



# Entrepreneurship and Innovative Thinking

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES 2024-25



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## President's message

For me, entrepreneurship is about taking an idea and exploring how it can make an impact. It is about questioning the status quo, and asking, “How can I make this better?”

This spirit was captured in our university's latest strategic plan, [MomentUM: Leading Change Together](#). This bold roadmap is guiding us in building a more socially just and prosperous future for Manitoba by advancing truth and Reconciliation, fostering a culture of big thinking and risk taking, and developing life-long learners.

Our five-year plan builds upon our existing strengths through three themes, which you can read about in this report: creating knowledge that matters, empowering learners, and reimagining engagement. Each of these concepts helps us focus on the innovative and entrepreneurial work of our community as we create solutions to society's pressing challenges.

To help community members discover and develop these solutions we launched IDEA START, a new hub connecting innovators and entrepreneurs to the units, supports, and services they need to help bring their ideas to life. IDEA START compliments the work done through the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship, building networks that creators need at every step of their journey.

As president, I am committed to fostering a culture where we work with partners to encourage each other — especially students — to pursue novel projects, take risks, and try new solutions. And as we expand and deepen our partnerships and connections, especially with rural, northern, and Indigenous communities, we are cementing our position as the University FOR Manitoba and helping everyone ask and answer the question, how can we make this better?

**Michael Benarroch, PhD**

President and Vice-Chancellor

# MomentUM | Creating knowledge that matters

The UM research community has significant capacity to address complex environmental, social and economic problems and drive transformational change. The university's new five-year research plan, [Change Through Research](#), outlines UM's key areas of expertise as they relate to solving society's most pressing challenges.

Within these areas and across disciplines, the university continues to champion and expand entrepreneurial models – those that support researchers working to transform ideas into knowledge mobilization and commercialization. With a continued and increasing focus on building bridges between researchers and industry, government and community, UM is part of vibrant ecosystems creating positive change.

## Support for research-based innovation

The Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation (PKMI) office plays a vital role in advancing innovation and supporting UM's research enterprise. PKMI supports faculty, staff, and students by fostering strategic partnerships with industry, government and community organizations to help translate academic research into real-world impact. The office works closely with UM inventors to manage intellectual property (IP); guiding them through the entire process from invention disclosure to IP protection and commercial licensing. PKMI also assists in the development of researcher-led ventures, offering support with commercialization planning, flexible licensing options, mentorship, and access to entrepreneurial training programs such as Lab2Market Prairies.

### PKMI highlights\*:



31

New UM inventions disclosed to PKMI



11

New patent applications filed



4

Exclusive license agreements



2

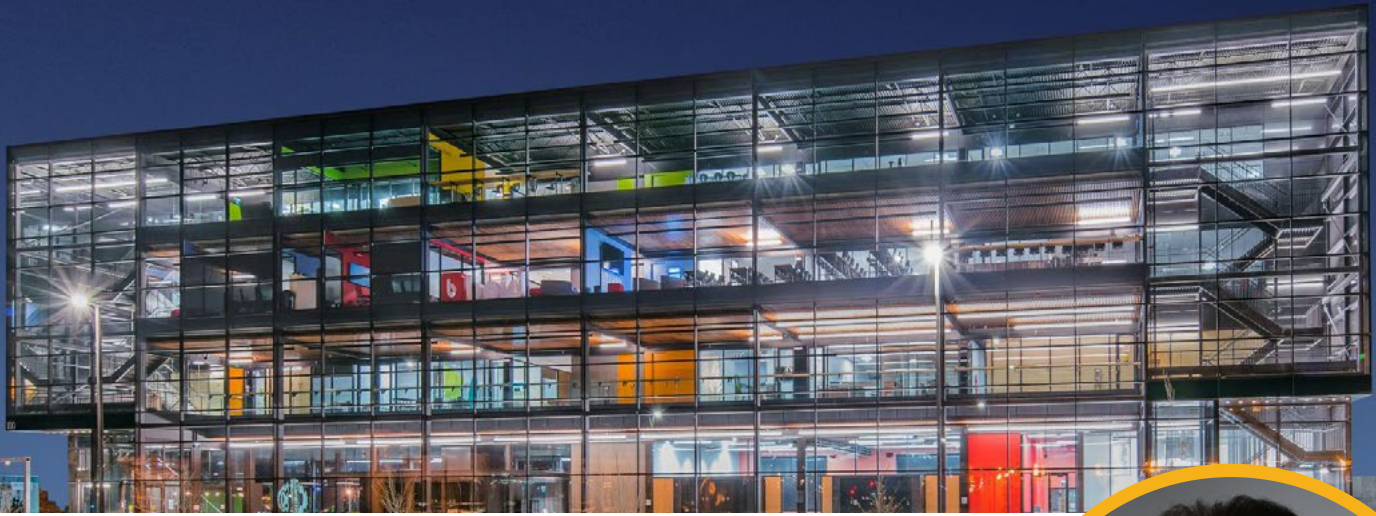
New Manitoba-based startups



\$990,000

CAD in licensing revenue

\*2023-24 fiscal



## PKMI Supports Borotheapeutics Ltd.

In 2019, Dr. Geoff Tranmer’s research group in the College of Pharmacy began developing improved treatments for ALS, motivated by the loss of a family friend to the disease. ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, has no cure and limited treatment options with Riluzole and Edaravone (the only widely used approved drugs), offering only modest benefits and typically extending life by just a few months. Seeking to make a more meaningful impact for patients, the Tranmer team redesigned Edaravone to improve its drug properties and more effectively target oxidative stress, a key driver of neurodegeneration and ALS progression.



With funding from Research Manitoba and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the team synthesized and tested a novel compound, Borsantrazole, in ALS disease models. Their efforts were supported by Drs. Jody Dexter and Andrew Tse of the University of Manitoba’s Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation office, who helped guide the patenting and technology transfer process. To bring the innovation closer to patients, Dr. Tranmer founded Borotheapeutics Ltd., a startup focused on advancing Borsantrazole through the drug development pipeline.



A key contributor to the project has been Nitesh Sanghai, a senior PhD candidate who first synthesized Borsantrazole and led its pre-clinical testing. Nitesh is also deeply involved in ALS advocacy, including serving on the Board of the ALS Society of Manitoba, and is a co-founder of Borotheapeutics. The startup was recently accepted into the North Forge ElevateIP program, which supports Canadian startups in developing intellectual property strategies.

Borotheapeutics is now working to complete pre-clinical studies and aims to secure investment to begin Phase I clinical trials. As Dr. Tranmer explained, “Drug development is very expensive and we are going to need investors who believe in the project as much as we do to provide a timely path forward into the clinic. If we can improve the quality of life for people living with ALS, that’s the real measure of success.”



Meet the team at [Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation](#).

## Lab2Market (L2M) Prairies Hub

Hosted by the University of Manitoba and PKMI, L2M Prairies is the region's hub for Canada's National Lab2Market Network, empowering researchers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan to translate their discoveries into viable market solutions. It delivers a three-stage entrepreneurship curriculum:

- Discover
- Validate
- Launch

L2M Prairies is backed by mentorship from seasoned entrepreneurs and industry experts, networking through a national ecosystem, and financial support through a key national partnership with Mitacs. Since inception, the L2M Prairies Hub has supported over 100 Prairies-based researchers across cohort-based workshops, accelerators and product development streams to guide researchers step-by-step from academic ideas to market-ready solutions. [Contact us](#) today to see how we can help you get started!



Find out more about [Lab2Market Prairies](#).

Lab2Market  
Prairies



# Major Funding announcement!

## Supporting entrepreneurial research

On January 15, 2025, NSERC announced the results of its first-ever Lab to Market competition, awarding over \$95 million in federal funding across four national networks to accelerate research commercialization in Canada. The University of Manitoba is a member of all four funded networks: **Lab2Market (L2M)**, **Labs4**, **invention-to-Innovation (i2I)** and **Sustainable Food Systems for Canada (SF4C)**, which will enable UM to deliver structured entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and industry engagement to equip researchers and trainees across disciplines with the skills and support needed to transform academic discoveries into market-ready innovations.

## Supporting research-based entrepreneurs



### Falling Walls Lab Manitoba

Nolan De Leon (centre, front row) represented Manitoba at the 2024 international Falling Walls competition in Berlin after winning the Manitoba competition with their pitch, “Breaking the Wall of Prenatal Diagnostics.” Nolan is investigating the use of circular RNA as a diagnostic innovation that could provide expectant mothers in remote communities with a screening tool for the early detection of birth defects.

The annual Falling Walls competition is inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It promotes research and innovation in all disciplines, by posing the question, “Which walls will fall next?”



*“The Falling Walls Lab is an important opportunity to showcase the world-class research happening every day in Manitoba, and I would like to thank the large community who came together to bring this celebration to life... Students are the greatest drivers of change in addressing the pressing challenges faced by society, and by empowering entrepreneurs and innovators across disciplines we can make these great ideas a reality.”*

**Dr. Hans-Joachim Wieden**, Associate Vice-President  
(Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization, and Innovation)

### Faculty of Science Research Innovation and Commercialization Grant

Every second year, the Faculty of Science distributes Research Innovation and Commercialization grants. This competitive funding opportunity is available to all faculty and graduate students within the faculty who wish to initiate, explore and develop activities toward commercialization of research. The 2025 recipients are:

Faculty Award: Dr. Jörg Stetefeld for [White Otter Biotech](#)

Graduate Student Award: Luma Clarindo Lopes for [Sensible Technology Inc.](#) with Dr. Sabine Kuss

Graduate Student Award: Fabian Rohden



### Introducing Robert Vinet, new Business Development Officer in the Faculty of Science

The Faculty of Science's Business Development Officer is responsible for fostering research-industry partnerships, research innovation, commercialization efforts, and industry/non-profit engagement.

@ Connect with [Robert.Vinet@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Robert.Vinet@umanitoba.ca)

## Research spotlight: Building capacity in health care innovation

### Building facilities for next-generation vaccines

Funding of \$29 million from the federal government is enabling the construction of two world-class research facilities on UM campuses. The new laboratories will help UM researchers collaborate with industry and government partners to develop next-generation vaccines for pre-clinical trials and delivery around the world.



On the Fort Garry Campus, the new PRAIRIE Biologics Accelerator will bring together scientists and engineers to support the development of new vaccines and approaches to improve the reliability and speed of biomanufacturing.



On the Bannatyne Campus, the PRAIRIE One Health Emerging Respiratory Disease Centre will provide much-needed laboratory capacity to enable pre-clinical vaccine testing against high-risk pathogens of concern. It will provide “Containment Level 3” agricultural laboratory space, currently not available in Manitoba.

## Innovation in biosystems engineering

### A new approach to canola oil and protein preservation

A groundbreaking innovation in canola oil extraction by Dr. Nazanin Vafaei, a postdoctoral researcher at UM’s Richardson Centre for Food Technology and Research, is set to transform the industry by reducing waste and enhancing efficiency.

Her research uses a low-temperature method that preserves the quality of both canola oil and the protein-rich canola meal byproduct. She has earned the prestigious Mitacs Outstanding Innovation Award for her work.



The next step in Vafaei’s research is to explore scaling up production to assess the commercial viability of the method. Her work demonstrates that environmentally sustainable practices can be achieved while also increasing potential economic gain.

# MomentUM | Empowering learners

## Curricular entrepreneurial learning highlights

The Asper School of Business leads the way in delivering courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level about entrepreneurship and innovation. There are two key courses at the undergraduate level:

1. ENTR 2030 - Introduction to Entrepreneurship: Business and Social Perspectives. This is a required course for students in the Asper School of Business.
2. ENTR 2020 - Starting a New Business is for students in any other faculty who want to explore entrepreneurship as a viable career.

A unique feature of these two courses is students present their ideas to a panel of industry and academic judges. Hosted by the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship and made possible by a generous donation from the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Manitoba, the CPHR Pitch Competition was a highlight for over 750 students who took these courses in the past year.



*"Entrepreneurship is more than just the nuts and bolts of starting a business. It's more than numbers and strategy. It's about seeing problems and having the confidence to solve those problems. This course is finding a way to teach students to solve those problems in everyday life."*

**Matt Schaubroeck**, ENTR 2020 Instructor



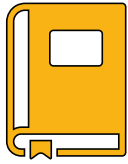
**750+** students in ENTR 2030/2020



**45** students declared an undergraduate major in Entrepreneurship

## Reaching students with entrepreneurial learning

SCI-4000 The Entrepreneurial Mindset for Scientists continues its popularity where students develop entrepreneurial competencies to align and extend their Science degree.



**140+** SCI-4000 students since 2020 inception

## Dental Hygiene students explore small business basics and build innovation skills

Associate Professor Kathy Yerex initiated a redesign of HYG-2318 Dental Hygiene Theory and Practice IV in 2025. For the first time, students learned about small business basics and participated in project-based learning to develop solutions to this design challenge: How might we address the unmet oral health needs of Canadian seniors while empowering dental hygiene professionals to expand their roles, improve accessibility and foster long-term oral health care in a cost-effective way?



**28** Dental Hygiene students participated

## Co-curricular learning opportunities

### How to start a side hustle

This free course, offered by the [Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship](#), in collaboration with Lane Two Learning and founder Jeff Mitchell, is designed for aspiring entrepreneurs who want to turn their skills, ideas and passions into profitable ventures while balancing school, work or other commitments.



**60+** participants and **26** businesses launched



## Better Together

Hosted by [The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning \(CATL\)](#), this two-day experiential learning opportunity has welcomed over 150 students, staff and faculty over the past two years. Using design and systems thinking, participants work in interdisciplinary groups to develop a solution to a real campus challenge shared in a video.



**150** student, staff and faculty participants

We are #bettertogether

*"There's growing demand from educators to learn how to strengthen students' entrepreneurial skills across a range of disciplines."*

**Janine Carmichael**, Faculty Specialist for Entrepreneurship



Janine Carmichael, Faculty Specialist for Entrepreneurship at CATL brings expertise in entrepreneurship and adult education to support instructors teaching about, for and through entrepreneurship. Contact [Janine](#) for more information about supports related to curriculum and pedagogy of entrepreneurship education.

## 3K Pitch Competition

Hosted by the [Faculty of Science Innovation Hub](#), the 3K Pitch Competition was proudly sponsored by the Bioscience Association of Manitoba.

- 1<sup>st</sup> – “A Smarter Way to Stop Cholera Outbreaks - No Antibiotics Needed” by Rana Ahmed, Ghosoun Alomari and Paula Pineda Sanchez
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – “BioinformHER: Empowering Women in Bioinformatics” by Tobi Olanipekun and Samuel Ogunsola
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – “Acinetobacter sp. dPCR Identification Kit” by Elaine Schultz



*"It's really important to have competitions like this because it creates space and time and energy to just sit down and look at a problem... and just play in the space of "What could we do?" "How could we build this?" "What is possible?"...Especially in this day and age when the problems are so complex and overreaching. We're really turning to science to figure out how can we solve these problems."*

**Andrea Ladouceur, BAM President**



Contact [Daniel.Heschuk@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Daniel.Heschuk@umanitoba.ca) in the Science Innovation Hub.

## Spark program

IDEA START and CATL collaborated to offer co-curricular learning opportunities for students, staff and faculty to spark interest in entrepreneurial learning, pathways and supports. Over 50 participants, mostly at the Bannatyne campus, have explored entrepreneurship through unique hands-on activities, and connected with UM supports and services to support moving ideas to impact.



Reach out to [Janine.Carmichael@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Janine.Carmichael@umanitoba.ca) or [Rajeev.Koyal@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Rajeev.Koyal@umanitoba.ca) for a booking.



## TEM student group

The Entrepreneurial Mindset is a new club on campus to bring together students interested in exploring entrepreneurship, innovation and collaboration.



Visit the [TEM student group](#) for more information.



## Stu Clark New Venture Championships

In 2025, 32 teams from 22 universities came to Winnipeg to compete in the prestigious New Venture Championships. With 46 community judges listening and sharing feedback, \$64,000 in prize money was awarded to the top teams.

*"It was interesting to read and learn about a number of outstanding solutions to several business or health challenges we are currently facing. I have been doing this for years, and my fellow judges agree that this was one of the strongest cohorts we have seen to date."*

**Chuck LaFlèche**



### Graduate Business Plan Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Imagine Devices Inc., University of Texas at Austin
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Eutrobac, University of California, Santa Cruz
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – Humimic Biosystems, University of Arkansas
- 4<sup>th</sup> – Revyn Medical Technologies, University of Victoria

### Graduate Level Social Entrepreneurship Award Winner

- Fetal Therapy Technologies, Johns Hopkins University

### Graduate Level Video Pitch Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Revyn Medical Technologies, University of Victoria
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Neurofore, Washington University in St. Louis
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – The Easy Snack Corporation, Western University

### Undergraduate Level Video Pitch Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Drago Boxing, Western University
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Ova Health, Western University
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – Motiv, University of Cincinnati

### Undergraduate Level Social Entrepreneurship Award Winner

- Mablab, Harvard University

### Undergraduate Business Plan Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Xatoms, University of Toronto
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Nerview Surgical, McMaster University
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – Weldright, University of British Columbia
- 4<sup>th</sup> – Ova Health, Western University

# MomentUM | Reimagining engagement



## Building bridges within UM

### IDEA START Open House brings together UM innovators and business leaders

IDEA START is UM's exciting new hub for all things relating to entrepreneurship and innovation.

The UM community and local business leaders gathered at the IDEA START Open House in November for the unveiling of the IDEA START brand and a significant funding announcement for entrepreneurship programming.

Dr. Michael Benarroch, UM President and Vice-Chancellor, spoke about the need for programming to connect innovators with the resources they need for success, and his commitment to supporting UM community members as they think beyond the classroom and collaborate across disciplines.



Moe Levy, Director of IDEA START, announced new funding of \$1 million from Price Industries for the development of entrepreneurship curriculum development for all stages of the entrepreneurial journey. The curriculum will be offered through UM

Extended Education and will be based on the guiding principles that have made the company the global success it is today.

As UM's network across the university and province, IDEA START will offer access to cutting-edge technology, tailored mentorship and collaborative spaces for UM students, faculty and staff seeking to grow innovative ideas into viable successful ventures.

To better connect UM services and supports, IDEA START will open Innovation Hubs in the Faculty of Agriculture, Price Faculty of Engineering and Rady Faculty of Health Sciences.



The IDEA START logo and its tagline, Putting people and ideas together, "capture the spirit of creative thinking at the heart of advancement and entrepreneurial success," said Levy.

Levy was joined by speakers Dr. Mario Pinto, Associate Vice-President, and Dr. Hans Joachim Wieden, who expanded on the vision and mission of IDEA START.

Manitoba's internationally recognized architecture firm, 5468796 Architecture Inc., will design the new IDEA START space at University Centre and the network of Innovation Hubs across UM campuses.



## Inaugural faculty symposium showcases entrepreneurship at UM

The UM community gathered in November to be inspired by the success stories of faculty who had applied entrepreneurial thinking to generate ideas with lasting impact.

The university's first-ever Entrepreneurship & Innovative Thinking Faculty Symposium featured faculty who were engaging with entrepreneurial approaches to enhance student engagement, enrich the student experience, support research, generate unique business ideas and revolutionize health care.

The collaborative event hosted by CATL, the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship, IDEA START, and Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation, brought together nearly 100 people to learn about entrepreneurship in various forms.

- Dr. Snehil Dua from the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences shared how she incorporates entrepreneurship as a type of experiential learning into her courses to provide students with real world experience and help prepare them for their post-university careers.
- Dr. Nathan Greidanus from the I.H. Asper School of Business shared highlights from his scholarship of entrepreneurship, including the relationships between entrepreneurship and Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder (ADHD) and exposure to natural disasters in childhood.
- Associate Professor Tijen Roshko from the Faculty of Architecture shared her journey about founding a high fashion felt company called Koyle TJN. She also shared how combining her background in science, technology and art with entrepreneurial approaches helped the company to be featured at this year's Startup Fashion Week in Toronto.
- Dr. Claudio Rigatto from the Max Rady College of Medicine shared about his journey to build a start up around a UM technology for chronic kidney disease along with Faculty of Science researchers using accessible and affordable lab-equivalent technologies.



## IDEA START Podcast

IDEA START and CATL partnered on a new podcast called the [IDEA START Podcast](#). Season 1 highlights:

- UM President Dr. Michael Benarroch shares his vision for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning at UM.
- The 100<sup>th</sup> UMSU President Divya Sharma and UMSU General Manager Thomas Blumer introduce UMSU Ventures – a new space to help student entrepreneurs bring their venture to life on campus.
- Debra Jonasson-Young, Director of the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship, outlines key supports for students of all disciplines.
- Dr. Brenda Stoesz, who leads the Science of Teaching and Learning Team, shares how Virtual Reality is being used to reimagine faculty development.
- Dr. Loren Oschpok, Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation Office Director, dives into strategies for protecting and advancing intellectual property.

## Direct support for entrepreneurs



### I-VIC Community of Practice

The IDEA START Venture and Innovation Community (I-VIC) launched in November 2024 and steadily gained momentum. It is now the largest community of practice around entrepreneurship and innovation at UM. The community met on the last Wednesday of every month and is open to all UM community members, including students, post-docs, faculty, staff and alumni.



To learn more or join the community visit [I-VIC](#).

### Startup Coach Program

Housed in the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship, the Startup Coach program offers tailored one-on-one mentorship to students who are in the process of launching their businesses.

The Startup Coach mentored 223 students in the past academic year. Through personalized coaching, students receive expert feedback on business feasibility, financial modeling and cash flow projections, as well as market research and scaling strategies.



Students can easily book free coaching sessions via [StartupTree](#).

## UM as part of a larger ecosystem



### Stu Clark High School Pitch Workshop

Each year the Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship offers a pitch workshop for high school students in Manitoba. This year over 60 students learned to refine ideas, build entrepreneurial confidence and polish their presentation skills.



Contact [Amy.Jones@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Amy.Jones@umanitoba.ca) for inquiries.

### Shad

This year UM welcomed 35 high school students from across Canada for a one-month on-campus residency program focused on STEAM and entrepreneurship. In addition to engaging talks and tours, all Shad programs across the country approached the same design challenge in 2025: How might we design innovative and sustainable transportation solutions that meet the needs of people in Canada? Rooted in design thinking, Shad design teams shared their understanding of the problem and their solution through an engaging presentation and solution prototype.

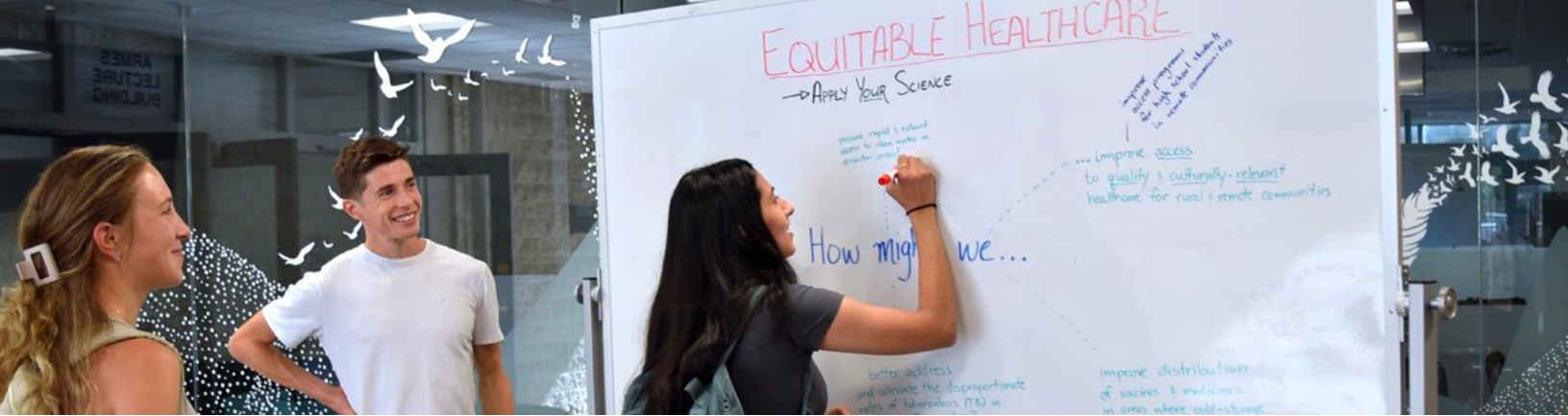


### Sprint to Innovate

In 2025, UM again partnered with Red River College Polytechnic to offer the fifth edition of Sprint to Innovate. This unique weekend-long innovation sprint invites post-secondary students in Manitoba to design solutions for challenges put forward by local organizations.



Explore the [Entrepreneurial Resource Hub](#) for tools, templates, funding opportunities and expert guidance from the Stu Clark Centre.



## Faculty of Science Entrepreneurship Speaker Series

Hosted by the [Faculty of Science Innovation Hub](#), this year's guest speaker was Dr. Les Tari, Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) of Cidara Therapeutics [BScHons/89, PhD/95].

*"First and foremost, do things not for money, not for accolades, but do it because you're passionate about it... A PhD or any science degree is just a license really to explore and critically think."*

**Dr. Les Tari, Chief Scientific Officer (CSO), Cidara Therapeutics**



## University of Manitoba Students' Union supports student entrepreneurs

To kick off a new academic year, the University of Manitoba Students' Union offers Bison Bash. A key feature is the **Bison Bash Market**, where student makers can offer their products for sale.

**UMSU Ventures** is an exciting initiative of the University of Manitoba Students' Union. It is a pop-up space for student entrepreneurs to transform their innovative ideas into successful ventures. Students can showcase their products or services, test them in the market, and gain real world experience in operating a business.

## Supporting Ramp Up Weekend

As mentors and sponsors, UM contributed to the annual Ramp Up Weekend put on by North Forge. After a weekend of building a minimum viable product, teams pitched their business ideas in the finale at UM's new Desautels Concert Hall.

# Leadership team 2024-25



**Debra Jonasson-Young**

Executive Director, Stu Clark Centre for Entrepreneurship  
I.H. Asper School of Business

[umanitoba.ca/entrepreneur](http://umanitoba.ca/entrepreneur)



**Janine Carmichael**

Faculty Specialist, Entrepreneurship  
The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL)

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**Loren Oschipok**

Director, Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation  
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

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**Rajeev Koyal**

Program Manager, IDEA START  
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

[umanitoba.ca/ideastart](http://umanitoba.ca/ideastart)



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