

MOMENTUM

MOHAWK COLLEGE COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

SPRING 2022



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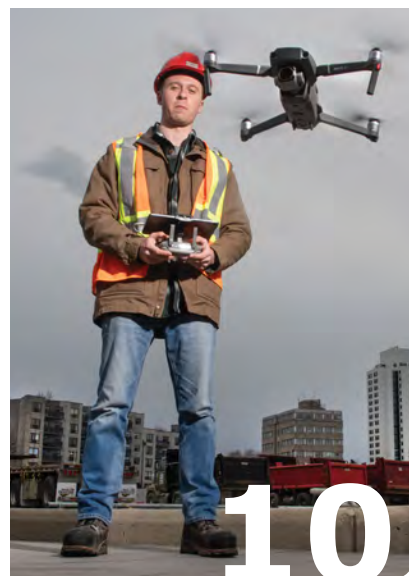
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ABOUT: Mohawk College educates and serves more than 29,500 full-time, part-time, apprenticeship and international students at three main campuses in Hamilton, Ontario and learning hubs across Hamilton through City School by Mohawk, and at the college's Centre for Aviation Technology at the Hamilton International Airport. Mohawk is among the top ten colleges for applied research in Canada. It has been named one of Canada's top employers and greenest employers, holds a GOLD STARS rating from AASHE for sustainability achievements and is home to the country's largest and first institutional building to receive dual certification for Zero Carbon Building Framework design and performance for The Joyce Centre for Partnership & Innovation. More than 135,000 people have graduated from Mohawk since it was founded. **VISIT:** mohawkcollege.ca or mohawknewsdesk.ca to learn more. **PHOTOS:** The health and safety of our community is our highest priority. All of the photos used in this edition of Momentum Magazine were taken following Public Health's physical distancing protocols. **COVER:** Geet Chahil, Television and Communications Media student.



From the President

I am pleased to welcome you to the latest issue of Momentum. In its pages you will read about our commitment to embedding entrepreneurship into the student, faculty and alumni experience at Mohawk College.

We know many of our students will pursue an entrepreneurial path at some point in their lives. Throughout my career in business, public service and academia, I have been inspired by my father. He was a serial entrepreneur and a great example of resiliency.

I'm also inspired by so much of what is featured in this edition, including Mohawk's support of LiONS LAIR participants, our student entrepreneurs setting up successful drone videography and photography businesses while still immersed in their studies, the impressive progress of our Centre for Entrepreneurship and the achievements of our alumni who maintain strong connections to Mohawk.

We know that along with our focus on work-integrated learning, providing a grounding in what it takes to launch and operate a business is crucial to educating our students.

And this perfectly ties into two aspirations in our 2022-2025 strategic plan: to enable Future Ready education, research, programs, services and experiences for students, employees and our community; and to lead in workforce development.

Our new strategic plan meets our short-term needs for pandemic recovery as a college and a community, and sets an innovative course for our future.

We consulted more than 1,000 college stakeholders to come up with a future direction that will carry on Mohawk's longstanding progress in sustainability, access to education, workforce development and advancing Truth and Reconciliation.

This plan is borne of a time of uncertainty and upheaval but that has provided an opportunity. If we've learned anything over the last two years, it's that we need to be able to adapt to change.

Entrepreneurs embody that each day. ■■■

Regards,
Ron J. McKerlie



Building a business mindset

The Centre for Entrepreneurship at Mohawk College is a one-stop hub for students, alumni, faculty and the community



Centre for Entrepreneurship team:
Natalie Reid, Ryan Anderson, Sarah Dolden

No matter the program being studied at Mohawk College, learning the skills and mindset of an entrepreneur will prepare students for a time they might launch a business, undertake a side hustle to boost income, or apply innovation and change leadership as an employee.

"Whether you are studying to be a fitness trainer, a plumber, an electrician, a computer programmer or a social worker, thinking like an entrepreneur is an important skill to have," says Ryan Anderson, Associate Dean of Business and the Centre for Entrepreneurship, a hub dedicated to entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and small business that launched in November 2020.

"People are very keen to develop this expertise because, I think, there is a general understanding that more people are finding they may want to work for themselves.

MOHAWK'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONNECTION

McKEIL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

How SURGE can
help you succeed:



YOUR IDEA



MENTORING
& COACHING



NETWORKING

This has been a tough period. People have been laid off or downsized and with that has come the need to try something new, turn a skill or passion into a business and work for themselves. Historically, a lot of new entrepreneurial ventures have been born from poor economic times. We have also seen students who have come back to school after working the early part of their career, only to want to make a similar change and become their own boss."

Entrepreneurial skills, from strategy to implementation, are transferable across sectors and around the world.

"Mohawk has put a premium on embedding entrepreneurship into curriculum right across the campus. Being able to build a business plan, establish and understand a budget, and see market opportunities are key skills no matter what field you are in."

Anderson and the Centre are also attuned to the concept of intrapreneurship, which is the application of the mindset of entrepreneurship — innovation, risk-taking, resiliency, constant seeking of opportunities, growth and progress — and applying that as an employee within an organization.

“Thinking like an owner is a valuable skill no matter what your role is,” says Anderson.

The Centre builds on an existing strong spirit of entrepreneurship at Mohawk. At last count, there were almost 100 courses geared towards the subject and SURGE, the college’s start-up incubator, has supported the launch of 42 student-run businesses since 2018. That includes two that went on to pitch to be on CBC’s Dragons’ Den and 22 led by women.

Amplifying entrepreneurship

In November 2020, the college took the bold step of founding the Centre for Entrepreneurship to bring SURGE and the three other entrepreneurship micro-centres — The Agency, The Collective and The Consultancy — under one roof.

The idea had been circulating for quite some time, says Anderson. It was championed by Vice-President, Academic, Alison Horton who led the advocacy of putting a strategic priority on entrepreneurship in concert with Mohawk’s long-established focus on work-integrated learning.

Anderson, who joined Mohawk in April 2020, was charged with establishing the Centre for Entrepreneurship and growing the roster of programs, resources and supports for existing and potential entrepreneurs.

“Bringing together all the threads makes for an opportunity to do even more programming. We have phenomenal entrepreneurs at Mohawk and faculty mentors that are industry leaders. The Centre is dedicated to building a pipeline and ecosystem that capitalizes on all the expertise within the college so that we can influence and inspire students to do great things.”

The Centre’s mission is to create entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial opportunities for students, alumni and

the community by creating linkages with partners, mentors and development opportunities and establishing industry-leading programs aligned with the college’s strategic plan.

The Centre is working with alumni, SURGE graduates and a roster of entrepreneurs-in-residence who include both faculty and community business owners.

Quick results

The Centre has made remarkable headway in just a year and a half. It has delivered entrepreneurial training and programming to over 4,000 students and there are now 37 programs in all faculties and schools within the college offering entrepreneurial training within their curriculum.

Hundreds have attended more than two dozen Centre events, including more than 450 who took part in the fourth annual MINDSHIFT Entrepreneurship Conference in March 2022.

The Centre established a Summit Speaker Series that features in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs in podcasts and videos. Anderson also hosted a three-part series of “fireside chats” exploring mental health for entrepreneurs with experts.

“The pandemic has certainly highlighted the issue but it existed long before that. Entrepreneurship is a rewarding path but it is also stressful and challenging. Mental Health is an essential component to any workplace. It impacts critical areas of business, like employee retention, hiring, performance metrics and customer service. But, most of all the Centre has a responsibility to train business leaders to be the best they can be for themselves and their employees.”

The sessions were well-attended by people from inside and outside Mohawk. They’ve since been rebranded into the Centre Snacks Series, because at 12–14 minutes, the podcasts can be consumed while getting to work, taking a break or eating lunch.

Mohawk has also partnered with Robert Gordon University in Scotland to host shared speaker events.

“We are bringing in speakers from all walks of life, in all sectors and people who have had a wide range of experiences. When we put successful entrepreneurs in front of our students, the learning is so immediate and powerful. It gives life and air to what they are learning in school.”

The Centre has developed a roster of mentors and Entrepreneurs-in-Residence from within the college’s faculty and the community, and is among three co-founders of the Ontario College Incubators Network (OCIN), which now includes 16 schools. OCIN has already

hosted team pitch events, guest speakers and group lessons for Entrepreneurship Week.

Anderson says the Centre is now working on providing a “bookshelf” of elements that faculty can embed into curriculum, including resources available through a partnership with Shopify and customized programming as needed in a range of disciplines, including skilled trades, health and wellness and engineering.

Anderson is also focused on building relationships with community organizations, including the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the YWCA.



Kathy and Blair McKeil

Model for other colleges

Kathy McKeil, who along with husband Blair are the namesakes of the McKeil School of Business at Mohawk, says the Centre for Entrepreneurship will be an important network for emerging entrepreneurs.

“I think this approach is going to be a model for other colleges. There has been a very positive response to what Mohawk is doing,” she says. “Ryan and the team at the Centre are incredible. They’ve done so much in such a short time. We are looking forward to finding ways to partner with the Centre. Our approach is that we want to make a meaningful impact, not just write a cheque.”

The McKeils started in the family marine business in Hamilton and now operate an alternative lender called Breakwater Financial, along with the McKeil Family Foundation.

McKeil says she is continually impressed with Mohawk. “It’s just very progressive and action-oriented. The mindset there is just to get stuff done and that’s what entrepreneurship is all about.”

Future directions

The Centre is now working on developing micro-credentials, which are highly focused, flexible and rapid training programs through Continuing Education that can be taken as standalone or embedded into a postsecondary curriculum.

The first offering is family business and succession planning. “We know there is a wave of successions coming. Many business owners are going to say, ‘I got us through the pandemic, now I’m retiring and moving south.’ So we see a need for this.”

Another micro-credential will look at mental health for business leaders.

Faculty resources

A bigger goal, says Anderson, is to see the Centre build on the success of the Small Business and Fundamentals program to lead the development of a series of degrees, diplomas and certificates in building and launching businesses.

The hope is to see entrepreneurship embedded into all programs across Mohawk.

Tara Dinyer, a professor in Health, Wellness and Fitness, is setting that example. “We are starting to see real synergies with the Centre for Entrepreneurship.”

Dinyer co-teaches a capstone course that requires students to come up with an idea and a business plan.

“Our course is 14 weeks. We can’t cover everything that can help students with this journey. So we post workshops from the Centre for Entrepreneurship that students can attend. It augments what I can offer.”

The real-world content available through the Centre is so valuable for students in their course work and as they develop business ideas, even after they graduate, says Dinyer, who has served as a mentor and faculty advisor in SURGE.

“What I love is that I can’t be an expert in everything. I don’t do app development or computer programming, and I’m not a lawyer,” she says.

“But through SURGE, my students have access to other faculty and community resources that build on what I can offer them. The Centre creates this team of experts.”

‘Leaps and bounds ahead’

Entrepreneur-in-Residence Erin McCluskey says she sees great things ahead for students who develop their business leadership qualities while learning technical skills at Mohawk.

McCluskey wishes she had that opportunity while studying design at another college.

“I didn’t know where to register a business or what accounting software to get or how to file my business taxes or how to negotiate my rent or trademark my logo. I had to figure that all out. I would have been leaps and bounds ahead with just a basic business grounding.”

She is a partner and creative director at The Laundry Design Works, a boutique design and brand strategy agency in downtown Hamilton that has a roster of high-powered apparel, sports and hospitality clients.

She says when she speaks to students, she stresses the importance of networking.

“What you know is still key but relationships are everything. So joining industry organizations and getting on boards and volunteering your time for worthy causes are opportunities to show who you are and what you can do.”



Erin McCluskey, partner and creative director at The Laundry Design Works

The connections built in the early years of The Laundry are driving the agency's work now, says McCluskey. "It's so much more than handing out business cards. It's about making genuine connections with people you want to do work with." Another key message McCluskey offers is that entrepreneurs can't

be afraid to fail, because lessons come from mistakes.

"I hope to continue a relationship with the Centre for Entrepreneurship because I love what they are building over there. In typical Mohawk fashion, it's hands-on and will really help people at a fundamental level."



Videographer Geet Chahil grateful for business advice through SURGE

When Geet Chahil graduates later this semester from Television and Communications Media, he feels he will be well prepared to take his video production company to the next level.

He started Geet Chahil Productions Inc. three years ago and decided to join SURGE last year.

"I was linked up with a business coach and that has been phenomenal. He's been a fantastic resource."

During weekly meetings, Chahil talks to his coach about what he's accomplished, what he's working on and future goals. Chahil has forged a niche in marketing videos for businesses that weave in storytelling.



Geet Chahil, Television and Communications Media student

"If you can't find a job, you can't apply all these creative skills you have. Starting your own business isn't easy. There are a lot of things to learn, and to do that in school is a great running start."

– Geet Chahil



"My coach has been a nice sounding board for me. There are so many things to take care of in the creative fields. Creatives, especially, tend to struggle with business. They can create the best videos, photos and graphic design, but they struggle with selling themselves."

Working with a business coach has shortened the learning curve on business plans and marketing strategy, says Chahil. Joining SURGE has also allowed access to a lawyer to read over Chahil's client contracts and even resulted in job referrals.

"I think the biggest thing is that my coach has helped me shift my focus from one-off videos for clients to a series of videos for a fixed fee that build on one another. That is a stronger strategy that means more steady income and a pipeline of work that evens out the peaks and valleys of freelancing."

His coach has also helped Chahil get more confident about networking. It's all resulting in a business that is taking off. "If not for SURGE, I wouldn't be here this fast."

Chahil is excited to see Mohawk expand its entrepreneurial resources for students. "If you can't find a job, you can't apply all these creative skills you have. Starting your own business isn't easy. There are a lot of things to learn, and to do that in school is a great running start." ■■■

Mohawk's entrepreneurial micro-centres

SURGE is Mohawk College's start-up incubator, offering free one-on-one mentoring and supports to Mohawk students and alumni who are entrepreneurs or want to become entrepreneurs.

The Agency is a highly successful experiential learning program within the McKeil School of Business in which students from Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing, Graphics, Broadcast Media, Journalism and Photography work together to solve communication challenges for for-profit and non-profit businesses.

The Collective is an inventory of student freelancers in a variety of fields, including media, communications, construction and skilled trades, and software and web design. The Collective includes a mandatory boot camp for students and alumni to teach the operations, legal and marketing skills needed to create and run a business.

The Consultancy is a paid experiential learning opportunity for select student intrapreneurs who act as consultants and work within teams to help community businesses launch products, digitize, undertake market research and enhance their operations. ■■■

Learn more at
entrepreneurship.mohawkcollege.ca

Stephen Aikman



Growing entrepreneurism

Mohawk Foundation board member Stephen Aikman gives back to the college that gave him his start

Entrepreneur Stephen Aikman credits Mohawk College for setting him on a course to multi-million-dollar success.

“Mohawk is where I got my start. It was my foundation of learning. I have a business degree and an MBA and I can honestly say I learned the most at Mohawk College.”

Aikman, who graduated from Business Administration, is the founder of an organic skin care company that merged into a venture that went public in 2019 with a market capitalization of \$30 million.

The Centre for Entrepreneurship is a great advantage for students, he says.

“It will continue to grow the path the college is on. Mohawk already has a great reputation and now business and entrepreneurship can be synonymous with Mohawk.”

Aikman’s 25-year career at RBC began with his selection from 400 applicants for a training program. He was told his time learning practical business skills at Mohawk was the deciding factor.

He founded All Natural Advice in 2013 with a \$1,000 investment, knowing nothing about skin care, but understanding the market opportunity.

“We saw the future was in the e-commerce space. It would give us a chance to compete side by side with the large traditional beauty brands.”

Within three years, the company’s products were selling in 12 countries and All Natural Advice was the No. 1 selling brand in its segment on Amazon in Canada and Australia.

In 2018, the company was sold to health and wellness company Mimi’s Rock for more than \$10 million. Aikman is a major shareholder and has stayed on as vice-president of development to help grow the brand and break into new markets, including China and the Middle East.

Aikman joined the board of directors of the Mohawk Foundation in 2020 and hopes it could play a role in providing bursaries, sponsorships or Dragons’ Den-style investment to a next generation of would-be entrepreneurs. ■■■



James Kretz with Gimuel Ledesma, a Mohawk graduate, that has contracted Engineering Visuals for construction site progress monitoring.

Flying high

Civil Engineering Technology student James Kretz has taken the skills he's acquired as an applied research assistant to soar to new heights with his own business

Civil Engineering Technology student James Kretz is converting his experience as an applied research assistant in Building and Construction Sciences into a new business venture.

Under the direction of Professor Richard Borger, Kretz has worked on light detection and ranging (LiDAR) scanning and data collection for commercial and industrial projects using drones, high-resolution cameras and 3D modelling software since he began his program in 2019.

The LiDAR scanner mounted on a drone sends out laser pulses that beam data off physical surfaces. Kretz is responsible for calibrating and processing that data to create a 3D point cloud — a digital twin that is an accurate and

complete geometric representation of the dimensions and shapes of structures and geographic environments.

Kretz has worked on factories, blast furnaces, power plants, bridges, sports venues, and even a critical Ontario Power Generation dam within the raging Niagara River.

"Working with disruptive technology like this makes me an excellent candidate for employers who want to explore LiDAR scanning and drone work. It's really in demand so my experience really made me stand out," says Kretz.

"School helps you build those fundamental skills, but in applied research, you're learning what the industry is moving toward."



Kretz has been working at Hamilton engineering company JNE Group of Companies as a civil and structural designer as both a co-op and summer student. He's been offered a job at graduation.

But he's also developing an entrepreneurial opportunity.

That came out of Mohawk's drone work on a rehabilitation project of the deck, girders and piers of the Canadian side of the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls. It was a challenging, complicated project with Quebec-based company Construction Demathieu & Bard, but it was a success.

Data captured by drones showed the otherwise hidden parts of the bridge required even more repair than initially thought.

Afterwards, Kretz was asked by a point person at the construction company—a Mohawk graduate—to edit together a video recapping the bridge project. From that initial video, Kretz has built a freelance business called Engineering Visuals.

It brings together Kretz's existing skills in video editing with his newer skills in drone work.

"Working in applied research opened my eyes to a new technology and a new mindset about how it could be used in a new way."

But it also exposed him to critical skills in project management, communications, deadline management and teamwork that have been key for his business and also for his role in supervising students.

"I think James found a hidden entrepreneurial talent. Applied research opened an opportunity for James to start his own disruptive technology business," says Borger. "Mohawk has fostered an atmosphere where applied research is encouraged and supported. Students get real-world experience that opens opportunities for careers and businesses."

Engineering Visuals has completed videos for the redevelopment of piers in Hamilton Harbour and Kretz sees opportunities in residential construction and real estate, too.

"I am committed to developing more parts of my business. I think there is a lot of demand for drone-based videos."

Kretz has also been hired by Mohawk to conduct flight reviews for those seeking advanced drone certificates.

And he is part of a project to test the accuracy of a new type of drone-mounted LiDAR that can collect and process data much more quickly. The Mohawk team will create a high-density model of a specialized on-site crane at ArcelorMittal Dofasco using the new technology to more fully understand the application and functionality of this next generation of LiDAR scanners.

The group has been invited to present its results at a national conference of Construction Specifications Canada in May. ■■■



Jessica Lunshof (left) and Madison McBay, TAMVOES

Tending the lions



IRIS team

The college is a key enabler of the success of participants in Innovation Factory's annual pitch competition, LiONS LAIR

Mohawk College is a key enabler of success for LiONS LAIR pitch competition participants through applied research support and as a provider of a pipeline of talent.

The competition, hosted by regional business accelerator Innovation Factory (IF), is entering its 12th year in 2022.

"Mohawk College faculty, researchers and students have built strong relationships with LiONS LAIR participants over the years and have played a crucial role as they navigate the road to commercialization," says Andrea Johnson, General Manager of the Centre for Emerging Research Initiatives at Mohawk's applied research hub, IDEAWORKS.

That includes everything from working on designs and prototypes to testing and evaluation of products.

"Applied research out of the college is driving innovation with tangible results," says Johnson.

David Carter, executive director of IF, recalls when he first arrived at his job in Hamilton,

he took a tour of the mHealth and eHealth Development and Innovation Centre (MEDIC) lab at Mohawk.

He marvelled at how students had the benefit of being able to clearly picture their future job, because the MEDIC lab is a working environment.

"I hadn't been involved in academia and I can tell you that my conception of a postsecondary education was not that. They were finding industry solutions. I was completely blown away and then I learned about IDEAWORKS, which takes that applied research mindset campus-wide."

Young companies need the support of Mohawk, says Carter.

"Relying on consultants or outsourcing would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to get a product out the door. That's not realistic. Mohawk provides that kind of expertise through students and faculty at low cost or no cost."

Health management platform provider TAMVOES has relied on MEDIC for integration with a wide variety of health platforms.



Steve McBride,
Weever Apps CEO

The company launched in 2020 after co-founder Jessica Lunshof found herself juggling the care of both her mother and grandmother as each battled cancer. She was exhausted by the constant repetition of their health history to health care professionals, trying to keep track of the barrage of new information, all while trying to manage keeping loved ones up-to-date.

She decided to build a platform to store, secure and share health information and partnered with co-founder Madison McBay, a specialist in health informatics.

“Even the healthiest of people have reams of health information about them captured in various places. When there is illness or injury, it’s key that patients and caregivers make informed decisions based on complete and accurate information,” says McBay.

“TAMVOES offers the ability to input and track all your health information in one place that you can access anytime from anywhere. Users can allow access to that information to doctors and to their own trusted circle of loved ones.”

Users can track their medical history, prescriptions, procedures, lab tests and

appointments, take notes, and store it all securely and then share access.

MEDIC’s digital health software developers have designed a universal integration hub that allows the TAMVOES system to fetch information from different repositories of data.

“Working with MEDIC has given us access to technical expertise around high-level integration that we wouldn’t otherwise have as a start-up. They are so experienced with project management and they foresee issues before they happen,” says McBay

TAMVOES experienced exponential growth in 2021 when it was a finalist in LiONS LAIR.

There are now thousands of users and the platform is building out its features. It launched an iOS app in January and an Android version is on its way, too.

The company hopes to connect with eHealth Ontario’s immunization record system through MEDIC to directly input information about childhood and adult vaccine records into the TAMVOES platform.

“We never would have been able to make that connection without the help of MEDIC.”

The MEDIC-TAMVOES project is supported by funding from Southern Ontario Pharmaceutical and Health Innovation Ecosystem (SOPHIE). SOPHIE is a healthcare innovation initiative established by Innovation Factory and the Synapse Consortium.

For more than three years, Mohawk has worked closely with IRIS, which helps municipalities auto-capture and assess the condition of roads through AI-enabled dash-mounted cameras.

The company was the winner of the 2019 LiONS LAIR.

“When we started out as a company, we had limited resources,” says CEO Emil Sylvester Ramos. “When we connected with IDEAWORKS, we determined that Bilal’s team was the best to help with development and to bridge critical gaps and to execute on our value proposition.”

Bilal Al Momani is a Computer Science Professor. His students developed an application to image and measure potholes and road defects found within a city. The system included image recognition software to recognize potholes and light and shading filtration to calculate their depth.

"I always try to bring an industrial focus to my classes. Students don't just want theory; they want application of that learning."

Working with cutting-edge innovators differentiates Mohawk students, says Al Momani.

"Our students are prepared and ready to get to work right away."

With Mohawk's help, IRIS developed a system that could be tested in vehicles in the City of Hamilton fleet. The sensors are now found in City waste trucks and inspection vehicles and the system is now used in the U.S., Japan, Brazil and Europe.

The partnership with Mohawk has led to hiring graduates, says Ramos.

"It's really worked well for us and we are going to continue working with the college. We have been successful because of the people who believe in our technology and our team and the impact we could have."

Ye Qi, who studied Computer Systems Technology - Software Development at Mohawk, is working as a full stack developer for IRIS. He handles the collected data, develops and maintains the server and the database, and integrates the data with the frontend web app.

While he was a student, Qi built a demo mobile app to collect road images.

"I gained work experience as a developer, furnished my skills, solved real-life problems,

and got familiar with the latest, most popular development tools in the industry," he said.

"Mohawk helped me pave a solid way to become a professional developer."

Al Momani says Mohawk supports future entrepreneurs by providing real-world experiences, end-to-end supports and professional feedback.

"Real-world work helps enrich the students' experiences and affords them the opportunity to build their skills independently, allowing them to grow."

Mohawk still works with Weever Apps, the very first winner of the LiONS LAIR competition in 2011.

Weever builds platforms to digitize and automate processes on the factory floor, including safety reports, maintenance breakdown records, quality defect reports and other reports that have traditionally been inputted manually.

Weever's systems are used by multinational giants, including Unilever, Mars Wrigley and HelloFresh.

"Mohawk has been tied to us since we won the competition," said CEO and co-founder Steve McBride. "We've hired Mohawk grads, computer students have done user testing for us and we've helped the college develop curriculum. We've helped each other all the way along."

The company has secured a federal grant to do a project with Mohawk in wearables over the next year.

"LiONS LAIR introduced us to a number of partners that have been crucial to growing our business over the last 10 years. Mohawk is one of them." ■■■

"Mohawk supports future entrepreneurs by providing real-world experiences, end-to-end supports and professional feedback."

– Al Momani



Left to right: Professor Jason MacCulloch, Associate Dean Larisa Volman, Professors Tara Dinyer, Zina Lombardi, Nick Petrella, Chantal Szpak

Pitching forward

Fit to Pitch competition is showing Health, Wellness and Fitness students the potential of an entrepreneurial future

A capstone project in Health, Wellness and Fitness that culminates in the Fit to Pitch competition is helping students see entrepreneurial possibilities for themselves.

The team project bridges three courses and requires students to conceptualize a business and develop business and marketing plans.

“This program graduates students with the skill sets to pursue various career paths, including entrepreneurship,” says Larisa Volman, Associate Dean of Health Studies.

“Innovation intersects all aspects of Mohawk’s strategic plan. Fit to Pitch is a great example of innovation because it calls on students to tap into their inventive and creative ideas and work as a team to build a business case. It’s a very practical and valuable experience regardless of where their career takes them.”

All students present their ideas and course instructors choose the top three to go on to the Fit to Pitch event in April, which offers up to \$20,000 in in-kind prizes.

“We are looking for businesses that have identified a problem and found a creative solution for it,” says Professor Tara Dinyer. “We get some amazing ideas and it’s hard to pick the top three from them.”

Fit to Pitch brings in expert judges and alumni from the community and includes a speed networking event in which all program students meet with industry representatives to ask questions and seek advice.

Some concepts have led to immediate business launches out of school, says Dinyer, while others happen years after graduation.

“It’s very rewarding to see ideas come to life.”

Program graduate Christopher Spack says his experience in Fit to Pitch allowed him to test taking an idea full circle. He is now the owner of Your In Home Chef, which prepares healthy meals for day-to-day life, events, health retreats and parties.

“The capstone helped a lot to prepare a vision for a career to build towards that combined my interest in health and in cooking. Fit to Pitch let me see it was plausible to create a career for myself.” 🍴



Christopher Spack,
Your In Home Chef

Welcome to Mohawk

Beth Gibson, Manager, Workforce Partnerships, Community Partnerships and Learning; Toby Merritt, Manager, Accessible Learning Services; Wendy Makey, Director, Alumni Relations

Breaking down barriers

Mohawk has partnered with the Discover Ability Network to encourage employers to hire those with disabilities

Hiring people with disabilities is both the right thing to do and a smart business decision.

A diverse workforce increases profitability and innovation, opens access to new markets and helps organizations meet the challenge of a growing labour shortage.

Yet the greatest obstacle for people with disabilities is finding employment, says Toby Merritt, Manager of Accessible Learning Services (ALS) at Mohawk. Unconscious biases, misconceptions, and accessibility barriers leave qualified people with disabilities unemployed or working in jobs that are below their talent or training.

Those issues can be solved through boosting awareness and empowering both employers and job seekers. That's why a cross-campus coalition at Mohawk, including ALS, Alumni Relations and Student Life, has partnered with the Discover Ability Network.

Funded by the federal government, Discover Ability promotes the benefits of hiring those with disabilities, works with employers to create safe, welcoming and inclusive workplaces, and matches job seekers with registered employers.

The Mohawk group has focused on developing supports for small- to medium-sized businesses.

"We are adding resources, hosting workshops and mobilizing industry experts to help employers understand the value of hiring job-seekers with disabilities for co-ops, internships and jobs after they graduate," says Beth Gibson, Manager, Workforce Partnerships, Community Partnerships and Learning.

"This is a multi-level collaboration across the college and there is a lot of support for this. This accessibility work is an area of strength for Mohawk."

The partnership resulted in engagement events for employers in 2021 and more are planned for 2022, says Gibson.

Mohawk is modelling equitable hiring, too. “The college actively endeavours to increase the representation of marginalized people, including women, Indigenous, Black, racialized, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ at all levels of the organization,” says Sharon Kamassah, Manager of Workplace Equity and Inclusion.

That requires identifying and removing any potential barriers in recruitment and selection and coming to a deeper understanding of how privilege and power impacts employees, she says.

“We recognize, as proven by the research, that when we consistently remove barriers, people are more inclined to show up as their excellent and innovative selves. It also helps support our college’s culture of trust and wellness.”

Levelling the playing field for those with physical, mental or cognitive challenges means relatively easy and inexpensive adjustments, says Merritt. It can be as simple as pivoting the format of a job interview.

“People who are fantastic performers in their fields may not perform well in a traditional job interview. That can be true of people on the autism spectrum, for instance.”

By signalling that any accommodations will be facilitated or that people with disabilities are encouraged to apply allows those with disabilities to see a place for themselves.

“Making the call explicit, ‘We want you and we welcome you,’ makes all the difference.”

Mohawk provides a range of programs aimed at preparing those with disabilities for postsecondary education or for employment.

Matthew Cordeiro has completed four programs at Mohawk, beginning with Community Integration through Co-operative Education, a two-year program for students with intellectual disabilities and other significant learning challenges.



Matthew Cordeiro,
Mohawk College student

“Mohawk is a very inclusive college that cares about its students,” he says. His academic accommodations have always been supported and have allowed him to achieve success.

“I love Mohawk so much that right now I am completing the Counselling Techniques certificate in Continuing Education and got accepted into the Accessible Media Production postgraduate program for September 2022.”

Amanda Coles says her participation in Career Pathways, a certificate program designed for students with a learning disability, autism or mental health challenges, prepared her to succeed in Mohawk’s Pre-Media program.

She’s now registered in TV and Broadcasting for September and hopes to one day work in film.

“I learned so much. I don’t know where I would be without the program.” 🇩🇪

Katie Cyr



A brewing business

At Mohawk College, Tea Sommelier Katie Cyr has learned what she needs to know about the beverage and running a business

Katie Cyr has turned a love for tea handed down from her grandmother into a full-time business thanks to two programs at Mohawk College.

Microblending loose-leaf tea in small batches started out as something she enjoyed doing for herself and family and friends. She set out to learn more when a friend told her about a Tea Sommelier certificate program through Mohawk's Continuing Education.

Then Cyr earned certification as a Tea Sommelier after passing a challenging exam through the Tea and Herbal Association of Canada. "My journey through Mohawk has been incredible. Studying in Continuing Education offered the flexibility to work and learn a new skill at the same time."

Cyr launched Monarch Tea Co. about eight years ago, and started out offering tea workshops in libraries, community centres and private homes. It was a sideline in addition to a full-time job in retail. A year ago, she decided to make tea her full-time occupation.

What has really taken off for Monarch Tea is corporate events for employees of large

organizations, including Facebook, Google and Warner Bros. USA, and RBC. Cyr hosted an event for the Mohawk Alumni Association and even conducted a tea workshop through the Canadian military for veterans with post-traumatic stress.

During the pandemic, companies have sent gift tea sets to employees at home and then hired Cyr to do guided brewing and tasting events over Zoom.

Last year, Cyr took Foundations for Small Business through City School, which has grown her confidence, she says.

She was the winner of Mohawk's SURGE Pitch Competition in 2021, which came with a year of mentorship of a business coach through the Centre for Entrepreneurship, along with cash and in-kind prizes.

Monarch Tea also won a FirstOntario 1Award for small business in 2021.

"I think there has been a cultural shift around entrepreneurship so it really makes sense for Mohawk to integrate these skills into the education it provides." ■■■



Karen Breitner

On-the-job learning

Electrician Karen Breitner wishes she had a grounding in business before striking out on her own

It's been 20 years since Karen Breitner founded her electrical business and she wishes that she had the business lessons while in college that she's had to learn through trial and error.

"It's been an on-the-job process of learning all of that for me," says Breitner, owner of Lumination FX in Dundas.

She is a master electrician and lighting designer and her company is a full-service, licensed electrical contractor specializing in residential and commercial electrical services.

Breitner supports Mohawk College's growing focus on entrepreneurship geared to programs of study and specific trades. She chose to study electrical over millwright just so that she could open her own business down the road.

But while she was well-prepared for the technical side, she didn't have a strong business grounding. "It was about five years before I was profitable. I made mistakes in

undervaluing myself and I'm still prone to that at times."

Breitner made sure to observe the practices of owners she worked for over the first 14 years of her career. And once she launched her business, she asked lots of questions of contractors she knew to get their outlook and/or to seek advice about a problem she was facing.

Owning a business is a round-the-clock undertaking but Breitner says she loves the ability to schedule her work around her life. When her children were young, she could see them off to school or join a field trip and now she can make time for grandkids.

She's also scaled back from more employees to three—including her daughter Sarah, who is also a Mohawk graduate—to suit the pace she desires.

"What I have is manageable for me now. I am very hands-on, so I would rather be out doing the work than back in the office managing employees." ■■■

Jatin Verma

World entrepreneurs

International students have launched 14 businesses through incubator SURGE since 2018

International students are finding all they need at Mohawk College to begin and sustain their entrepreneurial journeys.

Many international students come from families with family businesses, says Anuraj Bajwa, Dean, International and Partnerships.

"Often the entrepreneurial mindset is already there and they've grown up in it."

These students may want to return to their home country to work in that business or to start something of their own in Canada. So a growing focus on entrepreneurship through the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SURGE and embedded curriculum will attract more international students to Mohawk, says Bajwa.

He points out that international students or alumni have started 14 businesses through Mohawk's incubator SURGE since 2018.

That includes Jatin Verma's financial services brokerage World Financial Group. A graduate of Health, Wellness and Fitness in 2015, Verma says a life coach opened his eyes to the entrepreneurial world.

Verma decided to pursue finance and two and a half years after earning his licence, he's got

offices in Stoney Creek, Scarborough, Alberta and British Columbia.

Verma says students will benefit from a grounding in entrepreneurship within their courses at Mohawk.

"Being an entrepreneur requires self-discipline and motivation. You have to be the voice that drives you and you have to be willing to keep working on yourself."

Abhishek Soni graduated in 2016 but still calls on his mentor for advice about his Smartphone leasing business.

It started out as a phone leasing kiosk at the college and grew into three locations at colleges and universities. But Mobélease pivoted during the pandemic into a downtown Hamilton business focused highly on cell phone activations and mobile device repair services.

The plan is to return to campuses, says Soni, but in the midst of the pandemic, he was scared about the future.

"Initial days of Mobélease I was thinking about going back to India and joining the family business but my mentor encouraged me to keep trying. She motivated me. SURGE has played a vital role in our success." ■■■



Lisa Syms

Choosing a path

Students in the Accessible Media Production graduate certificate program have the option of entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship routes

Entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship skills have been built into Mohawk's graduate certificate program in Accessible Media Production (AMP) from day one.

"Accessibility is largely an intrapreneurship endeavour," says Jennifer Jahnke, program coordinator and co-instructor of a course called Entrepreneurship, Intrapreneurship and Accessibility.

"Many students come to our program with the support of their employers and they are looking to develop the skills they can use to make changes within their existing organizations."

Students in the course are required to pitch a project and they are exposed to industry guest speakers from around the world each week.

Adam Spencer, a serial entrepreneur and CEO of document remediation firm AbleDocs, teaches the entrepreneurship side of the AMP course.

AbleDocs, founded in 2019, is now in nine countries, has 170 staff and offers 27 products and services.

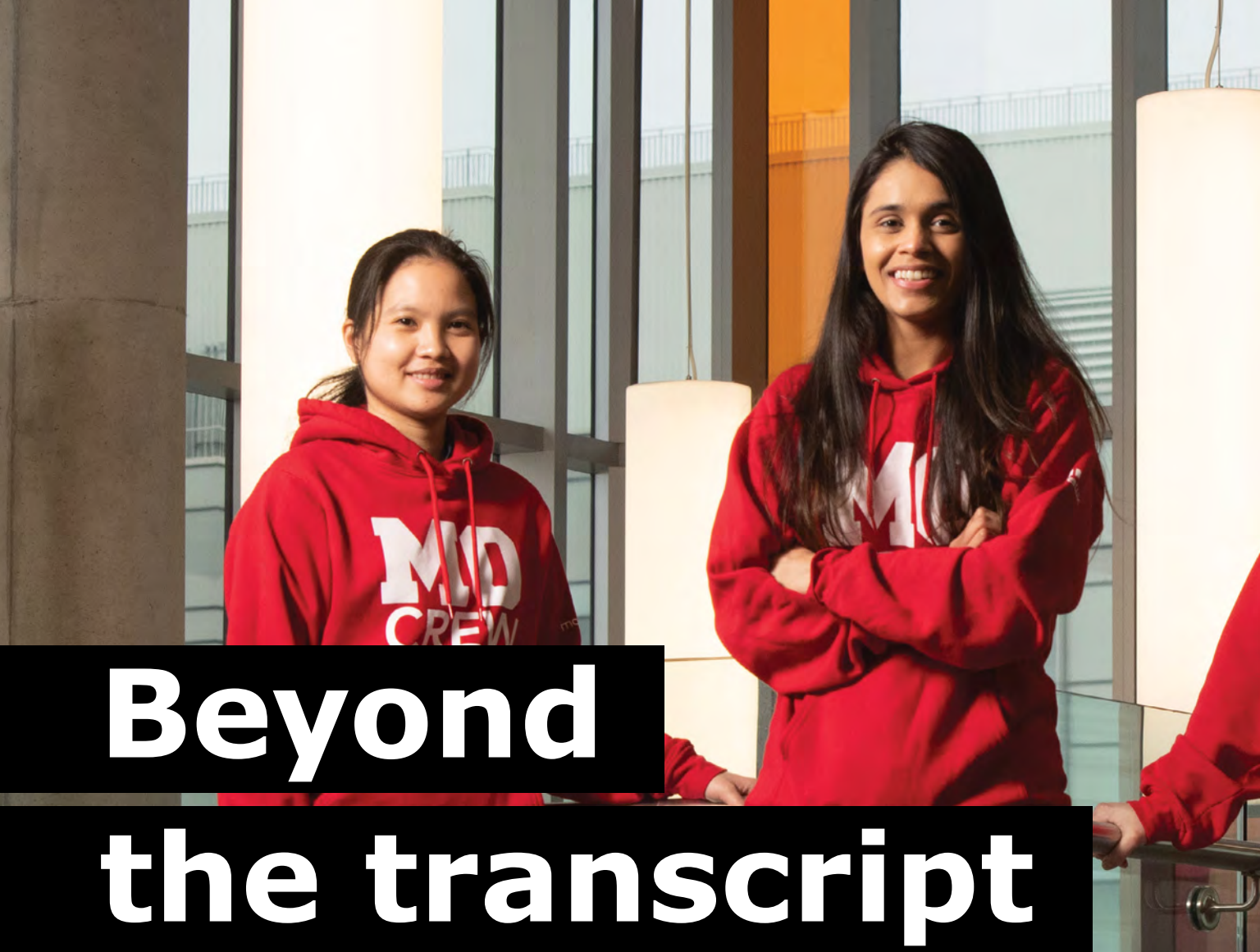
As the population ages and the push for accessibility grows, demand is climbing for people with specialist skills, says Spencer. Whether students choose to be an entrepreneur or an intrapreneur will depend on their risk tolerance, he says.

"There are challenges with each route but there are amazing career paths in whatever you do in accessibility."

Lisa Syms found the program after losing her job of 15 years. "It intrigued me because I had been looking for an upgrade in my technical skills. I liked that I could choose a path to work independently or within an organization."

She considered starting her own business but then applied to a job as an accessibility consultant at CIBC.

"The program gave me the base knowledge and the passion about accessibility. I have to be the person in the room who knows the most about accessibility and I love to be that. This is worthwhile work. What I do helps someone read their bank statement and be independent." ■■■



Beyond the transcript

Mohawk's Student Life offers leadership opportunities that set students up for success

Marita Linde's experience as a First Year Experience (FYE) Leader in Student Life at Mohawk College has made her feel connected to the campus during remote learning and has even pointed her to a potential career.

Linde, who is in her fourth and final semester of Software Support, facilitates two or three group sessions a week for the FYE Program. Some are informative learning sessions and others are social hangouts.

"I honestly think it's been amazing and I really enjoy the work so much. It's shown me a direction of what I want to do. Answering

questions and providing help to students is really rewarding."

Linde says she's thinking about pursuing a career in online education.

Student Life offers a number of student leadership opportunities both volunteer and paid to help students give back to their communities and gain valuable work experience. It also offers the Campus to Community program in which student leaders connect volunteers to community partners for meaningful volunteer experiences.

"Many students who volunteer move on to get paid positions or student leadership roles at the college," says Andrea Brienesse, Events Coordinator in Student Life.

Frances Braga, an international student in Computer Systems Technology, began her



Left to right: Frances Braga,
Dhruvi Shah and Marita Linde

time at Mohawk taking part in social activities to meet people.

From there, she found a part-time job through Student Life as one of six student leaders in the First Year Experience program who help new students transition to life at Mohawk.

The leaders answer questions through chat or video calls on MS Teams and co-host social and educational events, including sessions on sustainability, time management, finances and sleep health.

"I've been building my confidence, especially since English is my second language. It's made me feel more at home," says Braga, who hails from Philippines.

"I'm so thankful I came to Mohawk. It hasn't been a normal experience but I decided not to let the pandemic stop me. I signed up for

everything I liked and Mohawk offers so many supports and events to choose from."

Dhruvi Shah, who is in her last semester of Chemical Engineering Technology, has been working with Student Life since she began her program in September 2018.

She is a leader in both the Campus to Community initiative and the First Year Experience program and has participated in the two-day Mohawk Student Leadership Academy.

She says she is strong academically, but her leadership opportunities at Mohawk mean she has skills that will set her apart as she embarks on her career.

"When I was applying for my co-op, I was asked about how I would handle a certain scenario. I had an experience that I could draw upon to answer the question. I've also got references now out of work I've done," she says. "And I feel prepared in taking the lead, delegating tasks, planning events and managing projects. I feel that confidence."

Briennesse encourages all students to track their non-academic campus and off-campus involvement, including campus jobs, leadership roles, volunteering, training and extra-curricular sports and clubs, in their co-curricular record (CCR).

"It's a supplement to a resumé and gives a fuller picture than transcripts. It helps students land placements, jobs, and awards and scholarships. A full CCR shows initiative and a desire to give back. It can be the edge in a competition for a job or scholarship."

With each entry, students choose from five to 10 achievements or learning outcomes that define their experience.

"That really gives employers a complete picture of the skills and qualities a student has acquired through all their college activities. And having such a complete record is helpful to a student when they go to job interviews. They have experiences to talk about and the CCR helps them articulate all that they've done." ■■■

Leading a green building transformation to net zero

Mohawk College has established leadership and expertise in the journey to net zero energy and net zero carbon through the construction and operation of the Joyce Centre for Partnership & Innovation — Canada's first and largest net zero institutional building.

Traditionally built commercial and institutional buildings consume huge amounts of power that is largely drawn from the grid. Nearly a quarter of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions — 40 megatonnes annually — comes from buildings.

The Joyce Centre opened in 2018 and soon became the first institutional building to be Zero Carbon Certified for design and performance under the Zero Carbon Building Program of the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC).

Over the past three years, the almost 97,000-square-foot structure has generated more energy than it has consumed, thanks to the use of solar power, a large-scale geothermal energy system for heating and cooling, a tight building envelope, and data analysis that informs building operation to fully harness the building's energy efficiency.

The Joyce Centre's energy-intensity design target was set at 73 kWh/m² per year, a level 80 per cent lower than the 2018 Canadian national median for college and university buildings. According to the latest data, the building's actual energy intensity was 42 kWh/m² in 2021, or 85 per cent lower than the median level for postsecondary buildings across Canada.

"A lot of technologies have to be in place in order for a building to perform like this



and they all have to be integrated and communicate with each other," says Henry Colyn, Chief Building and Facilities Officer. "And from there it requires the constant monitoring of our Facilities team, who have to make adjustments and tweaks to optimize performance. It's always a challenge to be the first, but our team is proving the design."

That design includes 28 geothermal wells that extract heat from the ground in winter that has been stored from the summer. Overall, the building transfers roughly two-thirds more heat into the ground than it draws.

In addition to energy use, the Joyce Centre is a model of water conservation by harvesting rainwater from the roof and using it for toilets and irrigation, following filtration and disinfection. Annually, the building draws less than five per cent of its water from the municipal system.

The Joyce Centre features an advanced Building Automation System that allows staff



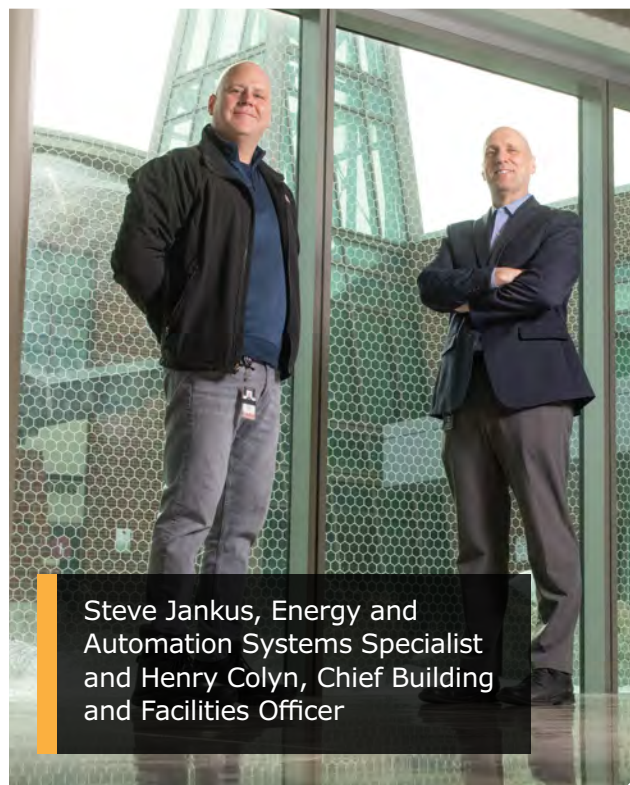
Mohawk College Facilities team

to crunch data to scientifically identify issues, maximize energy efficiency, reduce costs and improve comfort.

“Net zero design doesn’t automatically mean it will perform to that standard. It’s not ‘set it and forget it.’ We are adjusting and learning every day,” says Steve Jankus, Energy and Automation Systems Specialist in Facilities Services at Mohawk College.

Modelling can only go so far, especially in a complex campus building containing labs, study spaces, a café, and dozens of classrooms, not to mention the challenges of managing oscillating demands during two years of closures and reduced campus activity during the pandemic.

Achieving net zero requires day-to-day management, a dedicated and innovative Facilities team, and a committed college leadership to nurture a culture of sustainability. The Joyce Centre for Partnership & Innovation at Mohawk College has them all. ■■■



Steve Jankus, Energy and Automation Systems Specialist and Henry Colyn, Chief Building and Facilities Officer

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