Research and Innovation

2025 Annual Report

Professor Leah Cowen
Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and Strategic Initiatives

2025.research.utoronto.ca

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

DEFY GRAVITY

A Message from the Vice-President

We had much to celebrate in 2025. Amid geopolitical change, we met the moment by creating the U of T Emergency Fund to safeguard U of T research with short-term bridge funding to prevent disruption. At the same time, we developed the resources and pathways to attract top researchers and graduate students to Canada. We continued to excel in global rankings: not only are we Canada's leading university by most global university rankings, but we also ranked third among North American public universities and maintained our position as 21st globally.

The Division of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation (VPRI) advanced its mission to support and promote the research and innovation activities of our community. This past year, VPRI provided to U of T's more than 2,000 faculty researchers, 1,300 startups and thousands of student and postdoctoral researchers the critical supports they need to succeed.

We have an ambitious year ahead as we advance our commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion, advocate for increased support for investigator-led research, and foster research and innovation that deliver real-world benefits to Canadians.

I want to thank the VPRI team for all their accomplishments in the past year.

Sincerely,

Professor Leah E. Cowen
Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and Strategic Initiatives

U of T Rankings

#1 in Canada by most major global university rankings
(ARWU 2025, NTU Ranking 2025, THE WUR 2026, U.S. News 2025–26)

#1 in Canada for entrepreneurship
(Inc. Magazine & Fast Company 2024)

#2 in the world for sustainability
(QS Sustainability Rankings 2026)

#3 among North American public universities
(THE WUR 2026)

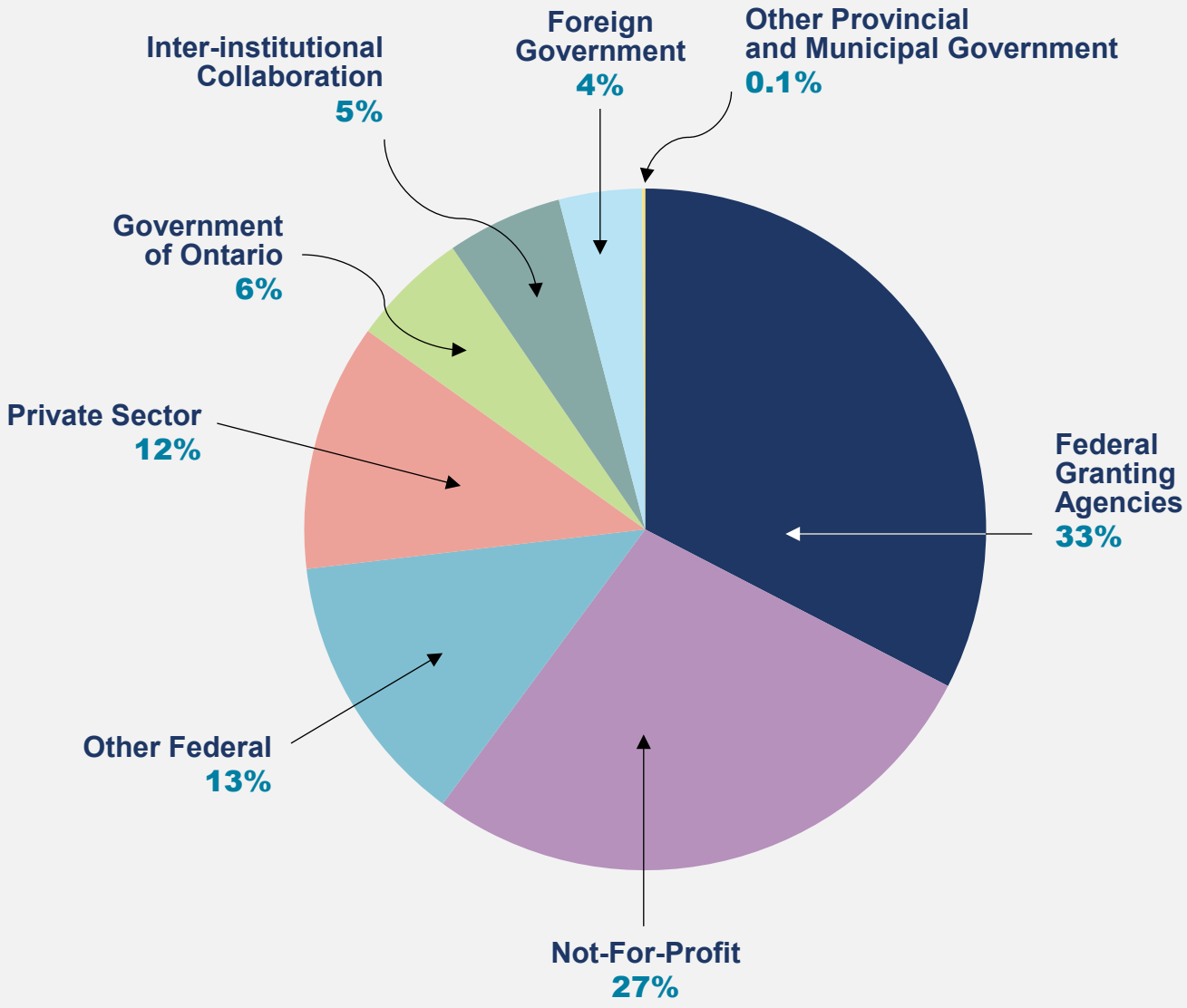
#9 most cited university in the world in global public policy documents
(Overton Public Policy Index, April 2026)

#11 in the world for health sciences
(Nature Index 2025)

#21 university in the world
(THE WUR 2026)

Funding

U of T and hospital partners are proud to lead Canada's largest research and innovation ecosystem, delivering global impact and powering economic growth, enabled by the crucial support of our funding partners.

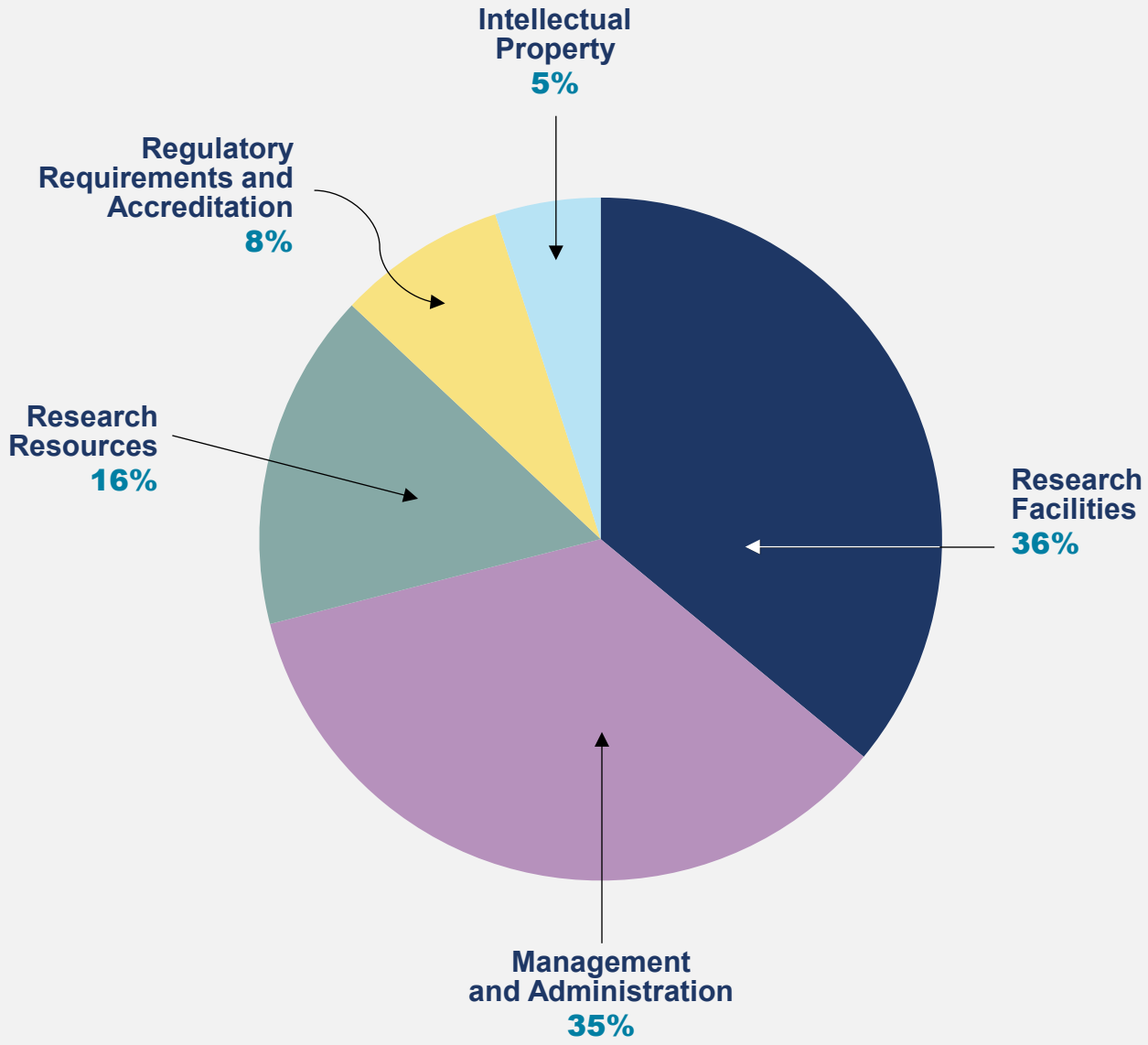


Research Funds Awarded to U of T and Partner Hospitals by Sector (2024–25)

Total Funds Awarded:

$1.7 billion

The federal **Research Support Fund (RSF)** supports the indirect costs of research—maintaining advanced labs and equipment, sustaining research support staff, ensuring compliance and strengthening security ensuring a world-class research environment.



Research Support Fund Expenditures by Eligible Categories (2024–25)

Total Funds Awarded:

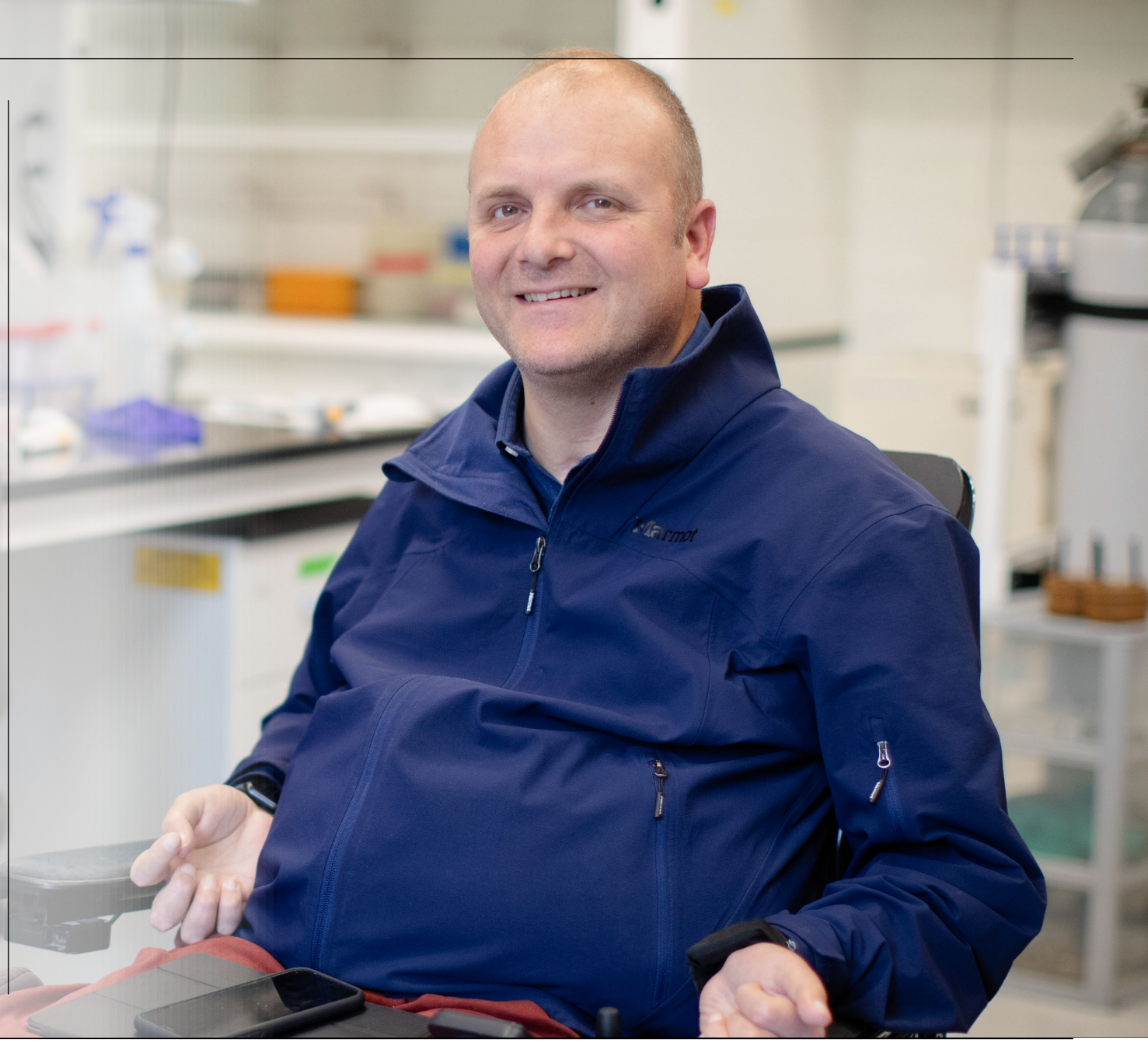
$62.3 million

Canada Research Chairs (CRCs)

330

Canada Research Chairs:
U of T holds more CRCs of any other university in the country.

We attract and retain researchers at the top of their fields. We are on track to meet or exceed federal equity targets across all four designated groups by 2029, ensuring excellence and inclusion advance together.



Professor Michael Garton
Institute of Biomedical Engineering

Canada Research Chair in Synthetic Biology

Professor Hilary Brown
Department of Health & Society, UTSC
Mid-Career Researcher Award 2025

Her research spans the full life course, investigating how disability, chronic disease, and structural inequities drive disparities in maternal and child mental health outcomes.

Connaught Fund

We are creating research opportunities.

As Canada's largest internal university research funding program, U of T's **Connaught Fund** invests over $8.2 million annually in researchers and trainees, advancing scholarship across disciplines and supporting work that serves the public interest.

In 2025, the **Mid-Career Researcher Award** recognized five faculty members leading innovative research programs and building the foundations for future major Tri-Agency funding.

$200M+

awarded to researchers since 1972.

Professor Amy Bilton
Department of Mechanical & Industrial Engineering

Her work develops innovative water and energy technologies for sustainable global development, working with industry and NGOs on projects in India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Mexico, and Nicaragua.

Connaught Fund

We support researchers at all stages of their careers.

The Connaught Fund plays a vital role in advancing researchers throughout their careers, supporting them from graduate training through early, mid, and senior-career stages.

Professor Amy Bilton has received three Connaught Fund awards since joining U of T in 2014:

- Connaught New Researcher Award (2018–2019)
- McLean Award (2024)
- Connaught Innovation Award (2025–2026)

3,200+
researchers have been supported by the Connaught Fund since 1972.

Commercialization & Entrepreneurship

Featured Startups

AmacaThera is developing a next-generation hydrogel drug delivery system engineered for precision, control and better patient outcomes.

Byteshape is making AI nimble, fast and inexpensive through foundational bitlength learning technologies.

Mutuohealth is building an AI-powered digital assistant to accelerate administrative tasks for physicians.

Top 5
in the world for university startup incubators

1,500+
venture-backed startups

$17B
raised in the past five years

20,000
jobs created in the past five years

Schwartz Reisman Innovation Campus

In 2025, the **Schwartz Reisman Innovation Campus** served as a gathering point for over **20,000 people** across **130+ events**—turning shared space into shared breakthroughs through:

Pitch competitions

Bootcamps and hackathons

Networking sessions

Government announcements

Trade conferences and exhibitions

Keynotes and lecture series

Partnerships & Collaborations

U of T connects researchers to the partners, infrastructure and resources they need to tackle urgent global challenges.

Featured Partnerships

Our researchers are partnering with global chemical producer **BASF** to develop new technologies using the Acceleration Consortium's AI-driven self-driving labs to rapidly create advanced materials and molecules.

University Health Network is partnering with the **Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA)** to advance heart health for Indigenous communities with point-of-care tools and publicly accessible resources.

Awards & Honours

U of T researchers are recognized for their impact and excellence through prestigious national and international awards, underscoring the university's standing as a research powerhouse.

Award spotlight

University Professor Dick Bond
Department of Astronomy & Astrophysics

Shaw Prize in Astronomy
Hong Kong

For his groundbreaking work studying fluctuations in the cosmic microwave background.

Professor Jennifer Stinson
The Hospital for Sick Children and Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing

Peter Gilgan Canada Gairdner Momentum Award
Canada

For her leadership in digital therapeutics and training initiatives for childhood illness pain assessment and self-management.

Professor Paul Santerre
University Health Network and Institute of Biomedical Engineering

Elected to the U.S. National Academy of Inventors
USA

For outstanding contributions to innovation in biomaterials through the invention and commercialization of new technologies.

Distinguished Professor Kamari Maxine Clarke
Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies and Centre for Diaspora & Transnational Studies

SSHRC Insight Award
Canada

For her work exploring the use of geospatial technology tracking mass atrocity violence to build human rights cases.

150

international and major national research accolades received by U of T researchers in 2025.

President’s Impact Awards

This award recognizes contributions that emerge from academic scholarship and demonstrate clear, real-world impact.

2025 winners

Professor
Miriam Diamond
Department of Earth Sciences

Professor
Zoe Hilton
Temerty Faculty of Medicine and Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care

Knowledge Translation Program
Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Temerty Faculty of Medicine and Unity Health Toronto

Professor
Mayo Moran
Faculty of Law

Professor Moran is also the recipient of the 2025 Carolyn Tuohy Impact on Public Policy Award.

Professor
Steven Narod
Women's College Hospital and Dalla Lana School of Public Health

Derrick Rossi Innovation Awards

This inaugural award bridges the gap between discovery and real-world use by providing funding to proof-of-concept research projects with the potential to drive economic growth, improve lives, or reshape industries.

2025 winners

Professor
Chung-Wai Chow
University Health Network and Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Professor
Molly Shoichet
Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering

Professor
Peter Roy
Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Professor
Emma Master
Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering

Professor
Keith Pardee
Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy

Solving Global Challenges

Our researchers are working on the problems that define this century.

Developing medical innovations to advance human health and wellbeing.

Promoting the humanities and their essential function of examining human values.

Strengthening the institutions, values and civic structures that underpin democratic society.

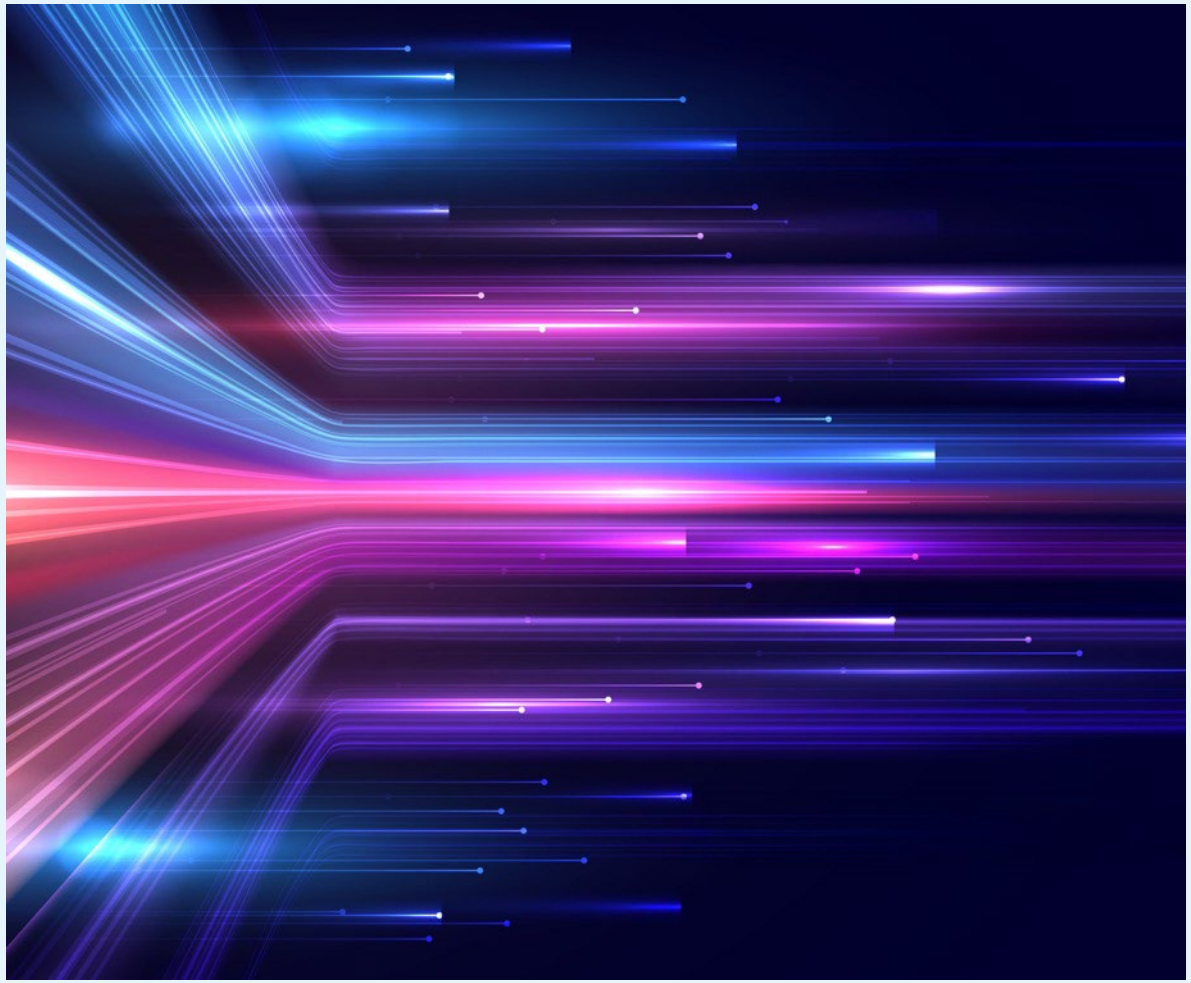
Building AI technologies alongside the ethical and legal frameworks to govern them.

Advancing biomanufacturing to prevent and respond to infectious disease.

Designing high-precision therapeutics and regenerative medicine.

Creating sustainable solutions to the climate crisis.

AI Computing



Boosting U of T's computing capacity to ensure a sovereign Canada.

In November 2025, U of T received a $42.5-million federal investment through the **Canadian Sovereign AI Compute Strategy** to expand Canada's high-performance AI computing capacity. This new funding builds on a recent revitalization to the **SciNet** supercomputer systems, bringing total recent investments to $94.5 million.

By strengthening AI infrastructure at U of T, the initiative will accelerate breakthroughs across health care, science, engineering and the humanities, while reducing Canada's reliance on foreign compute resources.

New Frontiers in Research Fund — Transformation

Using Indigenous knowledge to address urgent environmental challenges.

In March 2025, **Professor M. Murphy**, School of the Environment and the Women and Gender Studies Institute, received a $22-million **New Frontiers in Research Fund—Transformation** award to lead a major initiative that positions Indigenous academic and community experts as leaders in designing the ways pollution risk is evaluated and managed.

The work is co-led by **Professor Kristen Bos**, Department of Historical Studies, UTM, whose team is developing an Indigenous chemical risk platform in collaboration with U of T scientists.

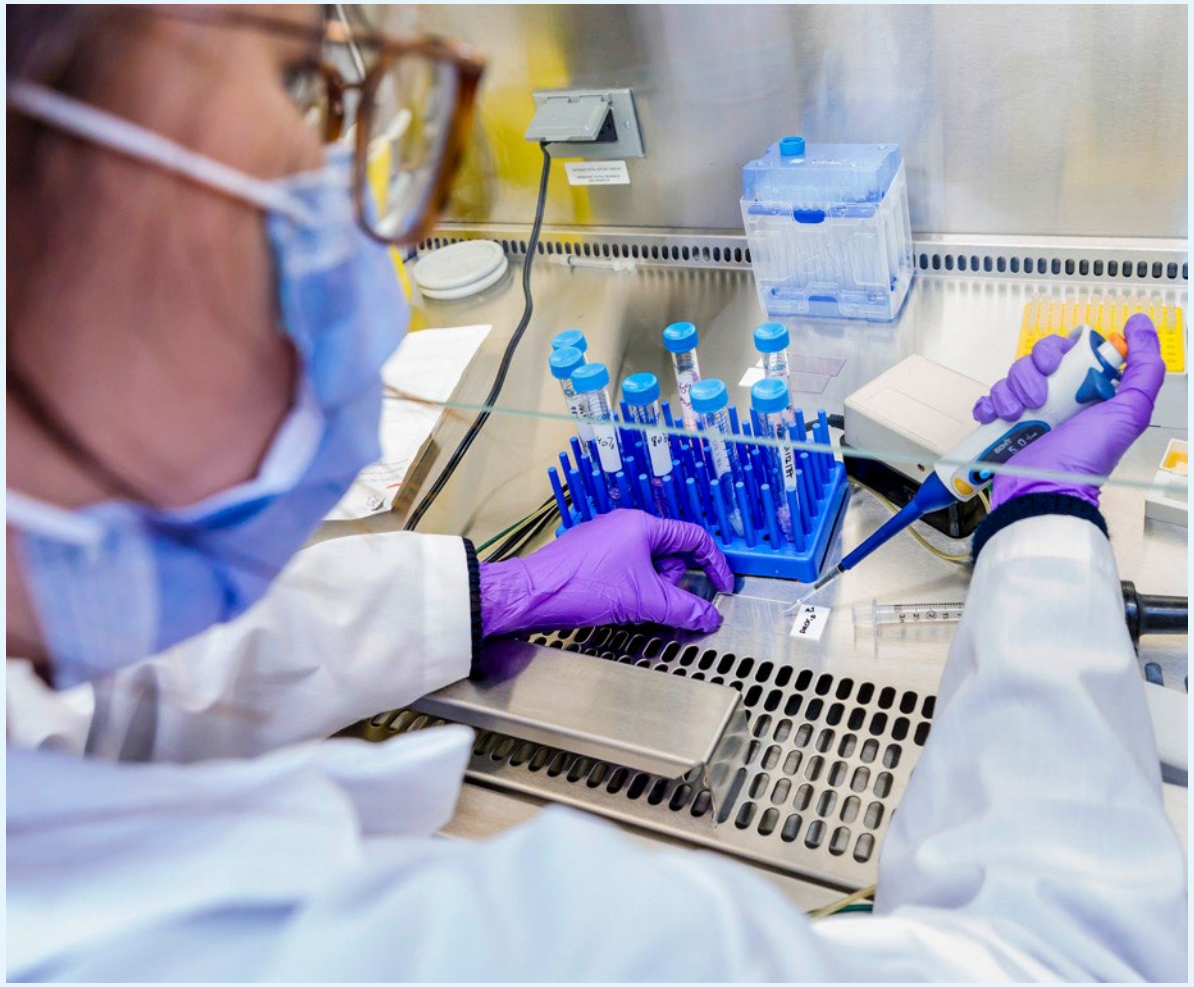
Lawson Climate Institute

Advancing climate action solutions.

In April 2025, U of T launched the **Lawson Climate Institute**, a new multidisciplinary centre to accelerate practical, scalable climate solutions across the university, made possible by a transformative $60-million donation from Brian and Joannah Lawson—the largest gift to a Canadian university for climate change solutions.

The institute will expand U of T's capacity to advance the technologies and policies needed for Canada to reach net-zero by 2050 and empower students to make climate action a priority.

Biolabs University of Toronto



Fueling discovery with expanded wet-lab space.

U of T has partnered with **BioLabs** to launch **BioLabs University of Toronto**, a 40,000-square-foot shared wet-lab incubator and co-working space in the MaRS Discovery District—now the largest of its kind in the city.

This partnership ensures early-stage startups have access to specialized equipment and lab space. It connects founders to BioLabs' global network of investors, industry partners and mentors, strengthening support for Toronto startups amid a severe shortage of wet-lab space in the downtown core.

U of T Emergency Research Fund

Protecting research from funding cuts.

In October 2025, U of T launched the **Emergency Fund** to keep groundbreaking research on track with up to a year of bridge support for faculty affected by U.S. funding cuts.

The Fund enabled **Professor Artem Babaian**, Department of Molecular Genetics and his team to continue advancing their cloud-based tools uncovering hard-to-detect RNA viruses that may contribute to diseases like Alzheimer's, Crohn's and cancer.

Research Leadership Academy: Insights & Exchanges

Empowering faculty to lead complex research initiatives.

The Research Leadership Academy: Insights & Exchanges, now in its second cohort, helps mid-career faculty to build their capacity to lead expansive research networks, build broad partnerships, evaluate their impact, and foster inclusive research environments - cultivating authentic leadership that drives transformative research and innovation.

The program leverages the university's internationally recognized community of research leaders to provide mentorship and strategic insights.

Serving the U of T Community

The VPRI supports researchers across U of T's expansive research and innovation enterprise—offering a broad range of services and expertise at every stage of their careers and on all three campuses.

Strategy, Advocacy and Communications

Advancing awareness of U of T research through robust outreach to partners and stakeholders.

Funding Administration

Managing research funding from proposal to delivery.

Safeguarding Research

Protecting facilities and digital infrastructure; advising on risks and requirements.

Partnership Development and Coordination

Building partnerships across U of T, hospitals, industry and community.

Advancing IP commercialization

and supporting startups through accelerators.

Training and Development

Supporting researcher development and training on technical and safety protocols.

Research Facilities and Tools

Providing access to computing, databases and core facilities.

Oversight and Compliance

Ensuring ethical, legal and financial compliance, including ethics review and lab inspections.

Powering U of T’s Research & Innovation Ecosystem

VPRI's dedicated team supports over 2,000 faculty researchers and 1,300 startups at U of T, Canada's largest and most dynamic research and innovation ecosystem.

7,500+
Research Ethics Board submissions

400+
corporate research collaborators over the past five years

700+
active commercialization projects

2,200+
research partnership agreements

25,000+
environmental health and safety trainees

9,700+
research grants

2,500+
lab and fume hood inspections

New in 2026

U of T Defence Research Initiative

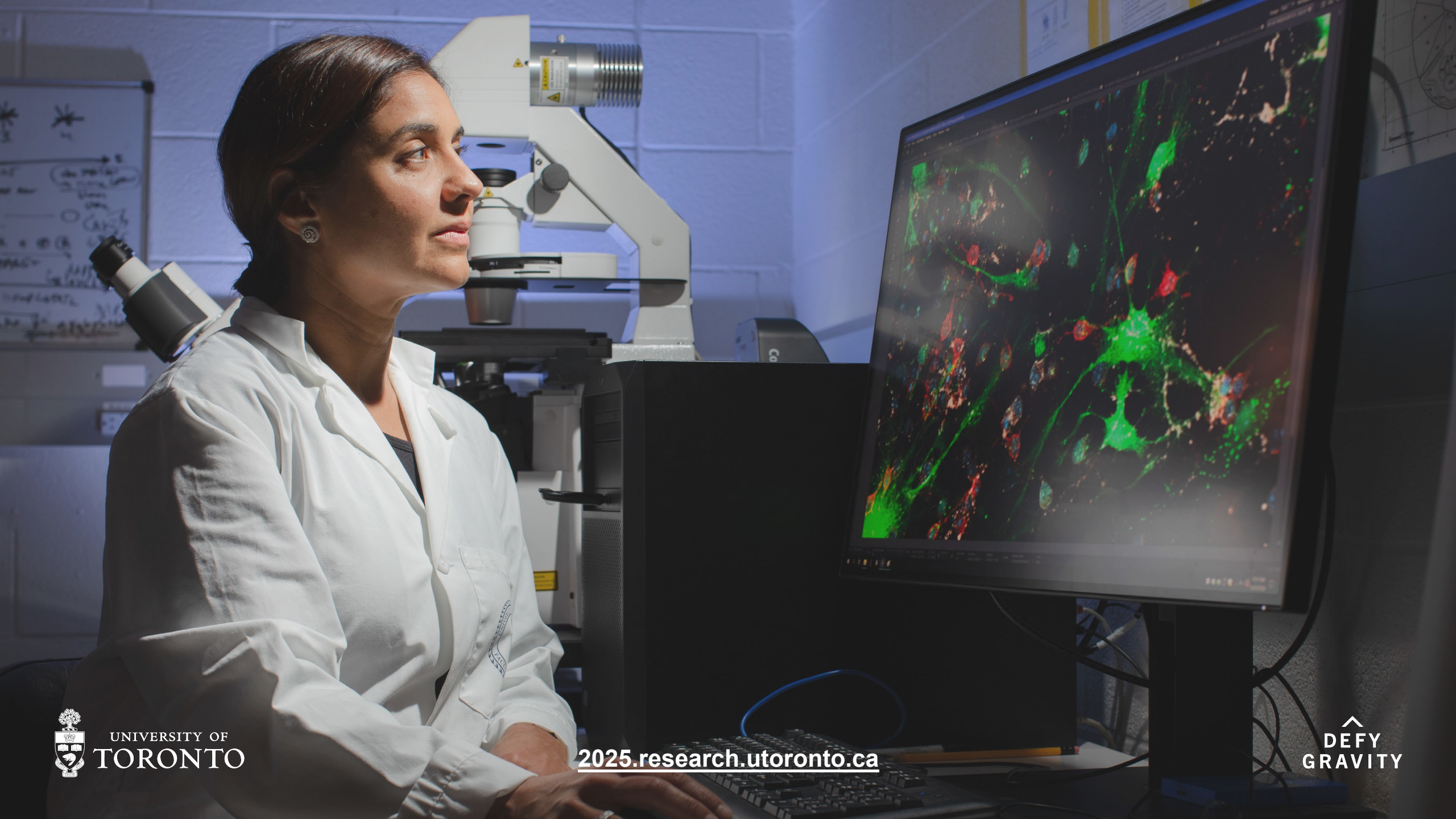
Canada's $63 billion defence commitment, alongside $6.6 billion for a new Defence Industrial Strategy, mark a turning point for Canadian security and innovation.

U of T's new defence research initiative is meeting the moment by bringing together researchers, government, and industry to advance defence-aligned research and training, and to develop technologies that serve both civilian and national security needs.

Canada Impact+ Research Talent Initiative

U of T is excited to nominate outstanding researchers for the Canada Impact+ Research Talent Initiative, which will attract the world’s top scholars, early career faculty and trainees to U of T so we can build a stronger, more resilient Canada.

Canada is investing $1.7 billion over 12 years to attract more than 1,000 top international and expatriate researchers, including PhD students and postdoctoral fellows.


UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO
2025.research.utoronto.ca
DEFY
GRAVITY