



#### Campaign Priority

## Enable Healthy Lives

Chronic disease, climate change, pandemics, and growing inequity all pose serious risks for health and well-being worldwide. Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis opened our eyes to just how precarious human health can be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The University of Toronto, a key partner within one of the largest research hospital networks in North America, is at the forefront of research, teaching, innovation, outreach, and policy work that is addressing the world's most intractable health challenges. Working at the intersection of disciplines, our researchers are helping to prevent the next pandemic, pioneering highly targeted diagnostics, medicines, and therapeutics, confronting the global mental-health crisis, applying Indigenous knowledges to health, exploring the social, economic, and biological determinants of health, and much more. The campaign will help pave the way for solutions that enable people to live longer, healthier lives.





Campaign Priority

## Create a Sustainable Future

The earth is warming at an accelerating pace, and we only have a short window to prevent catastrophic climate change. As a global leader in sustainability research and education, the University of Toronto is already providing solutions for climate change by drawing on our deep expertise in clean tech, renewable energy, climate science, natural resource management, sustainable design, environmental law and policy, global health, and global governance. The campaign will help propel our work to create a more sustainable future by nurturing climate leaders, funding bold research and innovation, and supporting our efforts to make our campuses exemplars of sustainability.



We take one of the largest contributors of garbage—food waste—and chemically regenerate it into a bio-plastic used to create polyester.”



**Avneet Ghotra** (BSc 2018 UTM), Co-founder of ALT TEX, a startup developing clothing fabric made from industrial food waste



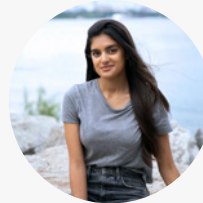




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By peering into a life unlike your own, real or fictitious, you can sympathize with others in an intimate way. The arts and humanities can be powerful catalysts for social change, especially if historically marginalized communities are doing the creating.”

**Yazmeen Kanji** (BA 2020 INNIS), Founder of Films with a Cause, which produces and promotes socially conscious films



**Campaign Priority**

## Spark Creativity and Culture

The study of history, philosophy, film, music, literature, and language enriches our lives by creating meaning, empathy, and understanding and opening our minds to new possibilities. These fields teach us how to reason, create, collaborate, and consider values and viewpoints outside our own experience. They help us think deeply about the structures and discourses that shape our world and what we can do to build a more just and equitable future. From breaking new ground in the digital humanities to studying Indigenous knowledge systems to examining the implications of artificial intelligence, U of T students and faculty in the humanities are reaching across disciplines to explore the most consequential topics of our time. The campaign will support this vital work.





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The idea that the big questions are answerable, that there is no question that won't yield to human creativity, ingenuity, and hard work is what drives me, and it's a belief that we must cherish, nurture and, above all else, not take for granted.”

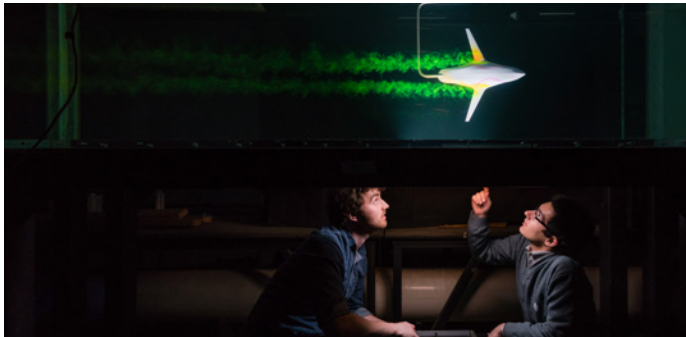
**Juna Kollmeier**, Director of U of T's Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics



#### Campaign Priority

## Drive Scientific Discovery

The basic and applied sciences help answer fundamental questions about our world and pave the way for the medicines, technologies, and industries we rely on. From insulin to stem cells to neural networks, the University of Toronto, together with its hospital and research partners, has a remarkable track record for making discoveries that completely change what's possible in our world. Today our researchers are pushing the boundaries of artificial intelligence, astrophysics, chemistry, data science, molecular biology, materials science, neuroscience, nanoscience, and many other fields. Investing in these areas will help lay the groundwork for tomorrow's game-changing ideas, breakthroughs, and discoveries.





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ICUBE at U of T Mississauga and U of T’s Impact Centre helped us plot out how we could turn our scientific know-how into a business. U of T took us and turned us from scientists into entrepreneurs.”

Just Vertical co-founders **Conner Tidd** (MSc 2017) and **Kevin Jakiela** (MSc 2017)



#### Campaign Priority

## Power Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Innovation is the bedrock of social and economic prosperity. The University of Toronto is Canada’s most innovative university and a recognized leader in developing and commercializing ingenious ideas. Our depth of expertise in fields as diverse as artificial intelligence, bioscience, robotics, law, economics, management, and philosophy offers opportunities to create technologies and ventures that are not only game-changing, but also ethical and socially constructive. Our world-class network of incubators and accelerators provides students with the customized support they need to start, grow, and scale their ventures. Investing in this area will help us create solutions that generate social and economic value and improve lives around the world.

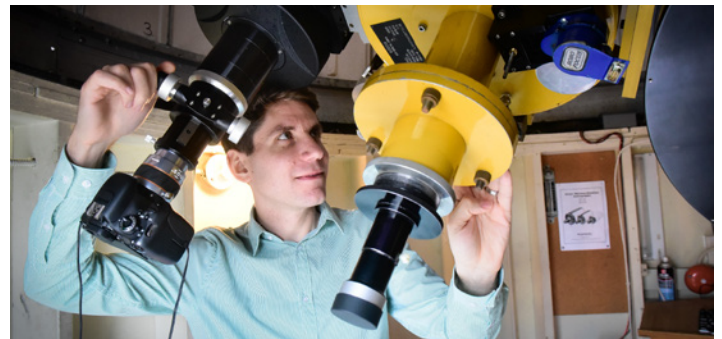




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As a student, I was involved in the Partners in Leadership Program as a mentee, which was incredibly beneficial in terms of professional networking and learning about career opportunities. Now that I'm working in my field, I wanted to pay it forward by becoming a mentor myself, which has been an incredibly positive experience.”

**Elaine Larocque** (HBS 2019; MSc 2020), graduate of the Master of Environmental Science program at UTSC



#### Campaign Priority

## Support Student Success



The world is changing faster than ever, and technology is reshaping how we live and make our living. Work in the coming decades will require people to constantly reinvent themselves to keep pace. That's why we provide our students with an education that stresses leadership, creativity, collaboration, cultural fluency, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and a global perspective—competencies that will serve students long after they graduate. We do so in an environment that prizes excellence, wellness, diversity, and belonging for equity-deserving communities. This commitment to inclusive excellence sets us apart from other world-class universities and creates an incredibly rich environment for research, teaching, innovation, and social impact. The campaign will help provide the life-changing spaces, supports, and opportunities our students need to prepare for success in a complex and ever-changing world. And through expanded mentorship and career programs, thousands of our alumni volunteers will help students transition successfully to the next phase of their lives.



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The University of Toronto is a globally renowned university and an immense engine for social impact thanks to the contributions of our community.

Generation after generation of alumni and supporters have given their time, energy, and philanthropic support to the University to advance our mission, propelling our research and providing our students with the same life-changing education, experiences, and opportunities they had on our campuses.

Engagement and philanthropy, now more than ever, are critical to UofT's pursuit of excellence, inclusion, innovation, and impact. During this time of recovery, rebuilding, and reconciliation, our campaign will provide alumni and supporters around the globe with opportunities to engage in the life of the University, invest in future leaders, seed groundbreaking work, and contribute to projects that strengthen their communities.

With your support, the campaign will help bring together top minds from every conceivable background and discipline to collaborate on the world's toughest challenges. It will nurture ideas and initiatives that have the greatest potential to transform lives, shape global debates, and open up new avenues for art, science, and culture. It will also inspire a new generation of compassionate thinkers to pursue their passions and realize their potential.

Together, we can take on what might seem impossible today and generate the ideas and talent needed to build a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future.





[defygravitycampaign.utoronto.ca](http://defygravitycampaign.utoronto.ca)



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