

STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN 2024-2030

ACADIA UNIVERSITY IS LOCATED IN MI'KMA'KI, THE ANCESTRAL AND UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE MI'KMAW NATION.

ACADIA UNIVERSITY

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ACADIA UNIVERSITY IS ONE OF CANADA'S MOST HIGHLY REGARDED ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS AND HAS A HISTORY OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE.



Founded in 1838, we have a long tradition of academic excellence, ground-breaking innovation, and an environment that encourages collaborative, community-oriented, and transdisciplinary research.

Research is central to Acadia's mission of preparing students for success in a contemporary and changing world, and we want undergraduates to be introduced to hands-on research opportunities early and often. Our vibrant research culture is driven by active faculty and student research programs, the work of our formal research centres and institutes, our ongoing investment in the development of research facilities, and the programs of our research chairs.

Acadia maintains some of the smallest class sizes in the country (15:1). We have 18 graduate programs in the arts, education, kinesiology, community development, and science. Along with St. Francis Xavier University and Mount Saint Vincent University, we offer a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Educational Studies. We also have a memorandum of understanding with the Memorial University of Newfoundland related to co-supervision of master's and doctoral students.

Acadia undergraduates and graduate students receive exceptional learning opportunities and research training. With access to award-winning researchers, state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment, field stations, community-based projects, and creative experiences, our students are making a significant impact in our world. All of this takes place within a campus environment that promotes respect, inclusivity, sustainability, and diversity.

STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Acadia *Strategic Research Plan 2024-2030* expands on the 2015-2020 strategic "rural and coastal" approach and is designed to support the Acadia research ecosystem to:

- Strengthen research activity across campus;
- · Advance our research strengths;
- · Communicate, celebrate, and acknowledge all forms of research activity; and
- Support decision-making and resource allocation.

Our *Strategic Research Plan 2024-2030* reflects current and emerging strengths at Acadia and affirms the University's commitment to research across disciplines, while providing guidance and direction to grow and enhance Acadia University's research activity and impact.



BY THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY

This *Strategic Research Plan 2024-2030* was developed with the input of a wide range of Acadia University stakeholders from November 2023 to July 2024. Through focus groups, campus-wide consultations, digital responses to guiding questions, a dedicated Working Group, the Senate Research Committee, and the Research, Innovation, and Graduate Studies (RIGS) Office, feedback was consolidated, and research strengths were identified. Secondary research was also conducted, including:



Environmental scan of past and existing strategic plans at Acadia

Comparative analysis of peer institutions

Provincial and federal government alignment analysis





ACADIA'S RESEARCH CULTURE

Research is at the centre of Acadia's mission to provide an unparalleled learning experience for our students as they expand the boundaries of knowledge, work on the pressing issues of our time, learn experientially, engage their communities, and become global citizens. Our research is conducted by a passionate and dedicated cohort of faculty and students within a picturesque and historic campus environment. We are collaborators who bridge disciplines and cultures, work with industry and community, and partner with other post-secondary institutions.

Located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded home of the Mi'kmaq people, Acadia's campus sits in the heart of the beautiful Annapolis Valley. We consider our rurality and unique geographic location to be strengths and take seriously our relationship with the community. Our award-winning faculty produces research that explores solutions to some of the world's most complex problems while also making a meaningful difference at home. The Office of Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies (RIGS), which includes the Office of Industry and Community Engagement (ICE), helps drive Acadia's research culture and supports a participatory and interdisciplinary environment that connects researchers, graduate students, Indigenous Peoples and communities, government agencies, industry partners, and community groups.





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OUR FACULTY ARE THE FOUNDATION

of a diverse research culture that provides every Acadia student access to the research process. Not only are our students trained as highly qualified personnel (HQP), but the research produced on campus is integrated into our teaching and service.

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

ACADIA'S RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT IS VIBRANT AND DIVERSE.

With strong connections to researchers around the globe, our regional community and local industries, our faculty and students are involved in a wide range of partnerships. We are proud of our strong record of applied research while respecting and valuing our liberal arts tradition that has cultivated the minds of our students for 186 years. We recognize the diversity of research methods and work to celebrate all research outcomes.

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EDIA COMMITMENT

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) are central to the research environment on our campus. With the support of the Associate Vice-President for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism (EDI-AR) and Acadia's Equity Office, Acadia faculty and students conduct research that reflects diversity in both research design and practice. Our campus is not only located in Mi'kma'ki, but also our region has several historical Acadian and Black Nova Scotian communities who have deep connections to the University and have made valuable contributions to our institution.

RESEARCH FUNDING

THROUGH CONCERTED EFFORTS BY THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND GRADUATE STUDIES (RIGS), THE UNIVERSITY HAS EXPERIENCED A MAJOR GROWTH IN RESEARCH FUNDING OVER THE PAST DECADE.

Much of this increase is the result of applied research initiatives – now representing over 60 percent of Acadia's total research income (Figure 1). Acadia has established itself as a pivotal force in driving economic growth across Nova Scotia, particularly in the Western region. Leadership in this key area is bolstered through a cohesive strategy for industry and community collaborations, making Acadia one of the leading small institutions in that category in Canada. We have been recognized among Canada's Top 50 Research Universities and consistently rank



among the best small research-intensive universities for applied research income. In 2022, Canada Research Infosource ranked Acadia second in the nation for corporate research income.

External funding from the federal Tri-agency funding programs has also grown, particularly with grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). We are also increasing our funding from provincial agencies such as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Research Nova Scotia and the Habitat Conservation Fund as well as with federal organizations such as the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI). Figures 2-3 illustrate funding levels and distributions across disciplines.





Figure 2: Annual research income, Acadia University, 2019-2024



CHAIRS

Acadia currently has four Canada Research Chairs (Tier I in "Coastal Wetland Ecosystems" [NSERC], Tier II in "Food, Health and Social Justice" [SSHRC], Tier II in "Healthy Inclusive

Communities" [CIHR], and Tier II in "Agri-Food and Sustainable Agriculture" [NSERC]). Acadia also boasts chairs such as the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership, the Rath Professorship in Entrepreneurship, and the A.D. Foulis Chair in Engineering.

ACADIA STUDENTS' RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The engagement of our students (undergraduate, graduate, as well as postdoctoral fellows) is the bedrock of our vibrant research environment. Not only do we provide funding for many of our graduate and undergraduate honours students, but growing collaborations with industry and community partners provide additional resources for student engagement. Over the past three years (2021-

2024), Acadia has employed over 1,000 students in a wide variety of research projects. We aim to dramatically increase this number over the next five years. We believe that every Acadia student should have an opportunity to lead or participate in research, community engagement, and/or creative experiences as an integral part of their educational experience.

ACADIA DIVINITY COLLEGE

Since 1968, the Acadia Divinity College (ADC) has been educating students working toward degrees in theology and ministry. Offering the only master's program in Nova Scotia for theology and ministry and the only Doctorate of Ministry program in the province for ministry and religious-oriented studies, ADC is the official seminary of the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada and the Faculty of Theology for

Acadia University. As an intellectual hub for faith-based scholarship, the College is also home to three centres of excellence: the Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, the Taylor Centre for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care, and the MacRae Centre for Christian Faith and Culture. Besides its engaging scholarship, ADC also provides Acadia with a connection with its past.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This strategic framework provides a roadmap to guide Acadia University in advancing its 2024-2030 research goals. The objectives, principles, and pillars reflect the values of the institution and the actions needed to strengthen our research culture.

OBJECTIVES

The Strategic Research Plan 2024-2030 is focused on four primary objectives.

- · Strengthen research activity across campus;
- · Advance our research strengths;
- · Communicate, celebrate, and acknowledge all forms of research activity; and
- · Support decision-making and resource allocation.

PRINCIPLES

Five overarching principles underpin the strategic pillars and are embedded throughout research priorities and operational commitments in the plan.





BREADTH AND DIVERSITY

Valuing research inquiry that spans from theoretical to empirical to applied and from foundational to evidence-based, with the aim of promoting diverse methods of research and their impacts.



EDIA

Committing to ensuring equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in research. This will include several initiatives, such as a new focus on Indigenous-led and Indigenous-focused research.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Recognizing the strength of student contributions to research and creating opportunities for students to develop research skills.



REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Appreciating the potential of research to solve complex social, environmental, and scientific problems.



SUSTAINABILITY

Encourage research that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).



BUILDING ON STRENGTUS

HAVING IDENTIFIED OUR RESEARCH STRENGTHS, OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS,

we will continue to increase our research footprint in the following five areas:



Climate change and sustainable aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems



Agriculture, agri-food, and biotechnology



Health and wellness



Bridging history, culture, and society



Al and data analytics

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS

Research under this theme seeks an understanding of natural environments and ecosystems while focusing on critical environmental issues, including climate change, changing coastal and marine habitats, developing conservation strategies for biodiversity, and exploring sustainable resource management practices.

Acadia's research contributions in this area include integrated research into climate change, ecological systems, the interaction of organisms with the environment, the environmental implications and impacts of human activities, including connections to human and community well-being, creativity, aesthetics, textual expression, ethical behaviour, and Indigenous and spiritual approaches to sustainability and environment. Globally recognized work examining the effects of tidal energy on coastal ecosystems, sustainable fisheries practices, water quality and environmental contaminants, and the preservation of coastal wetlands and fragile Arctic ecosystems takes place on campus.

This research is enhanced by the presence of outstanding research facilities, including the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, where researchers are digitizing the complete register of flora and fauna of the Acadian Forest Region and is augmented by the presence of a Tier I Canada Research Chair in Coastal Ecosystem Resilience and Connectivity. Several research centres and institutes also support this theme. Some of these include the Coastal Ecology Lab, the Acadia Tidal Energy Institute (ATEI), the Acadia Institute for Data Analytics (AIDA), and the Centre for Analytical Research on the Environment (CARE). Off-site research facilities include field stations at Beaubassin in New Brunswick, Bon Portage Island in southwestern Nova Scotia, and the Morton Centre on the South Shore of Nova Scotia.





AGRICULTURE, AGRI-FOOD, AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

Acadia University is located in the Annapolis Valley, the agricultural heartland of Nova Scotia, and has a long history of working with farmers and agri-organizations. We have developed significant agriculture-related research strengths representing several disciplines across the University, including food security and economics, wine tourism, nutrition and dietetics, value-added food and beverage product development and sensory analysis, natural product chemistry, including bio-products and encapsulation techniques, plant development and propagation, fungal endophytes and fungal diseases, aquaculture, soil health, data analytics, and integrated pest management, including significant research on invasive pest species affecting Atlantic Canada. Much of this research area uses an inter- or trans-disciplinary approach, with current research projects that combine expertise from nutrition, chemistry, biology, business, community development, economics, and sociology.

Several world-class labs, research centres and institutes support Acadia's agriculture, food and biotechnology research, including the Huestis Innovation Pavilion. This facility, including its four laboratories, is focused on chemical analysis for the growing craft beverage industry, a variety of applied research activities, and technology development directly benefiting companies working in the agriculture sector, including the Agri-Tech Lab that has partnered with industry and academic partners to successfully commercialize several products and technologies. Other labs and research centres include the Centre for the Sensory Research of Food, the Fed Family Lab, the Acadia Laboratory for Agri-Food and Beverage (ALAB), the K.C. Irving Environmental Centre, and the Acadia Institute for Data Analytics (AIDA). A Tier II Canada Research Chair in Agri-Food and Sustainable Agriculture supports this research area, as do the Acadia Sustainability Office, the Acadia Community Farm, and new academic programs, including the Science and Business of Beverage and the Science and Business of Biopharma options.



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Acadia's health and wellness research encompasses a wide array of studies aimed at understanding and improving the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being of individuals and communities. Researchers often prioritize the needs of rural and Indigenous Nova Scotians, including food security, access to health services and community-based programs, the effects of homelessness, an aging population, and racialized communities. This nationally recognized research results in evidence-based solutions that improve quality of life, reduce health disparities, promote sustainable health practices, and inform government decision-making. Health and wellness research at Acadia is inherently multidisciplinary and collaborative, involving a significant number of researchers from across the campus, as well as a variety of participants and collaborators from the community and all levels of government. Key areas of investigation include disease and injury prevention and management, physical activity, exercise and behavioural health, social health and wellness, childhood disabilities, nutrition and food security, mental health, Indigenous health, environmental health, and policy development.

This area of research is currently elevated by two Tier II Canada Research Chairs, including a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Healthy Inclusive Communities and a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Food, Health and Social Justice, and the establishment of nationally and internationally recognized research centres and labs specializing in fundamental research, community programming, policy change, and the development of novel technologies. Some notable examples include the Centre for Lifestyle Studies (COLS), the Fed Family Lab, the Computational and Applied Neuroscience Lab (CAN Lab), the Acadia University Centre for Neuroscience and Cognitive Health, Red Spruce Mental Health Centre, and the Motion Lab for Applied Biomechanics (mLAB). Acadia's research excellence has also produced renowned programs like the Sensory Motor Instructional Leadership Experience (SMILE®), Acadia Active Aging (AAA), and Kinderskills, with hundreds of students participating in these communitybased initiatives each year.



BRIDGING HISTORY, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

At Acadia, our researchers interpret history, culture, and society, while responding to problems and possibilities that bridge subjects, disciplines, and communities. We recognize that the liberal arts play an important role in illuminating the complexities of our world within a society that is ever-changing. We continue to champion a community of researchers who examine these complexities in fields including business, languages, literature, media, politics, history, economics, art, critical theory, and philosophy within and beyond disciplinary boundaries. Our research identity supports all stages of research creation, from individual investigations to collaborative projects. We also recognize and celebrate creative contributions in the arts, humanities, social sciences, fine arts, music, and drama.

This area of research strength is currently supported by a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Food Health and Social Justice, the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership, and the Rath Professorship in Entrepreneurship. We are strengthened by Acadia's Planter Studies Centre, the Acadia Art Gallery, the Esther Clark Wright and Atlantic Baptist Archives, the Centre for Interdisciplinary and Language Programs, and the Vaughan Memorial Library.



AI AND DATA ANALYTICS

Al and data analytics research at Acadia University spans a diverse range of disciplines and underpins many research programs across campus. Within computer science, business, and mathematics, Acadia has nationally and internationally acclaimed researchers specializing in data collection, mining, machine learning, statistics, mathematical modelling, simulation, and data visualization. The Acadia Institute for Data Analytics (AIDA) spearheads many of these efforts, applying data analytics and machine learning to tackle real-world problems in health, agriculture, food production, environmental sustainability, and green energy. Researchers from the humanities and professional studies also lead a variety of AI-related research programs and projects that help understand the economic, political, social and cultural impacts of AI, as well as examine ways to enhance academic research, communications and pedagogy using Al and emerging technologies. The adoption and use of emerging technologies are guided by management and policy research, and foundational research is looking at using AI tools to improve physical and mental health. Research into the psychology and neuroscience of human-Al interactions is driving the creation of new technologies, while innovative data management and modelling studies are ensuring sustainable fisheries and exploring the renewable energy potential in the Bay of Fundy.





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WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES, CENTRES, AND INSTITUTES

Acadia's campus includes established research facilities focused on a range of studies. These facilities and centres support innovative research and development that contributes not only to the strength of Acadia's research programs, but also advances innovation for industry and community partners while training the next generation of researchers through a variety of experiential learning opportunities. Acadia is able to develop its infrastructure due in part to the financial support of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and Research Nova Scotia (RNS). We value our relationship with both organizations as they continue to provide our researchers with state-of-the-art resources that allow our researchers to contribute solutions both at home and abroad.

- Acadia Centre for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies
- Acadia Centre for Estuarine Research
 - Acadia Centre for Microstructural Analysis
 - Acadia Institute for Data Analytics (AIDA)
 - Acadia Laboratory for Agri-Food and Beverage (ALAB)
 - Acadia Tidal Energy Institute
 - Acadia University's Planter Studies Centre
 - Centre for Analytical Research on the Environment
 - Centre for Interdisciplinary and Language Programs

- Centre for Sensory Research of Food Centre of Lifestyle Studies (COLS) E.C. Smith Herbarium Esther Clark Wright Archives Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens Humanities Hypermedia Centre K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre Motion Lab for Applied Biomechanics (mLAB) Prudentia Institute's Student Research Lab
- Statistical Consulting Centre
- Vaughan Memorial Library



PILLARS

Strategic actions for 2024-2030 are grouped into five thematic pillars spanning the breadth of Acadia's research activity. Each pillar invites participation from the research community across disciplines and levels of experience.

COMMUNICATE AND CELEBRATE RESEARCH IMPACTS

2 FOSTER A CULTURE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

INCREASE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY



5 INTENSIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION AND FOR SOCIAL IMPACT SOLUTIONS



PILLAR 1: COMMUNICATE AND CELEBRATE RESEARCH IMPACTS

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ACADIA RESEARCHERS ARE ENGAGED IN GROUNDBREAKING PROJECTS THAT ARE ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE IN CANADA AND AROUND THE WORLD.

The University has an important opportunity to share its work and its findings with the public to generate greater awareness and appreciation. Communicating and celebrating research is an essential area of strategic growth for Acadia. Foundational communication activities can include:

- Strengthen the research presence on the main University webpage(s);
- · Dedicate research-related communications resources;
- · Create a "Research Experts" database (Marketing and Communications);
- · Create a research outputs database (library);
- · Promote research impacts through Acadia's social media channels;
- · Promote research centres and institutes across campus; and
- Continue to engage the campus with events, lectures, workshops, etc.

To support an active research communication strategy, the University will need to grow its research communication capacity within the RIGS Office and proactively communicate research impacts through existing and new channels.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Strategic actions to communicate and celebrate research impacts can include:

- Allocate a dedicated communications resource to the RIGS Office to ramp up internal / external communications related to research projects and successes;
- Liaise with Acadia Marketing and Communications to develop a comprehensive research communications and engagement strategy to better communicate existing and new supports for researchers and students;
- · Revamp and regularly maintain the RIGS and ICE websites; and
- · Identify ways to celebrate researchers and share stories about the impact of Acadia research.

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AT ACADIA UNIVERSITY, CREATING AND FOSTERING A CULTURE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE MEANS SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS AT ALL PHASES,

from students embarking on their initial projects to established investigators overseeing teams engaged in multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional projects. Creating and fostering a culture of research inquiry and excellence also requires that institutional systems and processes be in place to build capacity and support researchers. It is also important for the University to embrace unfunded forms of scholarly inquiry, many of which add considerably to the institution's research program and its impacts. Growing both funded and unfunded research at Acadia will contribute to the overall strength and impact of the research program.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Strategic actions to foster a culture of research excellence can include:

- Develop a course release policy to ensure faculty have fair and adequate time to undertake innovative and groundbreaking research;
- Hire grant facilitators to help develop external funding proposals;
- Create consistent processes and training related to research administration (e.g., managing and reporting on project finances);
- Collaborate with the Associate Vice-President of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility to enhance supports for EDIA and Indigenous research;
- Gather data related to research activity to develop metrics and key performance indicators that will demonstrate impact; and
- Collaborate with the Vaughan Memorial Library to promote information literacy on campus and strengthen research skills and knowledge.

PILLAR 3: INCREASE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

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ACADIA IS NOTABLY STRONG IN SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO GAIN AND GROW THEIR RESEARCH SKILLS.

Expanding this area of strength requires a focus on attracting and supporting all student research and developing new systems and processes to increase faculty capacity to supervise students (e.g., course releases).

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Strategic actions to increase student involvement in research and discovery can include:

- RIGS to liaise with Acadia Marketing and Communications to celebrate the diversity of student research on campus;
- Continue to highlight the importance of research grants and contracts in supporting students;
- · Provide faculty with resources and capacity to recruit and mentor students; and
- RIGS to liaise with the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning Excellence to reduce barriers to research and increase activities and programming that target research opportunities for undergraduate students.

PILLAR 4: STRENGTHEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND GOLLABORATIONS

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ACADIA HAS STRONG TIES TO COMMUNITY, INDUSTRY, AND GOVERNMENT.

The size and culture of our institution promote collaboration (allowing for the more efficient use of resources). Continuing to strengthen opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, the importance of increasing Tri-agency applications, and increasing the level of philanthropic support for strategic initiatives is central to our success.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Strategic actions to strengthen opportunities for partnerships and collaborations can include:

- · Hire grant facilitators to increase external funding opportunities;
- Collaborate with the Office of Advancement to expand opportunities for philanthropic support;
- Celebrate the success of Acadia's applied research projects with industry, community, and non-profit organizations;
- Work with all researchers (including early career researchers), faculty deans, and the Provost to increase levels of Tri-agency funding applications and success rates; and
- Develop and strengthen key research relationships and partnerships with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian leaders, communities, and organizations.
- Include a dedicated section on the homepage of the RIGS website highlighting existing partnerships and opportunities for new industry, community, and government partnerships.

PILLAR 5: INTENSIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION AND MERCIALIZATION GOM AND FOR SOCIAL IMPACT SOLUTIONS

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ACADIA HAS A LONG HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT WITH INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

Through the Office of Industry and Community Engagement (ICE), Acadia's emphasis on fostering industry- and community-related research collaborations helps ensure that Acadia is responding to the rapidly changing needs of our project partners while generating economic and societal benefits for the regional community.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Strategic actions to intensify opportunities for innovation and for social impact solutions can include:

- Continue to support applied research and commercialization opportunities for faculty members and industry partners across all disciplines;
- Actively contribute to and engage with Springboard Atlantic;
- Provide experiential learning opportunities for students to complete work terms with industry, community partners, and social innovators;
- Create opportunities for students to develop research and professional skills with community partners; and
- Foster and support social entrepreneurship.

AT ACADIA UNIVERSITY, GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH IS IGNITING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE.

Our dedicated faculty and students are leading the charge in areas such as climate change, health and wellness, and digital innovation, tackling some of the most pressing challenges of our time. Their work is not just advancing knowledge but also creating critical solutions that have the potential to empower communities, reshape industries, and improve lives. As we continue to forge strong partnerships and inspire the next generation of thinkers, the future at Acadia is brighter than ever.

With the people, passion, and innovation in place, get ready — big things are on the horizon at Acadia!

