

Western International



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2024 - 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western International's 2024–2025 highlights showcase a year of meaningful growth, global engagement, and operational impact. Through transformative student experiences, collaborative partnerships, and international initiatives, Western reinforced its commitment to global citizenship and academic excellence.

This report **highlights strategic achievements across student support, global learning, communications, and international partnerships**—all closely aligned with Western's Strategic Plan and Global Engagement Plan.

In a year marked by global uncertainty and changing immigration policies, **Western International expanded its capacity to support the campus community. The team dedicated increased time and resources to advising students and proactively equipping faculty and staff with timely guidance**—particularly in navigating new and evolving study permit requirements.

We are pleased to provide this impact report to highlight some of our achievements this year.



Key Achievements at a Glance

- Supported 4,661 international students from 134 countries
- Welcomed new international, graduate, and exchange students at 3 International Student Orientations (Fall, Winter & Summer)
- Enabled 1,884 student mobility experiences in 63 countries
- Saw an 18.23% increase in exchange applications
- Expanded hybrid advising and boosted website traffic by 66%
- Strengthened global partnerships with 34 signed agreements (new & renewal)
- Deepened cross-campus collaborations with key partners including Western Research, School of Graduate & Post-Graduate Studies, Student Experience, and more

*"As an international student, I feel Western has provided me with the space and support to grow and pursue my dreams. I am eager to see where this incredible journey will take me next."
- Peitao Xu, first-year Master's of Engineering student*

INTRODUCTION

Western International is committed to fostering a globally connected university—one that embraces diverse perspectives, advances international collaborations, and empowers students through transformative global learning opportunities. The achievements of 2024–2025 reflect Western International's ability to adapt, innovate, and expand its global engagement efforts, ensuring that students, scholars, and partners thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

As **a central resource for students, faculty, and staff**, Western International upholds the Internationalization Statement of Principles for Canadian Educational Institutions (CBIE) and supports university engagement in key global networks, including Academics Without Borders, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, Scholars at Risk, and the Association of Commonwealth Universities—further strengthening partnerships and amplifying Western's international impact.

Aligned with Western's Strategic Plan and Global Engagement Plan, this report highlights major successes in student mobility, strategic partnerships, student support, and operational innovation. These efforts not only enhance Western's global reputation, but also reinforce its leadership in international education and collaboration.

The key themes reflected in our work last year include:

Strategic Plan Themes:

- Greater Impact
- Thriving Communities
- Academic Excellence
- Empowering People and Communities
- Western's Place in the World
- Operational Excellence

Global Engagement Plan Themes:

- Advancing Global Research
- Inclusive and Supportive Culture
- Enhancing Global Learning & Mobility
- Championing Global Citizenship
- Expand Western's Global Range
- Enable Western's Capacity for Global Success

[Learn More About Western International](#)



GLOBAL COMMUNITY: SUPPORT SERVICES & ADVISING

Western is a home away from home for 4,661 international students—2,437 undergraduates and 2,224 graduate students—representing 134 countries.

Each brings their own unique perspectives, experiences, and aspirations, enriching the fabric of campus life. The university's commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment is reflected not only in numbers, but in the connections, programs, and personalized supports that help international students thrive.

Behind Western International's efforts is a truly global team—with proficiency in 23 languages and drawing on lived experience in 43 countries. This collective expertise informs everything from immigration advising to education abroad support and program design. The **team is committed to empowering global citizenship on campus** through culturally responsive service and inclusive programming.

Student Advising

The backbone of international student support lies in advising services, which facilitated 3,783 student contacts—a 9% increase from the previous year. Our hybrid model allows students and prospective students to connect with an advisor no matter where they are in the world.

In addition to providing advising for international students, Western International staff also provide **support for both inbound and outbound education abroad participants. Last year saw a rise in advising sessions (650+ outbound advising sessions; 2,000+ students engaged)**, plus system improvements including new course approval forms and enhancements to the online application portal.

Faculty Engagement & Collaboration

Last year, our team also worked to deepen our collaboration with faculties and units through:

- **A new faculty liaison model for international student advisors**
- **Targeted outreach to academic and administrative colleagues**
- **Development of a digital Faculty Handbook for faculty and staff coordinating faculty-led programs abroad**
- **Information sessions for staff and faculty on student support and education abroad**



A team of Western students with a wide range of previous education abroad experience support as International Learning Ambassadors.

Their role is to meet with students to answer questions and share their experiences going abroad.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Although Western International is not the primary unit responsible for supporting research, we play an important facilitative role in advancing global engagement through research. By supporting international funding opportunities, hosting visiting scholars, and collaborating closely with Western Research, we help foster global research partnerships and mobility that address global challenges and promote inclusive academic communities.

Research Funding and Mobility Support

- The **Radboud-Western Collaboration Fund** has disbursed **\$500,000** to support **23 collaborative projects** in teaching and research to date.
- Through the **Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarship Program**, **\$1.5 million** has been **awarded to date to fund two Western projects**, supporting 23 outbound scholars and 23 inbound researchers across Cuba and West Africa.
- In **2024/25**, **Global Affairs Canada Scholarships** provided **\$159,449** to support **14 international students and two Western faculty members** in cross-border academic collaboration.

Supporting Scholars at Risk:

- **Western supported three Scholars at Risk** during this period, offering them a secure academic environment to continue their work while enriching Western's research ecosystem.

Supporting Visiting Research Only (VRO) Students

- The **VRO program welcomed 197 international research students from 25 countries**. In collaboration with Research Security, Western International updated intake processes and introduced social events to help build community and foster a deeper connection to Western.

Strategic Partnerships and Global Presence

- Strategic global partnerships are central to Western's internationalization efforts. Aligned with the Global Engagement Plan's commitment to sharing Western's strengths through collaboration, **Western International supported visits and activities related to incoming and outgoing delegations, and facilitated campus-wide requests for international agreements.**
- In 2024–25, Western International:
 - **Received 97 partnership requests**
 - **Signed 34 agreements (new and renewal)**
 - **Continued progress on 63 requests**



GLOBAL COMMUNITY: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & CONNECTION



International Student Orientation and arrival programs continued to be a key milestone for incoming undergraduate, graduate and exchange students, **welcoming nearly 1,900 attendees over Fall/Winter/Summer terms, including 110 exchange students from 20 countries.**

Beyond orientation, **100+ workshops covered critical topics** including:

- Career development
- Education abroad opportunities
- Permanent residency pathways
- Financial planning
- Health care

Peer-led initiatives expanded social connections and language support, helping students ease into their new academic and cultural environment.

The team also **prioritized outreach and relationship-building with student organizations and clubs** to collaborate on events, and increase awareness.

*"Global Café has been my weekly highlight because I've met some of my closest friends there and gotten to see how big and beautiful the world is without leaving campus. We've shared stories, tried different foods and laughed – a lot. It's made my experience at Western so much richer."
– Shagun Singh, Faculty of Health Sciences*

Programming Highlights:

Weekly Global Café Events

- Attended by an average of 70-100 students each week
- Growth in attendance to 25% domestic students, providing opportunities for international and domestic students to connect and cross-cultural learning
- Featured collaborations with 16 cultural clubs who facilitated activities for attendees

International Student Ambassador Program

- 30+ student leaders (international and Canadian, graduate and undergraduate) supported International Orientation, International Week, and outreach efforts, gaining leadership experience and intercultural competencies while supporting their peers.

GLOBAL LEARNING & EXPERIENCES

Expanding Opportunities

Education abroad remains a cornerstone of Western's commitment to global engagement and experiential learning. As one of the university's five signature experiential learning types, education abroad offers students transformative opportunities to gain cross-cultural skills and global perspectives.

As global travel and programming rebounded in 2024–25, Western saw strong student interest in mobility programs:

- **1,884 students participated in education abroad opportunities in 63 countries**
- **18.23% increase in study abroad applications**
- **112.5% growth in virtual internships since 2023**

To support this growth, new international exchange partnerships were launched in France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, expanding global pathways for students.

Ensuring Safety and Readiness

To support safe and informed travel, Western International provides robust resources including online safety modules, travel tips, and personalized advising. In 2024–25:

- **90%+ compliance in enrolment in Western's International Travel Registry**
- **6,000+ pre-departure modules delivered since 2022**

Advancing Equity in Global Mobility

Western is committed to making global learning accessible for all students, with a focus on those who have historically faced barriers to participation—including Indigenous students, students with financial need, and students with disabilities. Through the government-funded Global Skills Opportunity (GSO) program, Western provided targeted support to help these students engage in international experiences.



Global Skills Opportunity (GSO)

Through three targeted programs—Global Connect Costa Rica, Achieving Equity and Global EDIDI Competence, and Aging Globally—the GSO initiative supported 386 students in global learning experiences across Costa Rica, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

This included:

- **25 Indigenous students**
- **49 students with disabilities**
- **127 low-income students**

"Studying abroad was a life-changing experience. Global Connect opened doors to new perspectives and cultural immersion that I never knew about before." — Jose Grande Rodriguez, GSO Participant

CHAMPIONING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



Western's Global Engagement Plan prioritizes educating global citizens. **Western International advances this goal by preparing students, staff, and faculty to succeed in a globally interconnected world** through recognition, programs, and engagement.

The Global and Intercultural Engagement Honour recognizes students who actively build global and intercultural skills through academics and extracurricular involvement. Once completed, the Global Honour is noted on a student's final transcript.

In 2024–25:

- **115 students completed the Global Honour**
- **More than 900 students have earned it to date**

International Week, led by Western International, is a campus-wide celebration of global engagement.

In 2024:

- **Nearly 100 student volunteers and 30+ Staff Ambassadors collaborated**
- **More than 50 events were hosted across campus**
- **The Cultural Showcase drew almost 900 attendees (in-person and via livestream)**
- **Nearly 600+ students visited booths and expressed interest in participating in education abroad programs during the Go Abroad Fair**

The Global Undergraduate Awards

As the campus coordinator for the Global Undergraduate Awards (GUA), Western International champions academic excellence on a global stage.

In 2024, Western had the highest number of Global Winners worldwide and was the top-performing institution in the Americas.

- **4 Global Winners**
- **4 Regional Winners**
- **20 Highly Commended students**

"The Undergraduate Awards gave me an incredible platform to share my research globally and connect with other student scholars." — Christy Xie, BSc'24

"The Global Honour helped me stand out when applying for grad school. It reflects my global mindset and the value of learning from other cultures."

- Anisah Hooda, BHSc'20, MMASc'21

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS

Storytelling is key to fostering connections, promoting belonging, and reflecting the diversity of our global community.

In 2024, our communications priorities focused on:

- **Increasing opportunities to share stories and highlight the international community** through additional, cross-campus platforms such as Western News.
- Strengthening collaboration with student-facing and faculty communicators to **promote diverse representation across campus materials**.
- **Identifying and amplifying global champions** among students, faculty, and staff.

Student Spotlights

- Developed to showcase the experiences of international undergraduate, graduate, and exchange students, volunteers, and education abroad participants.
- Nearly **50 students were featured across our website and social media**, offering authentic peer-to-peer insights.
- One spotlight, featuring international student **Sarya**, reached **39,345 views on Instagram alone**.

Digital Growth & Recognition

- Strategic investment in digital engagement led to significant results in 2024:
 - **66% increase in website traffic**
 - **355.6K video views across platforms**
 - **1,083 new Instagram followers**

Our **Convocation Celebration campaign**—which featured personalized student stories, video highlights, and community messages—**earned an International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Virtuoso Award** in Digital Communication.

Rebranding & Accessibility

- We **completed the rebrand of International Student Services (ISS)** to better reflect a **holistic, student-centered approach** under the Western International umbrella. This included improvements to accessibility, visibility, and clarity—making it easier for students to access services and support.

Campus Engagement Through Newsletters

- Our **weekly student newsletter** continued to grow in reach and relevance, featuring timely information on programming, immigration updates, and events—with a nearly 5% increase in open rates in 2024.
- We also expanded **International Insights**, our monthly faculty and staff newsletter. Refined content strategy now features:
 - Community spotlights
 - Program and event updates
 - International research highlights

International Spotlight



STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS & SUPPORTS

Process Improvements

Operational excellence at Western International starts with the people and processes that make student-facing work possible. In 2024/25, we expanded our capacity across advising, programming, and administration by:

- Welcoming new staff to lead immigration advising, international arrivals, and partnership coordination
- Hiring 12 part-time/work study students, creating meaningful job opportunities
- Onboarding nearly 200 volunteers, supporting student leadership and skill development

Our hybrid advising model continues to enhance flexibility and access. **Reception staff facilitated nearly 4,800 visits and appointments, supported by an improved online booking system and daily drop-ins for same-day support.**

Student-Centred Spaces

Western International's physical spaces are an important part of fostering community. Last year, we **completed a renovation of the Global Lounge, creating a vibrant, student-centred hub** for social connection and programming. The updated space, partially funded through a generous contribution from the Ken Chu International Fund, complements the Chu Centre, where we hosted 250+ meetings and events with an international focus last year.

"Spaces like the Global Lounge at Western International offer more than a quiet place to study. We also connect with friends there and build community."
— Wajd Abuzaid, Master's Student, Faculty of Health Sciences

Strategic Financial Stewardship

Western International played a key role in managing both internal and external funding that supports international engagement, research, and student mobility.

Funding highlights include:

Faculty & Institutional Support

- Dispersed ~\$150,00 to support initiatives through the Visiting University Scholar Program (VUSP), Scholars at Risk (SAR), and the Radboud-Western Collaboration Fund

Student Mobility & Research Support

- **7 externally funded projects administered, totaling ~\$600,000 in awards to students and scholars**, including:
 - Mitacs Globalink: ~\$24,000 to 4 students
 - Global Affairs Canada: ~\$159,449 to 14 students and 2 faculty members
 - Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarships: \$138,380 in continued funding
 - Global Skills Opportunity: \$275,073 across 3 active projects



Before (left)

After (right)





New international undergraduate, graduate and exchange students posed for photos with President Shepard at a special Global Café during Fall International Student Orientation.



After over two decades, the Western Heads East (WHE) program was concluded at the end of 2024–25. WHE exemplified long-term international collaboration and student engagement in sustainable development. Since 2005, 176 Western students completed internships in partnership with organizations in Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Canada.



Every June, Western International invites graduating international students, volunteers and education abroad participants and champions on campus for Convocation to stop by our office for photos and a small treat in celebration of their achievements.



Ten Indonesian students studied at Western during the fall term after receiving the Indonesian International Student Mobility Award (IISMA), a full scholarship from the Indonesian Ministry of Education that funds high-achieving students for one term at 100+ host universities worldwide.



Last year, the English Conversation Program saw an increase in registration to 454 participants and 38 Leaders. The program provides opportunities for students to improve their English-speaking skills in conversational, informal settings.



More than 100 student volunteers and 30 staff members support International Week programming each year. Last year's Cultural Showcase featured two hours of performances by 10 student clubs.



In collaboration with the Muslim Students' Association, Western International co-hosted an Iftar dinner attended by 100+ domestic and international students with opportunities to learn about Iftar and Muslim cultural traditions.



In August, 19 students and one staff member from Kyung Hee University in South Korea, participated in the Summer Learning Program at Western. Led by Western International, the program was designed in consultation with both internal and external partners, as well as experts on human rights in Canada.



Last year, we had 10 students/student teams take over our Instagram Stories to highlight a day in their life on an education abroad experience. Jady, pictured here, shared her experience participating in a summer exchange to the University of Leeds last summer.



As part of International Student Orientation programming, new international students and their spouses, partners, and children are invited to an informal welcome lunch to connect with other families, staff and campus representatives.

Photo Highlights

FINAL THOUGHTS & LOOKING AHEAD



The 2024–2025 academic year demonstrated Western International's agility, innovation, and deep commitment to building a globally engaged university. From expanding international learning opportunities to strengthening campus supports, we continued to foster inclusive excellence in a rapidly changing world.

Looking ahead, we will focus on:

- Expanding equitable access to global mobility opportunities
- Enhancing the student experience through community building, international advising and digital service delivery
- Increasing and fostering global citizenship through participation in the Global and Intercultural Engagement Honour
- Strengthening international partnerships and strategic collaborations
- Amplifying student stories and digital engagement strategies
- Building capacity through targeted faculty and staff engagement

"I chose Western after I had applied to other universities because even though I had not accepted an offer, I got emails about the support that they had for international students. I was coming to a new country without any of my immediate support systems like my family or friends. I volunteered so I could help support students the way I was supported when I came to Western."

— Bianca Millione, International Student Ambassador