

# TOP OF THE CLASS IN INNOVATION



**LEADING RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES ARE NOT GENERALLY CONSIDERED STARTUPS; HOWEVER, THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S OKANAGAN CAMPUS (UBCO) IS JUST THAT.**



With many of the hallmarks of a successful startup, including pushing boundaries, nurturing creativity, and fostering community engagement, UBCO has been cultivating and inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs and innovators since opening its doors in 2005.



“To be part of this growth trajectory as a startup, not many opportunities like this exist in North America,” says Associate Vice-President & Vice-Principal of Research, Dr. Philip Barker. “Everyone knew it would be a great thing to have a university [in Kelowna],

but the impact of having a top 40 university in your city, you can't underestimate it.”



Thanks to top-notch faculty and close to 10,000 degree-seeking students hailing from more than 100 nations around the world, UBCO's work has led not only to economic prosperity but also to what Barker calls social prosperity: bringing in new perspectives and broadening the ways of thinking about what can be accomplished in the region.

“We have embedded ourselves in the community in a really profound way,” says Barker. “Knowledge that sits on the shelf doesn't help anybody, so we're trying to be deliberate with the kinds of programs and the research that we're doing.”

One such program, Entrepreneurship@UBCO, is an incubator run out of Kelowna's Innovation Centre, offering mentorship, training, and other support so students and graduates can dream big and start their entrepreneurial journey off on the right foot. Since its launch in 2018, early-stage companies that have completed the program have raised more than \$2.5 million in capital and hired over 100 employees.

To further its research and development activity in the region, UBC recently launched its Innovation Precinct on a 60-acre

parcel of land at the Okanagan campus, bringing together some of the University's best and brightest minds to advance ground-breaking research.

These are just two examples of the programs and research being conducted at UBCO that support and encourage growth in the region's key sectors, growth that is plain to see, as Barker notes.



“We're seeing the results manifest in what you see when you walk through Kelowna and see the companies that are here. It feeds forward towards a more vibrant community.”