

STAN SHAPSON

York's Research Blueprint

This special issue of *YorkU* magazine provides an exciting glimpse into the broad range of research and innovation at York University. Our scientists have placed instruments in space and on Mars for vision research and climate monitoring, and our social scientists have informed immigration and refugee settlement policies. We've attracted neuroscientists and health researchers with expertise in issues from bullying to autism, and our specialists in business and law have aided numerous policy-makers. Collaborations between the fine arts and computer science have resulted in a unique interdisciplinary research hub stimulating the burgeoning digital media industries in the Greater Toronto Area.



York researchers are ready to respond to the challenges of the future through strong partnerships, knowledge mobilization and commercialization. The Sherman Health Science Research Centre and the recently approved Life Sciences Building will provide future opportunities for large-scale research collaborations in health care and life sciences.

I invite you to engage with our researchers as you visit the new York Research Tower on the Keele campus, atop the new location of the Archives of Ontario. Our state-of-the-art facilities will provide further partnership opportunities so that we can intensify our innovations in technology and society and, true to our research roots, continue to find solutions to the world's challenges. ■

Stan Shapson is York's vice-president research & innovation.

SAMUEL SCHWARTZ

Forging Ahead

York's four principles – excellence, innovation, relevance and responsibility – have been the focal point of the growth of teaching and research in York's first 50 years. That York has upheld its values towards its vision is clear from its many research partnerships, and in the accolades that students continue to receive. In 2009 alone, York has forged research partnerships and collaborations with the Southlake Regional Health Centre and York Central Hospital, and created a joint nursing academy with the University Health Network. York has also become a full member of TRIUMF, Canada's accelerator laboratory and premier facility for studying the nature of matter.



Scholars within each Faculty at York are extending the boundaries of their research – York's climate change initiatives include 160 researchers from our many specialized research centres as well as across many disciplines and Faculties. Our knowledge mobilization efforts ensure that our researchers' expertise reaches society and the community in a way that helps us understand the world and how to thrive in the unpredictability of it.

This year the Archives of Ontario has relocated to York's Keele campus. We will have further resources available on campus to continue to fulfil our academic and research goals, and our vision for York to engage the world through its eminent scholarship and research activities. ■

Samuel Schwartz (MA '69, LLB '72) is a partner at Davis LLP. He is a member of York's Board of Governors and chair of its Academic Resources Committee.

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redefine THE POSSIBLE.

How knowledge mobilization turns research into action. BY MAMDOUH SHOUKRI

Driving Innovation

The first line of our Mission Statement makes it clear: “The mission of York University is the pursuit, preservation and dissemination of knowledge.” The first two items – pursuing and preserving knowledge – are pretty straightforward. Creating new knowledge is one of the most cherished functions of a university – a magnificent opportunity to expand human knowledge through our research and teaching.

But knowledge is of no benefit to anyone if it sits on a shelf. The greatest responsibility of the university is to mobilize that knowledge – to share it with the community and the world to help solve the problems we face, to improve competitiveness, to increase prosperity.

Today’s universities are expected and challenged by governments and society to link their knowledge creation to societal needs, and to become more entrepreneurial in dealing with industry. At York, we take this obligation seriously.

York was the first university in Canada to develop an institutional capacity to broadly support knowledge mobilization. York’s Knowledge Mobilization Unit provides services for

Today’s universities are expected to link their knowledge creation to societal needs.

faculty, graduate students and community and government organizations seeking to maximize the impact of academic research and expertise.

Knowledge mobilization is the intersection between researchers and research stakeholders; it’s where research and evidence help inform decisions about public policy, social programming and professional practice. It includes methods of knowledge transfer, translation and exchange. More than this, it extends them to include the co-production of knowledge.

Knowledge mobilization drives social innovation, environmental sustainability and a greater cultural understanding; it turns research into action. Consider ResearchImpact, the Web site of a knowledge mobilization network that connects researchers from York University and the University of Victoria with community and government organizations.

ResearchImpact disseminates information through a number of channels, including blogs, Twitter and other social

Mamdouh Shoukri is York’s president and vice-chancellor.



media tools. It provides easy access for researchers and community organizations to information on some of the 100 collaborations enabled by York’s Knowledge Mobilization Unit. A few of the many projects highlighted on ResearchImpact include:

- Research by York Faculty of Education Professor Stephen Gaetz in collaboration with University of Victoria nursing Professor Bernie Pauly and community partners, which evaluates community-based programs to end homelessness.
- York psychology Professor Henny Westra’s project on how to effectively provide mental health information to young adults.
- The work of York alumna Tamara Miller (MA ’08), which informs the Web strategy of the not-for-profit organization Free the Children.

Through streaming videos available on the Web site, researchers can initiate a dialogue with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit – just one example of how knowledge mobilization creates knowledge that is accessible and participatory, that engages all of our stakeholders and disseminates knowledge quickly to policy-makers and practitioners in the field.

In a little more than two-and-a-half years, York’s Knowledge Mobilization Unit has collaborated with more than 100 non-academic stakeholder groups, placed 25 graduate student interns with community and government partners, and attracted more than \$12 million in external research funding.

So while the idea of knowledge transfer is nothing new, York’s approach to knowledge mobilization is. We’re focused on connection, communication and collaboration with our partners in government, in industry and in the community. The last line of our Mission Statement gives us our marching orders:

Tentanda via: the way must be tried. ■

THINK OF York University's Knowledge Mobilization (KM) Unit as the Google of research in the social sciences and humanities. But it's real, not virtual. The KM Unit searches and matches York researchers with outside organizations so that decision-makers in the community can use the latest, often cutting-edge, research and advice from York in carrying out their work. It's a win-win partnership. KM paves the way for an organization to improve the outcome of its policies and decisions, while providing tangible evidence for researchers of the value of their scholarship. In essence, the researcher and the organization become co-creators of knowledge that enhances social well-being.

The brokers of such an exchange are aptly called mobilizers. Michael Johnny, manager of York's KM Unit, and KM officer Krista Jensen, both in the Office of Research Services, have matched over 100 projects between York University researchers and community organizations since the unit's inception in 2006. The unit has also placed 25 graduate students with organizations, and supported the development of 11 successful grant applications.

KM is based on a sophisticated push-pull framework that converts ideas and innovation into value for society. Collaboration is at the core, whatever the question. What kinds of companies go public? How do the homeless see their own health problems and needs? Such issues are investigated through an exchange between the researcher and the organization, each benefiting from the results. "Process, not content, is the key," says David Phipps, director, research services & knowledge exchange. "It doesn't matter if you are talking about homelessness, immigration, seniors or health. We are concerned with the process of engaging users at every stage of the research cycle: planning, execution, evaluation, dissemination."

Among recent projects is the Inclusivity Action Plan Program which emerged out of a monthly networking event, KM in the AM, on the topic of immigration in York Region, the sprawling set of suburban communities just north of York University. Speakers

for the session included York geography Professor Lucia Lo and Janet Rurak, executive director of the Character Community Foundation of York Region. The KM Unit matched psychology Professor Michaela Hynie and nursing Professor Mina Singh with York Region to make assessments that helped the region move forward in providing services for its increasing immigrant population. Similarly, KM supported the York Infrastructure Project, led by Lo and a team of researchers from York University and Ryerson University, which allowed the academics to share their findings on issues concerning public infrastructure and communities.

True to that philosophy of sharing information, the KM Unit is now building ResearchSnapshots, a database of summaries for the non-academic audience, through researchimpact.ca, an online network of knowledge mobilization services in collaboration with the University of Victoria. Here, people can look at studies that may have direct relevance to their

business or organization – from consumer behaviour to social issues. KM has also provided opportunities for graduate students. A 2008 KM intern examined entrepreneurial opportunities for Filipino Canadians in the Markham area, including how accessible and effective the relevant government services were.

All of which has led to considerable support from the community. Daniele Zanotti, CEO of the United Way of York Region, says, "It is important that community agencies are working from the best knowledge available so that they can make well-informed decisions. York's KM Unit makes research, as well as researchers and graduate students, accessible to non-academic decision-makers."

Stan Shapson, York's vice-president, research & innovation agrees. "By facilitating linkages and strong collaborations with the community organizations," he says, "KM supports the work of York's social sciences and humanities researchers and is an integral part of York's research infrastructure." ■

Research for All

How York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit could help your organization. BY SANA MULJI DUTT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KC ARMSTRONG



MATCHING MINDS: Geographer Lucia Lo