It is a great honour to share our annual report for the John F. Wood Centre for Business and Student Enterprise for the 2020 – 2021 year. It has been a year like no other and we are proud of our commitment to entrepreneurial programming at the Lang School of Business and Economics despite the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19.

Our faculty, staff, students and community partners have adapted to life in the virtual world and have pivoted our programming to reflect that. Through these challenges, some highlights over this past year include celebrating the graduation of the 100th company through our Hub Incubator Program, the creation of a virtual MakerSpace and the development of an asynchronous learner directed Innovation Toolkit.

In this report, we are delighted to introduce Dr. Barak Aharonson, our John F. Wood Chair in Innovation Management. An expert in strategic management and entrepreneurship, Dr. Aharonson brings a broad global network to his new role. Along with the John F. Wood Chair in Entrepreneurship Dr. Felix Arndt, we have a team of world-class researchers committed to breaking new ground.

The John F. Wood Centre is committed to developing innovators and entrepreneurs. We hope that as you review this report you will see firsthand all the success we have made towards that goal.

Warm regards,
Lysa Porth
Dean, Gordon S. Lang School of Business and Economics

As you review the enclosed summary of our accomplishments, I hope that you can see the impact the John F. Wood Centre has made on the University of Guelph students, alumni entrepreneurs, and the broader community this year.

I would also like to acknowledge our generous donors as none of our programming would be possible without you. Thank you for your unwavering support, especially during a challenging year.

We all know that we are stronger together and this past year has demonstrated the importance of togetherness even while pivoting to virtual offerings. The Wood Centre was happy to support our entrepreneurial community through various webinars where we discussed topics like “leading through crisis” and “marketing during uncertain times.” We came together for our entrepreneurial community and accomplished some incredible things that you will see highlighted throughout this report.

On behalf of everyone at the John F. Wood Centre for Business and Student Enterprise, I would like to thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Gregory Bauer
Associate Dean, Strategic Partnerships
Gordon S. Lang School of Business and Economics
OVERVIEW

Despite a challenging year due to Covid-19 we are pleased to offer this report outlining our successes while we pivoted to a virtual environment in 2020.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FELIX ARNDT, JOHN F. WOOD CHAIR IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

+ Continues to serve as a Senior Editor for the Journal of Management and Organization and as an Associate editor of Business Ethics, the Environment and Responsibility as well as on the editorial boards of the Journal of Management, the Journal of Product Innovation Management, and the European Management Journal among others.
+ served as an expert for the UK parliament and House of Lords in 2020
+ appointed member of the board of directors for Innovation Guelph
+ was visiting professor at the University of Agder; a research fellow of the Center for Sports and Management, Stockholm School of Economics
+ Felix / Lang co-hosted a conference with Imperial and Stockholm School of Economics that was extremely well received.
+ co-organized a PDW on “Researching Small-town Entrepreneurial Ecosystems” at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management
+ received a Mitacs research training award & an OMAFRA grant.
+ keynote speaker at the Entrepreneurship in Music summit.
+ conducted 30 interviews to the press and media.
+ continued roles as co-organizer for a EURAM conference; rep-at-large for BAM; member of entrepreneurship research for AoM.
+ awarded SSHRC in Fall 2020 to study business adaptation to COVID-19. This success was complemented by a grant of the Yukon Recovery program, which also attracted a collaboration within the city: uoguel.ph/business-covid19

INTRODUCING...

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Barak S. Aharonson as the John F. Wood Chair in Innovation Management.

With a BA from Tel-Aviv University, Dr. Aharonson gained a CPA and MBA from Recanati Business School, Tel-Aviv University, followed by an MBA from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto. Dr. Aharonson also completed a PhD in Strategic Management and Organization Theory, Rotman School of Business.

Before joining the Lang School in May 2021, Dr. Aharonson was a professor at Xiamen University in China. He has worked at the Stern School of Business at NYU and at the Coller School of Management in Israel. He is a globally recognized scholar in strategic management and entrepreneurship and is part of an exceptional network of international academics.

Well-aligned with the Wood Centre mission, Dr. Aharonson will work to ‘understand how we can intensify the innovation activity and entrepreneurial spirit in Canada.’

+ Continues to serve as an associate editor for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in European Management Journal.
+ teaching 2 fall classes (Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, undergrad; Research Methods & Design, PhD.)
+ Served on 3 committees at the school level
+ Continues to supervise 2 Ph.D. students and 3 master students.
+ Formed an international research group and applied for CIFAR (The Future of Being Human)(First round)
+ Continues to work on research papers.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Barak S. Aharonson as the John F. Wood Chair in Innovation Management.

With a BA from Tel-Aviv University, Dr. Aharonson gained a CPA and MBA from Recanati Business School, Tel-Aviv University, followed by an MBA from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto. Dr. Aharonson also completed a PhD in Strategic Management and Organization Theory, Rotman School of Business.

Before joining the Lang School in May 2021, Dr. Aharonson was a professor at Xiamen University in China. He has worked at the Stern School of Business at NYU and at the Coller School of Management in Israel. He is a globally recognized scholar in strategic management and entrepreneurship and is part of an exceptional network of international academics.

Well-aligned with the Wood Centre mission, Dr. Aharonson will work to ‘understand how we can intensify the innovation activity and entrepreneurial spirit in Canada.’

+ Continues to serve as an associate editor for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in European Management Journal.
+ teaching 2 fall classes (Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, undergrad; Research Methods & Design, PhD.)
+ Served on 3 committees at the school level
+ Continues to supervise 2 Ph.D. students and 3 master students.
+ Formed an international research group and applied for CIFAR (The Future of Being Human)(First round)
+ Continues to work on research papers.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Barak S. Aharonson as the John F. Wood Chair in Innovation Management.

With a BA from Tel-Aviv University, Dr. Aharonson gained a CPA and MBA from Recanati Business School, Tel-Aviv University, followed by an MBA from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto. Dr. Aharonson also completed a PhD in Strategic Management and Organization Theory, Rotman School of Business.

Before joining the Lang School in May 2021, Dr. Aharonson was a professor at Xiamen University in China. He has worked at the Stern School of Business at NYU and at the Coller School of Management in Israel. He is a globally recognized scholar in strategic management and entrepreneurship and is part of an exceptional network of international academics.

Well-aligned with the Wood Centre mission, Dr. Aharonson will work to ‘understand how we can intensify the innovation activity and entrepreneurial spirit in Canada.’

+ Continues to serve as an associate editor for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in European Management Journal.
+ teaching 2 fall classes (Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, undergrad; Research Methods & Design, PhD.)
+ Served on 3 committees at the school level
+ Continues to supervise 2 Ph.D. students and 3 master students.
+ Formed an international research group and applied for CIFAR (The Future of Being Human)(First round)
+ Continues to work on research papers.
Improve Life Challenge, March 2020

The John F. Wood Centre, in partnership with the Ontario Agricultural College and the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, hosted our annual Improve Life Challenge: Hack the Farm.

The theme of this year’s ‘hackathon’ was “Hack the Farm in a Climate of Change”. The event gathered 148 participants including students from colleges across campus, industry experts, faculty, facilitators, government officials, and community partners.

The students and community partners were placed into groups and used the Wood Centre’s unique ‘Innovation Toolkit’ to create solutions to real world challenges brought forward by our industry experts.

The community partners that engaged in the Challenge included: Beef Farmers of Ontario, Conestoga Meats, The Cooperators, Highline Mushrooms, Holland Marsh, Maple Lodge, OCP, OMAFRA, and Wellington Brewery.

The event concluded with a dramatic nail-biting pitch competition. The winning team clinched top spot with a solution designed for Wellington Brewery to achieve cleaner production by addressing technical barriers in their wastewater process. The first-place pitch also provided opportunities for partnerships that promote the circular economy. The winning team was awarded an internship to implement their solution at Wellington Brewery.

The student competitors reported improved critical thinking and complex problem-solving skills while the community partners gained problem-solving protocols and innovative solutions that were applicable to their workplace challenges.
Responding to a Pandemic

The focus of our summer 2020 semester was a response to the needs of entrepreneurs and innovators as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world and up-ended many plans.

Some of the highlights of our COVID-19 response included:

+ Development of two webinar series in partnership with the Lang School and other community organizations. The series, ‘Leading Through Crisis’ and ‘Bringing Your Business Online’ supported over 1,000 individuals and businesses. Students and community members can still access a library of webinars: uoguel.ph/new-webinar-series

+ The Wood Centre also brought together industry experts for various virtual roundtables such as ‘Marketing During Uncertain Times’ that supported entrepreneurs through the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic.

+ We were proud to leverage the MakerSpace and our 3D printers to make face shields for community healthcare and other frontline workers during the pandemic. The Wood Centre collaborated with the College of Art Interdisciplinary Design Lab – it was a life-improving example of multi-disciplinary expertise bringing innovative solutions to real world problems. To learn more, visit: uoguel.ph/critical-medical

+ Indeed, entrepreneurship is all about solving problems – and when the world faces wicked challenges, the timing is right for innovators to step up with entrepreneurial creativity to solve those problems. The John F. Wood Centre rose to the challenge by again working in partnership with Co-op and Career Services to provide a specialized summer semester Hub program for co-op students. The following link provides the details: uoguel.ph/new-opportunities
Winter 2020 Highlights

19 Events and Workshops hosted, including:
+ How to Pitch
+ Start-up Social
+ Lunch n’ Learns
+ MakerSpace Workshops in 3D printing and creativity

600 Students directly supported:
+ Customized in-class workshops, across campus
+ Academic classes taught by Centre employees (Problem Solving in Industry, Business Consulting)
+ Peer Helper and Ambassador Programs
+ 575 students indirectly supported via asynchronous/standalone materials (Innovation Toolkit)

100 Community Members and Businesses engaged and supported through:
+ Business Consulting course
+ Events
+ Mentors and Industry Experts in the Hub Incubator
+ 13 Businesses incubated

Summer 2020 Highlights

14 Events and Workshops hosted, including:
+ Leading Through Crisis: Supporting Entrepreneurs during COVID-19

60 Students directly supported through:
+ Customized in-class workshops across campus in undergraduate and graduate programs
+ MakerSpace workshops
+ Hub Incubator education

1,000+ Community Members and Businesses supported and engaged through:
+ Specialized webinar series for businesses adapting to COVID-19: Leading Through Crisis series and Bringing Your Business Online series
+ Mentors and industry experts in Hub Incubator

20 Businesses incubated
+ Hub Start and Build: uoguel.ph/s20-hub
+ Entrepreneurship Co-op program: uoguel.ph/new-opportunities
Fall 2020 Highlights:

4 Events and Workshops hosted, including:
+ Introduction to Design Thinking
+ Entrepreneurship 101
+ How to Pitch

380+ Students directly supported, through:
+ Customized in-class workshops across campus
+ Academic classes taught by Centre employees

(Business consulting, ICON: Applied Project Management & Community Engagement)
+ Peer Helper and Ambassador program
+ 750+ students indirectly supported through asynchronous/standalone materials (Innovation Toolkit)

25 Community Members and Businesses supported and engaged through:
+ Academic courses
+ Mentors and industry experts in the Hub Incubator

6 Businesses incubated:
+ Hub Start and Build: uoguel.ph/f20-hub
+ Felix Arndt offered a course (MGMT2500) in a unique format that attracted 200 students in its first year, making it one of the most popular electives. uoguel.ph/teachonline

Winter 2021 Highlights:

6 Events and Workshops hosted, including:
+ How to Pitch for Social Entrepreneurs
+ Innovation Tools for Sustainability
+ Government of Canada Innovation Forum

330+ Students directly supported, through:
+ Customized in-class workshops across campus
+ Academic classes taught by Centre employees

(Business Consulting, Problem-Solving in Industry, Design Thinking in Sport)
+ Peer Helper Ambassador program
+ 650+ Students indirectly supported through use of asynchronous/standalone materials (Innovation Toolkit)
+ Peer Helper Ambassadors

156 Community Members and Businesses supported and engaged through:
+ Academic courses
+ Mentors and Industry Experts in the Hub Incubator
+ Events

13 Businesses incubated
+ Hub Start and Build: uoguel.ph/w21-hub
Supporting and Building Community in a Pandemic

The summer semester was about responding to the immediate needs of our community. This semester was about deeper analysis and how to make meaningful change. The Wood Centre partnered with the Ideas Congress (ICON), Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI) on campus, and the local OakTree Project to help local organizations thrive during a stressful, global situation.

Four local charities — Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Guelph, Guelph Arts Council, Guelph Black Heritage Society, and the Integrated Youth Services Network — were semi-finalists in the OakTree6 Project to pitch for a prize of $7,500.

University of Guelph faculty, staff, and students supported the four charities in developing their final pitches. Undergraduate and graduate students worked together with the charities to co-create new initiatives, present their winning pitches and help them thrive during the COVID-19 environment. To view final pitches: oaktreeguelph.ca

This was the most rewarding and impactful class of my entire educational experience.

- 5th year PhD student
Advancing Our Impact in a Virtual World

In 2020, we worked to deliver services to our students, community partners, alumni, and organizations within a ‘virtual reality’, and our results were positive. Our clients are thriving in their business ventures, our unique pedagogies engaged our students, and our community partners continued to experience success in growing impactful projects.

Through successes, setbacks, and failures, we grew better together and used our learnings, conversations, and materials to achieve a new level that uses entrepreneurship and innovation as a force for good in our foreseeable ‘virtual future’. To attain this new level of support for our audiences, we engaged in three major development projects:

1. An online Innovation Toolkit
   + see year-end program review that follows

2. A virtual MakerSpace
   + see year-end program review that follows

3. Podcast series
   + We missed face-to-face interactions – an army of volunteers started the podcast series to sustain our ‘entrepreneurial community’ that we traditionally fostered via Start-up Socials, The Couch – an on-campus roaming conversation hot-spot etc.
   + Premise of the series: Enthusiastic Students interviewing Entrepreneurs and Innovators
   + uoguel.ph/podcast-series
Hub Incubator
In 2020, the John F. Wood Centre celebrated the 100th company to graduate the Hub Incubator program since its introduction in 2014!

What began as an idea to expand into the new venture creation space and encourage more University of Guelph startups, has evolved into one of our signature programs. We help foster innovation and entrepreneurship and we celebrate the resilience, perseverance, and entrepreneurial spirit of the Hub businesses fostered at the Wood Centre and across campus. Check out some of the stories we captured in our “100 Hub Company Celebration” uoguel.ph/celebrate-100

In 2020, thirty-nine businesses were incubated under the Hub program. This includes Retea, Izzy’s Imperfect Items, the Happy Era, Grand Finishing Systems, and Living Glass, all businesses that align with the University of Guelph mission to improve life.

The Wood Centre really helped hone our value proposition, what we wanted to achieve as a company, and how we can go about achieving it. We often use tips and tricks that we learned while in the program now.
- Sean, 5th Bean

Industries that the Hub Businesses fall into: (S20, F20, W21):

- Consumer Goods/Clothing 12
- Food & Beverage 8
- Digital Media/Research 6
- Consulting 4
- Health & Wellness/Cosmetics 3
- Education 3
- Home Services 2
- Horticulture/Indoor Gardening 2
- Dog Training/Pet Services 1

MakerSpace:
By winter 2020, the John F. Wood Centre MakerSpace was gaining traction on campus. There was a clear need for access to resources for students and with successful events, one-on-one support, and partnership development, we brought resources, tools and mentorship that would help them get their big ideas into the form of a Prototype. The pandemic required MakerSpace to re-imagine delivery while sustaining the creative programs that would meet student needs.

+ Transforming the physical MakerSpace at College Ave and Gordon St in Guelph, Ontario and bringing it to life in a virtual world
+ Our vision: users type in a URL and are welcomed to a virtual room full of resources to get creative and make change. For instance, click on 3D printers and learn how to design your own files; Click on the whiteboard and learn skills to exercise creativity and brainstorming; Click on a toolkit and learn how to build your first prototype. You can
enter a portal of other makers, keen to work alongside you with the development of your new idea through Discord. This is a virtual makerspace where curiosity is fostered, community is developed, and changemakers are born. It will offer both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities so that students can either login at specified times and connect with other students or complete activities at times that work within their schedule.

+ This project is complete and will be launching October 2021
+ Thank you to UofG’s Student Life Enhancement Fund for the award that enables this project.

Innovation Toolkit

Cross-campus Entrepreneurial Support
With our vision to provide accessible entrepreneurial education to all disciplines, the team advanced the Innovation Toolkit.

+ Our original Innovation Toolkit was designed to help students and faculty across campus learn the basics of entrepreneurship and innovation. We leveraged these materials to create a standalone (asynchronous) online toolkit of materials that walks learners through programs related to ‘how to problem-solve like an innovator’ and ‘how to implement like an entrepreneur’. This support truly helps students bring their ideas to life with case-studies, videos, tutorials, worksheets and much more. Students now have access to materials they can bring with them to the workforce, thus further amplifying the impact.

+ The Toolkit was tested in multiple classrooms representing students from every year of study across almost every college on campus
+ It helped produce over 100+ new ideas (policies, products, or services) for solutions to environmental, social, and economic problems
+ 1,400+ students accessed and utilized the Toolkit this year
+ Thank you to the Lang Transformational Learning Initiative Fund for the award that enabled this project

Financial Contributions

THE HUB
+ Each hub start company received $1000k stipend and each hub build received $2000k hub stipend
+ $10,000 in Oilseed Innovation Entrepreneurship Fund
  • Happy Era (Domenique Mastronardi) – $5,000
  • Grand Finishing Systems (Jonah Greenburg) – $5,000
Two UofG entrepreneurs and graduates of the Wood Centre’s incubator program will receive $5,000 in funding as part of their startups focus on advancing the Canadian oilseed sector.

Jonah Greenberg’s (BComm ’13) startup Grand Finishing Systems and Domenique Mastronardi (BEng ’21) of the Happy Era will receive the funds through the Oilseed Innovation Partners (OIP) entrepreneurship fund.

+ $2,000 from the Deborah and Warren Jestin Award
  • Awarded to Stewart and Courtney Russell of Well Baked Box
+ $1,500 to the Guelph Enactus Team for Social Entrepreneurship Pitch

Student Scholarships

+ $1,000 to the Alison Kane Memorial Award
  • Awarded to Michelle Kozdras
+ $10,000 in the Johnson Award
  • To be announced early November 2021
+ $2,500 to the Janet Aizenstros Award
  • To be announced early November 2021
+ Info on all awards: uoguel.ph/award-page

Research Supported
The John E. Wood Centre is proud to support innovative research with faculty partners. In 2020–2021, we supported ten research projects across multiple institutions and fields of study, including:

+ Women’s entrepreneurship
+ Entrepreneurship and innovation education in the Future of Work
+ Foundational skills development
+ Hackathon Practices
+ SME Management
+ Social Entrepreneurship
The University of Guelph, and everyone who studies here, explores here, teaches here and works here is committed to one simple purpose
- To Improve Life.