

## PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

# How College-Industry Partnerships are Addressing Canada's Innovation



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Canada has an innovation problem. We score a mediocre “C” on innovation according to the recent Conference Board of Canada innovation report card, ranking only ninth among sixteen peer countries. We have become laggards in the innovation game, and if not corrected, Canadian standards of living could deteriorate. Part of the problem is a lack of business investment in innovation and R&D – which scores only a “D” in the same report – suggesting that com-

panies need to see a stronger value proposition that warrants their time and effort. It is time to find new and practical solutions to address this challenge. One idea that Humber is already piloting is to recalibrate how colleges and polytechnics collaborate with industry. Rather than focusing on ideation, institutions such as Humber should turn to their strengths – teaching and learning, education and training. After extensive consultation with our industry partners and interested stakeholders, we have launched the Springboard Mentorship program, designed to transition college graduates into the new innovation economy. The program leverages the strengths of Humber faculty while helping recent graduates to develop the skills sought by the industries in which they hope to work. It is a true partnership between Humber, a company, and a funder.

## HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

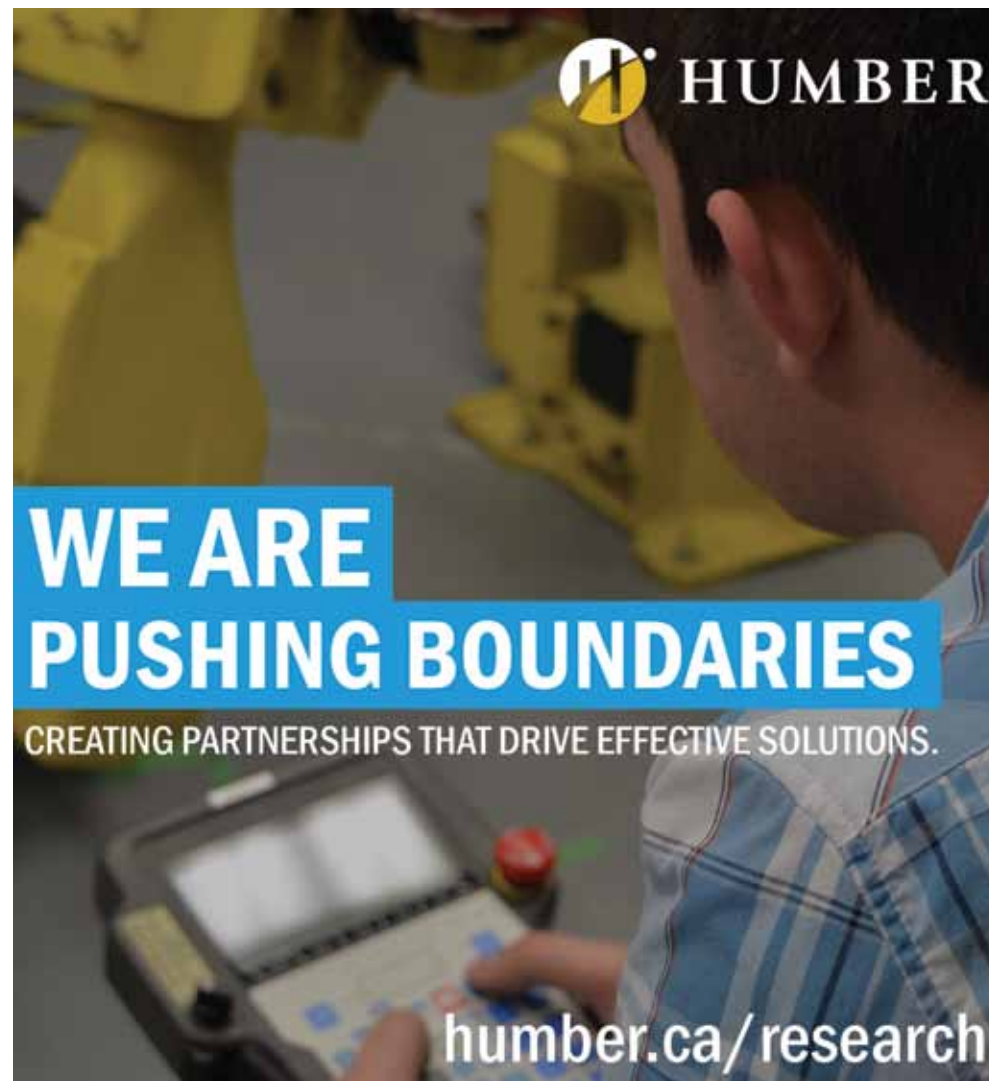
Humber hires recent graduates to work on critical applied research challenges under the guidance of a faculty member. These graduates

develop solutions to industrially relevant problems while also providing mentorship to undergraduate students who are engaged in applied research projects. External funding supports their time working at Humber. At the same time, these graduates are employed for two days a week at a company where they can apply and refine their skills, learn about their industry and gain valuable work experience.

## THE BENEFITS ARE MULTI-LAYERED.

Graduates put their skills into action immediately, generating an influx of new ideas, new designs and new ventures into the marketplace.

They also benefit from the faculty member's expertise and guidance, helping them to polish their applied research skills. In exchange, graduates help to reduce faculty workload by assisting students involved in faculty-run projects or externally-driven work. By acting as mentors to junior students, graduates develop leadership and communication skills while improving their practical knowledge.



Graduates complete the program more employable and better equipped to take the next step in their career, easing their transition into the workforce.

For an employer, the program reduces the risk of hiring new graduates, as they are able to see a graduate's body of real-world work

experience instead of simply hoping that there's talent behind that graduate's credential.

The Springboard Mentorship concept resonates with Humber's partners. Through the generosity of the Barrett Family Foundation and the support of Magna International, Humber has launched the program

with two recent graduates. The results to date are encouraging, and there is hope that the government will see the benefit and allow the program to be expanded. By looking at new approaches, we can begin to address the innovation challenge and get into a game that can impact and improve the quality of life of all Canadians.