

## PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

# Ryerson University's Model of Innovation Goes Global

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Challenging the status quo is what Ryerson University does. Ryerson's unique approach to research and innovation has not gone unnoticed here at home or abroad. In addition to being named one of the research universities of the year by Research Infosource, our Digital Media Zone was ranked fifth in the world among incubators in 67 countries by the University Business Incubator (UBI) Index and we were also named Canada's first Ashoka Changemaker Campus.

Building on our polytechnic roots and our unique mission – to meet societal needs – Ryerson prides itself on its strong connections with industry and community and its legacy as a city-builder. While attention has focused globally on the “innovation

gap”, Ryerson has pioneered new models to commercialize research, mobilize results, develop multidisciplinary collaborations with partners to solve problems, and build and support the pipeline for the entrepreneurs of the future. Whether it is creating new products and services, incubating or accelerating startups, driving change in existing organizations or pioneering social change, Ryerson plays a key role in the innovation ecosystem. Its approach of ‘zone learning’, which provides the space, support and connections required to turn student-driven ideas into action, has produced measurable results. Since its launch in 2010, Ryerson's DMZ has incubated and accelerated 159 startups and created more than 1300 jobs. And that is only the tip of the iceberg: other Ryerson Zones include the Innovation Centre for Urban Energy, The Transmedia Zone, The Fashion Zone, Design Fabrication Zone, and

Social Venture Zone. The University also has the largest Entrepreneurship program in the country and a myriad of programs and clubs advancing for-profit and social entrepreneurship as well as a unique collaboration on big data incubation, known as OneEleven.

Our unique approach to innovation has opened doors worldwide. The Digital Media Zone has become a “soft landing” site for entrepreneurs at top-ranked universities in India, China, South Africa and Israel. Last year, Ryerson, along with its for-profit arm Ryerson Futures, forged a unique partnership to build an incubator with the Bombay Stock Exchange Institute – BIL-Ryerson DMZ – to support transnational entrepreneurship.

Of course the foundation of continuous innovation is a strong research base. In the last year alone, we have collaborated with industry and government to open new multi-

disciplinary centres for innovation, including the Ryerson Centre for Cloud and Context-Aware Computing (RC4) with nodes in Transmedia and Advanced Manufacturing, Design and 3D Printing, as well as the Institute for Biomedical Engineering, Science and Technology (iBEST) with St. Michael's Hospital.

Every faculty has major projects working with global partners to tackle “wicked problems” and advance innovation. A few examples: The Centre for Urban Energy (CUE) has a satellite centre with Anna University in India and is extending its global clean tech collaborations. Dr. Gideon Wolfaardt (Chemistry and Biology) holds a joint appointment at Stellenbosch University in South Africa for a Chair in Wastewater as part of a global network on water research. Dr. Ali Mazalek, Canada Research Chair in Digital Media and Innovation, works with tangible interfaces to advance cre-

ativity, design and development with partners in the USA, India, Australia, and the Netherlands. Dr. Kathryn Woodcock (Public Health and Safety) is collaborating with major theme parks to support her work on the user experience and safety of amusement park rides. Through CIHR's Canada-China Joint Health Research Initiative, one of our leading researchers Dr. Michael Kolios (Physics) is collaborating with Chongqing Medical University to research nanoparticle emulsions for targeted ultrasound and photoacoustic molecular imaging of cancer. Dr. Candice Monson's (Psychology) research on innovative approaches to treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is driving change in the treatment of PTSD in Canada and the USA.

Part of Ryerson's success is its commitment to advancing research on entrepreneurship and innovation. In addition to examining innovation processes, women and immigrant

entrepreneurs, and training and incubation programs, Ryerson's researchers are part of the world's largest study of transnational entrepreneurship, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). Studies by the Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM)'s Drs. Howard Lin, Mary Han, and Sui Sui are also advancing knowledge on transnational entrepreneurship. Ryerson researchers are part of the European Union-led SI-DRIVE project, which will map social innovation and entrepreneurship in 67 countries. The Canada-China Institute for Business & Development at TRSM focuses on building collaborations between Canadian and Chinese entrepreneurs and educational institutions.

Ryerson is a university on the move. Our double-digit growth in research funding and the international demand for our unique approach to innovation are a few indicators that, as Ted Rogers prophetically said, “The best is yet to come”.