

The BLAZER

CONNECTING ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF CMU

WINTER 2025

25th Anniversary Issue



Celebrating 25 Years of Vision and Growth

This past year we have celebrated a significant milestone in the story of CMU—25 years of learning, community, and transformation. From its beginnings as a bold vision for Christian higher education in Manitoba, CMU has grown into a vibrant university that continues to shape lives and serve the common good.

As we reflect on this journey of evolution and growth, we also look forward with anticipation. CMU is stepping boldly into the future with announcements that will help set a trajectory for the next 25 years and beyond while honouring the virtues that CMU was built upon—a university rooted in faith, committed to dialogue, and energized by the challenges and opportunities of our time.

CMU has launched a fresh new brand. So much more than a new logo, the updated brand reflects who the university is today while balancing the need for a refreshed brand identity to attract prospective students with the need to maintain familiarity with alumni and donors. This new brand will help us share our story with clarity and confidence as CMU continues to mature and grow its reputation for excellence and world-changing alumni.

Announced in late August 2025, CMU is thrilled to offer its new Bachelor of Education degree, equipping future teachers to bring creativity, compassion, and excellence into classrooms across Canada and beyond. This program builds on CMU’s strong foundation in interdisciplinary learning and faith-informed education, preparing graduates to make a meaningful impact in the lives of students.

Beginning in Fall 2026, CMU will offer free dorm housing for all first-year students—a first-of-its-kind initiative among Canadian universities. This bold move reflects our deep desire to foster belonging and accessibility, while easing the transition into university life. The response has already been incredible.

As we celebrate 25 years, we give thanks—for the visionaries who dreamed, the faculty and staff who serve, the students and alumni who inspire, and the community that sustains us.

Expect more! The next chapter promises to be as bold and transformative as the first. Thank you for being part of this journey.

Kevin Kilbrei
CMU Director, Marketing & Communications

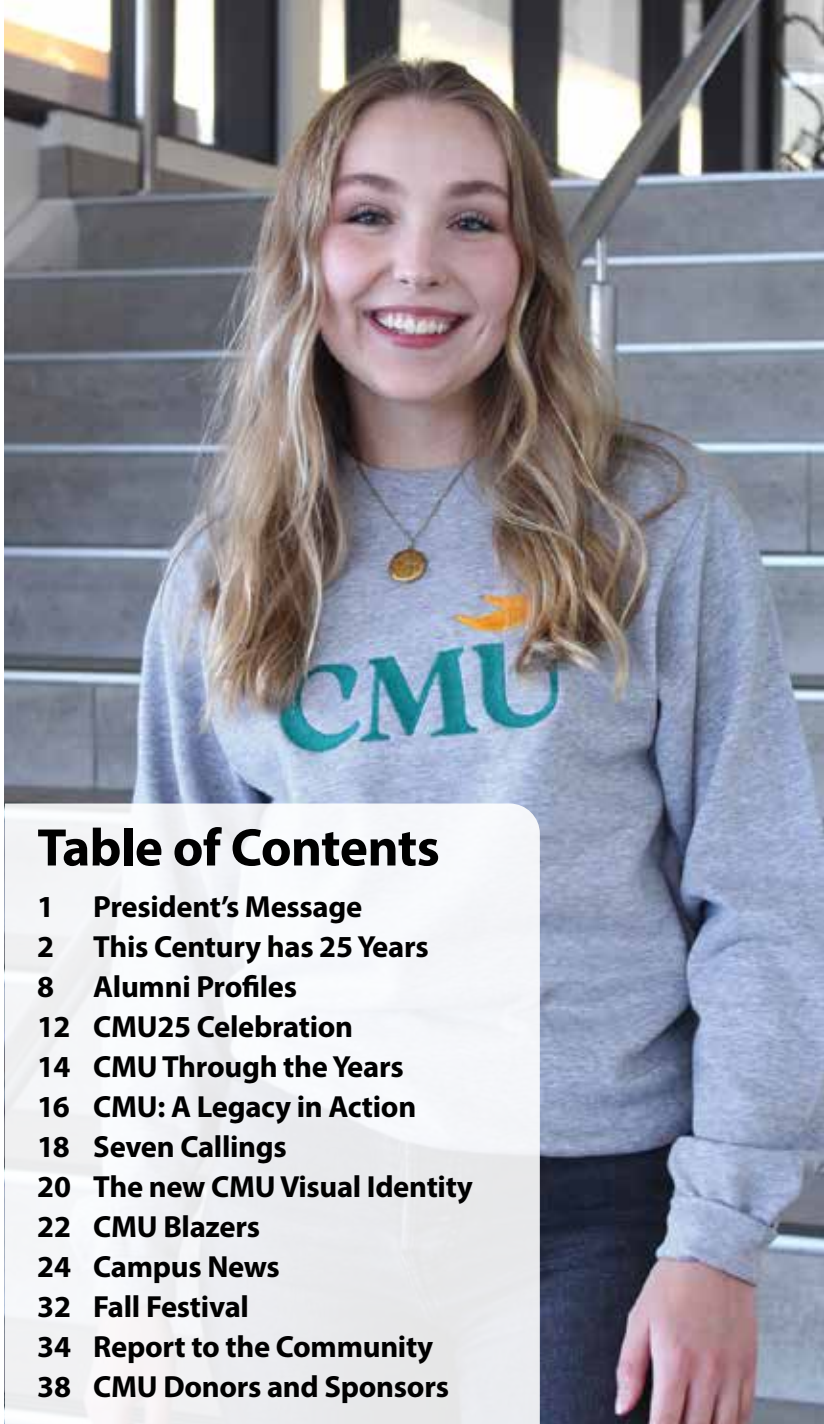


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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Flourishing as a university for 25 years

This year we celebrate the story of Canadian Mennonite University at its 25-year cadence. This is a worthy breathing place—a time to say thank you, tell stories, reckon with the times, and attune ourselves to gifts in much vaster spans. We offer tribute to generations of people who had a stake in building and nourishing CMU since long before the notion of coming together as a university was even a dream. We’re inspired by thousands of alumni of CMU and its predecessor colleges, whose lives bear witness to why this place matters to church and society. We’re humbled by visionary, sound leaders of the Province of Manitoba and of founding church bodies (Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba). We’re grateful for gifts of Indigenous welcome that enable us to live and learn on lands and waters that have been kin with Anishinaabeg, Cree, and Dakota First Nations since ancient times.

The range of CMU education offerings and student demographics have extended considerably over 25 years. Along the way we’ve continually asked: How does the heart of the university’s mission endure through times of change? How is CMU led in its discernment? In response: Hear and heed the yearnings and callings of those who see CMU from unique vantage points.

Let’s start with a blustery day in 2023, when alumni, friends, and faculty took time to reckon with the university’s story and renew its path forward. Rev. Dr. David Widdicombe of St Margaret’s Anglican Church offered this:

For mostly happenstance reasons, Canada is somewhat adjacent to mainstream imperial structures. Your voice as a university emerges from a tradition that’s always been

How does the heart
of the university’s
mission endure
through times of
change?

intentional about being somewhat adjacent to mainstream society powers. Not everyone at CMU identifies as Anabaptist, but the university itself does. Be intentional in remaining somewhat adjacent to society. It’s a gift that extends far beyond yourselves.

The phrase *somewhat adjacent* grabbed me, yet I wrestled with what it means. It wasn’t about being irrelevant, better, worse, out of touch, or leaning to the left or right politically. Eventually I got a sense of a two-way vertical extension, with a bandwidth stretching beyond what’s common. It’s as if Widdicombe said,

You extend deeply into the grit of the soil. You’re really practical as you attend to experiential learning, service learning, livelihoods, and good stewardship. For the sake of the other, you’re not afraid to get your hands dirty. You face stuff



that’s hard, for justice and mercy are refrains by which you live.

And, you behold the extravagance of Christ ever reconciling all things—abundantly far more than all you can ask or imagine. These phrases sound fantastical when spoken, so you keep singing. The world needs that persistent voice to cut through disastrous noise.

Seven more callings are featured on pages 18-19, as spoken in September at CMU 25 celebrations. Take heart with us as both gently and boldly CMU is nudged on.

Peace and joy,
Dr. Cheryl Pauls

CMU President

This Century has 25 Years

A Microhistory of Canadian Mennonite University

Dr. Brian Froese | CMU Professor of History



On an unseasonably warm fall evening, the annual J.J.

Thiessen Lecture series at CMU was underway. The Scriptures had been read, and for the night of October 22, 2024 it came from Hebrews 12:1-2 where the Christian faithful are reminded of being surrounded throughout history by a “great cloud of witnesses” as an encouragement to put off all weights and sins to run the race set before them, focused on Christ. The hymn too was sung; this time it was Frances R. Havergal’s 1874, “Take My Life and Let it Be” of a life consecrated to Christ. The speaker was Bruce Hindmarsh, Professor of Spiritual Theology and the History of Christianity at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. His theme for the lectures was the spiritual theology of the early evangelicals of primarily the eighteenth-century north-Atlantic world. That evening he talked about the life-long process and challenge of the Christian life transformed. Though the lecture was wide ranging, the brothers John and Charles Wesley loomed large.

This Century has 25 Years cont.

Archival photos supplied by Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and Mennonite Heritage Archives.



Aerial view of campus – 1948

As the Wesley brothers died in 1788 and 1791, Russian Empress Catherine the Great invited the Mennonites in Prussia to settle newly acquired land in the Empire, in present day Ukraine. What followed was over a century of institutional and economic development combined with some religious renewal movements.

In 1849, Peter Martin (P.M.) Friesen was born and 11 years later emerged the Mennonite Brethren. Friesen was many things; an educator, minister, philanthropist, defender of persecuted peoples, and an historian. Though he was part of the new movement, he hoped for Christian unity, especially among Mennonite groups. He remained a strong supporter of Mennonite traditions and teachings, combined with pietism. Due to his command of Russian, Friesen was called upon at times to represent Mennonites before government officials where accounts say he was effective in communicating Mennonite civil and religious interests. In 1887, he accepted the task of writing a history of the recently formed Mennonite Brethren. At the time the task was thought by some to take a fortnight. In the end he took a quarter century and produced a monumental volume that was both history and a collection of documents germane to

the Mennonite Brethren. Yet the book was more than a near thousand pages of Mennonite Brethren materials. He reached back to capture Mennonite migration to Russia and ended it with chapters on the Mennonite Brethren, General Conference Mennonites, and (Old Order) Mennonites in America. His historical method pulled in many aspects of Mennonite life in Russia, where, in addition to religious faith and practices, he included business and education.

As the CMU audience waited for the introductory matter to give way to the evening's lecture, CMU President Dr. Cheryl Pauls had a major announcement to make. Thanks to the generosity of a Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren businessman, CMU was to have its first endowed chair. It made

perfect sense that the new chair in Mennonite Brethren theology and biblical studies be named after P.M. Friesen, drawing from his legacy and vision of spiritual renewal, inter-Mennonite unity, and the importance of history and religion to understanding, in his time, Mennonite life in Russia.

The connective tissues of that evening, which joined past and present, included the physical space, or as Pauls called it, "locatedness." She expressed it through the land acknowledgment connecting CMU to a local geographical past measured in millennia whereas a spiritual locatedness was articulated through the outline of Friesen's book back to the 16th-century Reformation. The buildings, too, contain lineage. On May 9, 1921 the cornerstone of the Manitoba School for the Deaf was laid and construction began on an impressive gothic style building, featuring Manitoba limestone, that saw its first students—from across the prairies—enter on September 22, 1922. Meanwhile, that same fall in Russia, the Soviet government began its crackdown on religious instruction in schools. The harsh policy was very disappointing to the Mennonites, among whom was 29-year-old school teacher, Jacob Johann "J.J."

Thiessen. Vexed by those developments, he became involved in Mennonite emigration plans to Canada and he and his wife Tina finally boarded a ship to Canada to arrive in November 1926.

The connective tissues of that evening, which joined past and present, included the physical space, or as Pauls called it, "locatedness."



university. In 1944 they opened the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC). At the same time, starting in 1941, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada held formal conversations about starting a Bible college (discussions had begun in the late 1930s) and in 1947 they opened the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) in the basement of Bethel Mission Mennonite Church. J.J. Thiessen worked a number of years on the CMBC board and tirelessly sought solid presidents to give the fledgling college solid scholarly leadership. It had a few homes until 1956 when it moved into their newly constructed campus at 600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Despite their differences, those two groups of Mennonites in Winnipeg sought ways to navigate modern life with theological, biblical, and academically astute thinking and Christian practice.

Meanwhile, across a pathway that became Grant Avenue in the early-1960s, the gothic structure saw the Manitoba School for the Deaf depart for the Wolseley neighborhood. During the war, it was the Royal Canadian Air Force No.3 Wireless School for the training of air gunners and ground signal operators. In 1945 the RCAF left the building and it became a Normal School for teacher training until 1953. From 1966-1996 the Manitoba School for the Deaf returned. In the interim the City of Winnipeg used the building for emergency housing for about 100 families and classroom space for the Winnipeg School Division. That building holds important stories of provincial and national educational

The interwar years were filled with numerous challenges. At the end of the 1930s Great Depression, the Mennonite Brethren in Winnipeg began serious discussions about creating a school academically situated between the Bible schools that dotted the prairies and the public

a longer presence of Mennonite education in the area and the two sites were connected in 2014 by the Skywalk and Marpeck Commons, immediately becoming the hearth of CMU.

To honour Thiessen's role as a founder and longtime board member of CMBC, the lecture series was established in 1978. The specific space for the J.J. Thiessen lectures in 2024 was the CMU chapel that has overlooking it the large iconic painting of Jesus by Ray Dirks. In 1998, near the chapel, the MHC Gallery opened with Ray Dirks as founder and curator, a position he held for twenty-three years, guided by the art gallery's mandate to feature artists of any Mennonite/Anabaptist persuasion, and any artist of any spiritual tradition.

Despite their differences, those two groups of Mennonites in Winnipeg sought ways to navigate modern life with theological, biblical, and academically astute thinking and Christian practice.

As the stage in October 2024 filled for the formal announcement,

President Pauls led the proceedings. Her background was in music as both scholar and performer, and she began to teach in the CMU predecessor



colleges in 1994, near the time that the first walk through of the "castle" building north of Grant was held to consider as a possible place for a Mennonite university. Following Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt as CMU's first sole president, Pauls, in 2012, moved from the music wing to the President's Office where she has served and handled a range of changes and challenges in Canadian higher education, society, and the Mennonite world itself.

Pauls then announced the establishment of the P.M. Friesen Chair in Biblical and Theological Studies, introduced the donor, Edwin Redekopp, and the two co-chairs to initially hold the position, Dr. Andrew Dyck and Dr. Paul



projects and is now a registered provincial historical site—of which CMU is the guardian. The CMBC site represents



Doerksen. Redekopp spoke of wanting to honour his parents through this chair and described his father Henry's life of faith and churchly involvement. Henry immigrated to Canada in 1924 and in 1939 purchased the Roadside Store on Henderson Highway. It grew over the years into a building materials centre known eventually as Redekopp Lumber and Supply. In 1957 Henry started Allmar Inc., as a wholesale distributor to lumberyards and the construction industry. He described his father as deeply involved in the church, both Mennonite and beyond. Business was not only an economic activity, but a platform for Henry to share his faith with others. Over his lifetime Henry served with the Gideon's, Mennonite Brethren Mission Board, the Christian Business Men of



Canada, was for sixteen years Area Captain of the Salvation Army, President of the downtown YMCA, supporter of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, and was a supporter of the English translation of P.M. Friesen's book, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*. In Mennonite higher education in Winnipeg, Henry served as chair of the MBBC board and was a founding board member of Menno Simons College (MSC), two of the three predecessor colleges of CMU.

The two newly minted co-chairs gave their thanks. Dyck, a professor working in Christian spirituality and pastoral ministry, noted the formational shaping of people in the university's mission. Doerksen, a professor in Anabaptist theology and literature, concluded the launch by citing the word "irenic" in relation to Friesen's approach to theological disagreement, a quality he hoped



to embody in his work in this new position.

With Mennonite business history represented by the donor Edwin Redekop, that connection to Winnipeg's history continues—with David Friesen who, with his wife Katherine Loewen, started Quality Construction Company (later Qualico Developments Canada). David Friesen was a major benefactor and founding chair of the Menno Simons College board. MSC was born from a dream in the 1970s when *Friends of Higher Education* was formed to pursue the creation of a Mennonite college attached to a public university outside of church denominations. That dream was realized in June 1982 when

It took until the 1990s for circumstances to align, making a Mennonite university from the existing colleges a reality.

the provincial government granted MSC a degree-granting charter. When MSC opened, it led with an emphasis on conflict resolution and international development in a context of Mennonite-based agencies grounded in the Anabaptist peace tradition. MSC realized its formal relationship with the University of Winnipeg in 1988, offering university credit courses in 1989.

Business has long been connected in Mennonite higher education, from the content of P.M. Friesen's book to the endowment of the chair, to the 2011 creation of the Redekop School of Business by another Redekop family from British Columbia. To get to 2024, though, CMU first had to get through 2000 and its first class as a stand-alone liberal arts university. That reality was long in some peoples' dreams. The first conversation of a unified institute of higher education across Mennonite Brethren and Conference of Mennonites lines was already held in 1944. It took until the 1990s for circumstances to align, making a Mennonite university from the existing colleges a reality. For that, it came to industrialist, philanthropist, and refugee advocate Art DeFehr to take a leading role in getting the potential university economically grounded for its early years. DeFehr also worked to gather the political support from the provincial government where the willing Conservative government of Gary Filmon helped CMU reach the starting line. The process also took the work of many men and women to make the case for what became CMU.



There, that evening, on the CMU campus many historical ligaments that connect to form the university were present. From the people seated and speaking, the founding denominations represented, the predecessor colleges, the namesakes of the lecture series and the new chair, the background of the donor, support from business, effective representation to government, the physical space, references to a range of academic disciplines—history, theology, biblical studies, spiritual theology, pastoral ministry, art, and music—to the binding threads of faith, learning, scholarship, irenic relationships, and Christ, major portions of CMU's history were present.

Of course, not nearly all aspects of CMU can be discerned from the microhistory of one evening. For that we await the writing of the first comprehensive and scholarly history of CMU. Though, to understand October 22, 2024, we must first go back a century to a time that was very precarious for not only a stream of Mennonites seeking safety from Soviet Communism, but was soon precarious for the world. In that time of stress, dislocation, war, and global instability, the Mennonites in Winnipeg set about starting Bible colleges. ➡





25 years, 25 stories

Students are the heart of CMU. Over the past quarter century, our alumni have shaped industries, inspired communities, and redefined what it means to lead with purpose. In celebration of 25 years, we have profiled one remarkable graduate from each year—25 years, 25 stories. Their journeys reflect the diversity, resilience, and vision that define CMU. Their stories remind us that education is more than a milestone—it's a catalyst for change. Find seven of the 25 profiles on the following pages.

Find the complete set of 25 at 25 alumni profiles at cmu.ca/25.

Rigour, curiosity, and the arts: a CMU story of leadership



CMU was a place of transition, community, and discovery for **Evan Klassen**, Executive Director of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (MTC).

"My first gig was on this stage here in the ... [Laudamus Auditorium]," he says, explaining that he helped organize a theatre production of *A Man for All Seasons* with a small group of fellow students. He stage-managed, ran sound cues, and discovered the kind of collaborative, behind-the-scenes work that would eventually define his career.

You suddenly had new professors, new programs, and a different kind of community coming together.

Klassen graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Christian Studies, completing his degree shortly after the merger that brought together Concord College (formerly Mennonite Brethren Bible College), Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and Menno Simons College to form CMU. "It was a really interesting time to be here," he recalls. "You suddenly had new professors, new programs, and a different kind of

community coming together."

After graduating, Klassen spent 15 years as a professional stage manager with theatre companies across Canada, including the Shaw Festival in Ontario, Theatre Calgary, Manitoba Opera, and Winnipeg's Rainbow Stage.

He later completed a certificate in Arts and Cultural Management and moved into leadership roles, including Director of Artistic Operations and Production with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Managing Director of Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops, BC, and Executive Director of the Grand Theatre in London, ON. He had "a full-circle moment" when he returned to Winnipeg in 2023 to lead MTC, the same place he started his theatre career in 1998, working in the box office.

"The soft skills taught at a place like CMU are equally as important as the academics. Approaching things with a sense of ethics, of people first, of decolonization, of exploring where we are and who was here before ... that's a big part of being an arts leader." It's an approach that was shaped directly by his experiences at the university.

"The skills I developed at CMU—rigour, community, and a commitment to big questions—continue to guide my work in the arts."

Through the lens: How CMU helped an Indigenous storyteller find her voice

Gindalee Ouskun points to the great paradox in her life—she is shy and introverted, yet her work is public-facing and relational. "It's kind of ironic that I would choose a career where ... I'm always interacting with people and really putting myself out there," she laughs. "But being in the role brings out a sort of confidence that I don't necessarily always have."

Ouskun works at Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), a Canadian broadcaster and media network sharing news and storytelling by and about Indigenous peoples. She is the Marketing Coordinator, meaning she manages the social media, coordinates marketing, and manages a small team of staff.

After attending a huge



I wanted to be in a smaller space so I actually could have my voice heard in a classroom.

high school, she came to CMU searching for a more personal learning experience. "I wanted to be in a smaller space so I actually could have my voice heard in a classroom. I never really got that in high school," she says. It was intimidating at first, to be known and therefore unable to fade into the background, but she says "[CMU] was very welcoming."

Ouskun's creativity bloomed at CMU. She intended to major in history and minor in English, but taking Introduction to Communications and Media by chance revealed a creative bug she didn't know was inside her. She graduated in 2017 with a Communications and Media major.

Ouskun is passionate about working with Indigenous organizations, something she's done more of in the last few years. She had a profound experience shooting an event honouring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

"It was really difficult to listen to some of the stories, but I think being there was really important and not to pretend the stories don't exist ... As an Indigenous woman, they're really important to me. Especially now that I have a daughter, it's even more heightened."

"It's very important to me to be able to offer the service of providing images that they may not be able to get otherwise."

From student to teacher: A journey of faith, learning, and community



Heather Schellenberg was thrilled when she found out about the new Bachelor of Education after-degree program at CMU. As a teacher herself, she's excited about how this will allow CMU to send even more thoughtful, well-equipped grads out into the world. "I feel proud to have gone there, and I know it shaped me a lot," she says.

Schellenberg graduated in 2009 with an English major and a Biblical and Theological Studies minor. She taught junior high for more than a decade and is now doing a post-baccalaureate in guidance and counselling to work as a high school guidance counsellor. She is also one of two support teachers in Winnipeg School Division that works with international students.

She meets with classroom teachers to identify where these students are struggling, which supports could benefit them most, what to communicate with their parents back home, and how to advocate for them so they have the tools they need to succeed.

She also gets opportunities to take students on ski days

and camping trips, and teach classes that focus on English language, Canadian culture, and connecting with other international students.

"This is so unique. I get to be in so many different high schools ... I get to work with amazing teachers; the students are wonderful," she says.

The most important part of her role is making students feel cared for and supported. This was the ethos she felt CMU embodied when she was a student, from faculty to staff to her experience on the Blazers volleyball team.

"[CMU] is so relationally based and I think that is one of its gifts. CMU has really also encouraged me to think about things critically and with a broad lens, and to be accepting of anyone and everyone. I think that's a really positive thing, and that has translated so much into my teaching with students. This generous hospitality, every day: You are welcome. You are safe. You have value. You have a place in this room. Those things can make or break a classroom and a school experience for someone."

From martyrology to herpetology: A journey of curiosity, community, and conservation

A few days after graduating from CMU in 2025, **Tai Linklater** was in an airplane on the way to the Netherlands. The 23-year-old from Altona, MB travelled an ocean away from CMU, and yet it was present in almost every adventure of their two-week trip, a microcosm of their university experience: curiosity and community.

Linklater and a fellow classmate met up with Dr. Chris Huebner, Professor of Philosophy and Theology, who was on sabbatical doing research in Amsterdam, and together they toured many of the historical sites of early Anabaptist Christians in the 16th century. Linklater also visited Dutch friends they made during their CMU work-integrated learning placement.

During Linklater's placement at Assiniboine Park Conservancy in Winnipeg their main focuses were helping with the bird window collision mitigation program, polar bear behaviour monitoring, and a mitigation program for northern leopard frogs that got stuck in ecological traps throughout the park.

Linklater earned a Bachelor of Arts, four-year honours, with an interdisciplinary major in ecological pacifism and a minor

CMU is so relationally based and I think that is one of its gifts.





in biology. The degree, and the whole interdisciplinary approach of CMU, deeply nurtured their love of learning, especially across such a variety of fields. It's the part of Linklater's CMU experience that stands out most to them, along with the strong friendships they made.

"I'm not going to say everyone at CMU gets along ... but I do believe that anyone who comes to CMU will find their people." That sense of belonging has a profound positive impact on people's lives, they said, which "is why CMU's presence is important today."

Linklater developed a strong community living on-campus for all five years of their degree, so they're excited about the remarkable renovations to the Poettcker Hall residence building: "Poettcker is one of the central buildings of my CMU experience. Lots of my learning was done there, lots of my friendship building was done there."

As for Linklater, the next chapter of their future holds an immersive exploration into herpetology, the study of reptiles and amphibians, fulfilling a lifelong dream of their younger self.

... I do believe that anyone who comes to CMU will find their people.

CMU laid a foundation for me developing my sense of my ethics, how I should act in the world.

in the kinds of cultural or counter-cultural elements at CMU at the time."

"I think at CMU I really developed my perception of social justice and at a community level, at a grassroots level, how important that is and how important authentic connection is to work on challenging issues," Janzen says.

A significant part of his job with Oceans North involves working with communities that are often isolated and suspicious of strangers offering regulations or advice.

Despite this, Janzen says his people-centred approach to conservation has helped facilitate some of the most rewarding experiences of his career.

"I'm always striving to make authentic connections."

"CMU laid a foundation for me developing my sense of my ethics, how I should act in the world. And it's probably the reason why I've almost exclusively worked in non-profits."

For Janzen, CMU created a camaraderie that felt authentic and helped guide him towards a career that didn't just serve himself but the community.

For Janzen, this all began when he made the move from the small community of Coaldale, Alberta, to the hustle and bustle of Winnipeg. "I think it was pretty clear that there was like a strong social justice community here, and I think that was reflected

How an alum was taught to think "inside out and upside down"

The current Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Winnipeg came to CMU from Providence University College, by way of the University of Manitoba, where he initially planned to become a dentist.

After a conversation with a friend attending CMU, who mentioned a course on the history of rock music, **Kyle Devine** quickly changed direction. That pivot eventually led him to CMU's music program, where he graduated in 2006.

During those years, among the cinnamon buns and formless dormitory couches, the thing that most stood out to Devine was CMU's intrepid approach to education.

"What we were doing at CMU at the time was always connected to these sorts of bigger social questions or bigger questions of injustice in the world," Devine says.



To lead is to serve. No one ever taught me that, but that's what I saw at CMU.

in what they were reading and how they were thinking."

After CMU, Devine pursued a master's degree at the University of Edinburgh and finished off his PhD at Carlton University in Ottawa. His current research explores the environmental history of the music industry.

Devine has spent a large portion of his career as an educator, saying "the [students] that I really love working with are the ones that exemplify the kind of adventurousness that I think I was encouraged toward at CMU."

Holding such a distinguished position at the UW, Devine says he has modelled much of his career after what he witnessed at CMU, understanding that authentic leadership is demonstrated through service. "To lead is to serve. No one ever taught me that, but that's what I saw [at CMU]."

"I can't tell you which lecture or which professor [at CMU] did that. It's a kind of impression that was made that will never leave me or never go away," Devine said. "It's a standard that I try to hold myself to."

From basketball star to keeper of stories: CMU alum brings Mennonite history to life



Andrew Klassen Brown makes working in archives sound more exciting than one might think.

The 32-year-old CMU alum works as the Archivist and Records Manager with Mennonite Central Committee Canada, serves as the Vice-President of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, and spends his free time visiting secluded attractions important to Mennonite history, such as the Mennonite Memorial Landing Site on the Banks of the Red River near Ste. Agathe, MB.

It's safe to say he lives and breathes Mennonite history.

However, this wasn't always the case. Klassen Brown grew up a basketball star in his small hometown of Piney, MB, with a desire to be an engineer. His only experience with the Mennonite world was a few weeks a year at a nearby

He says his professors at the time were "unlike anything I'd experienced anywhere else in terms of like how adventurous they were

Mennonite-run summer camp.

He eventually followed his camp friends to CMU, where he decided to complete his undergraduate and graduate degrees (in 2016 and 2021, respectively). He says, "the benefits of CMU are pretty addictive," when reflecting on his combined ten years of study at CMU.

"[CMU] felt like an extension of the camp community that I was chasing. I think it enabled me to explore my faith, deconstruct and blow up whatever preconceived ideas that I had. CMU encouraged me to think about things intellectually, theologically, and in a community of people who are doing probably pretty similar things," says Klassen Brown.

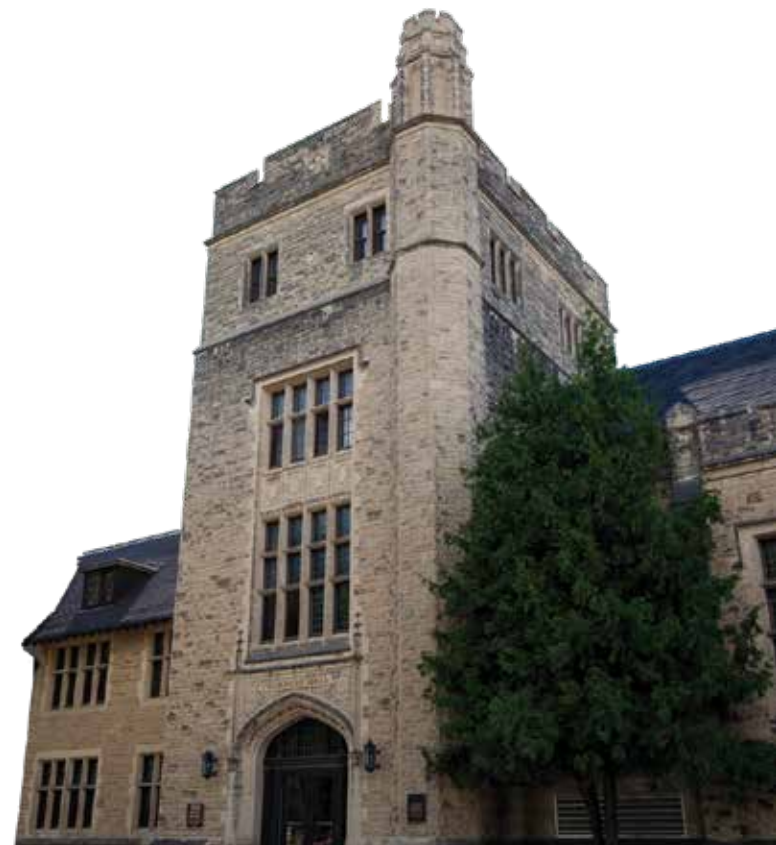
After completing his practicum at the Mennonite Heritage Archives, there was no turning back.

He says he "certainly went off the deep end since then."

To Klassen Brown, the archives hold tremendous spiritual value for a community of people. The "cloud of witnesses," he says, referring to a biblical passage in Hebrews that exalts those whose lives provide encouragement and guidance for believers, "shape and form us to this day."

"I'm literally surrounded by stories of people and people's stories of faith, of service, of Mennonite history and theology. And, part of my job is to tell those stories, learn those stories, and contribute to them."

CMU encouraged me to think about things intellectually, theologically, and in a community of people who are doing probably pretty similar things





“With joy we honour the 25-year story of a remarkable learning community and thousands of alumni whose lives call us forward.” These words written by CMU President Dr. Cheryl Pauls welcomed people into the celebration of CMU’s 25th anniversary on September 19.

Nearly 200 people gathered in Marpeck Commons to celebrate the milestone and hear from speakers representing faculty, staff, the church, government, students, and alumni. Attendees connected through conversation, viewed photo slideshows highlighting the institution’s history, and enjoyed music from a staff and faculty choir reflecting on CMU’s past 25 years.



The university and its predecessor colleges have thousands of alumni whose life stories demonstrate why this place matters.

The evening held glimpses of this ethos already at work: eleven faculty and staff wove together short illustrations of life at CMU, reflecting back and looking forward; the new CMU brand officially launched to the public, inviting students and broader community to “expect more”.

The university and its predecessor colleges have thousands of alumni “whose life stories demonstrate why this place matters, here and out there all over, who gently and boldly nudge CMU on,” Pauls said.

Many of these alumni trajectories were influenced by work-integrated learning (WIL) placements (formerly called practicum placements), which are a required component of every CMU degree. Whether running the



soundboard at a radio station, teaching in South Korea, or shadowing a zoo veterinarian, such experiential learning experiences help students discern their vocational interests. WIL at CMU is coordinated by the Centre for Career and Vocation, which Pauls announced at the event is now renamed the Ens Centre for Career and Vocation, to honour the extraordinary generosity of Philipp R. and Ilse K. Ens whose endowment fund provides vital support to CMU.



A multitude of other entities have built CMU into what it is today and continue to support it. “Tonight’s gathering is an act of tribute to generations of people who have had a stake in cultivating and nourishing CMU since long before the notion of being a university together was even a dream,” Pauls said.

The next 25 years will ask CMU to write new chapters that equip students and lifelong learners to face a rapidly changing and disconnected world.



CMU Through the years

1870s
1920s

Mennonites come to Canada with a vision for education, starting high schools and post-secondary schools

1940s

Mennonites build academically oriented Bible colleges:
• Mennonite Brethren Bible College
• Canadian Mennonite Bible College

1988

Menno Simons College opens at University of Winnipeg

1998

The Government of Manitoba establishes the Mennonite College Federation with a public Act with university status and considerable latitude of program potential

CMU
2000

The property at 500 Shaftesbury Blvd. (now known as Assiniboine Castle) is purchased and restored
The name **Canadian Mennonite University** is announced
CMU founding areas of Bible and theology, music, conflict resolution and international development provide a foundation for new academic development in the arts, humanities, and social sciences
Three main locations of activity include main campus on Shaftesbury Blvd., Menno Simons College programming at UW, and Outtatown

2003

The university moves to a unified governance and administrative structure, and appoints Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt as its first president

2005

CMU opens Concord Hall, a new energy efficient student residence
Computer Science program ends
Bachelor of Music Therapy is launched

2007

Communications and Media major is launched
Science offerings expand significantly

2008

Acceptance into Universities Canada membership

2009

Science laboratory is built

2010

Major in Business and Organization Administration is launched

2011

Redekop School of Business is launched along with a Bachelor of Business Administration

2012

Dr. Cheryl Pauls is appointed CMU President

2014

Marpeck Commons is built — home to CMU Library, CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre, folio café, and public and student spaces
Skywalk spans Grant Ave. to connect the north and south sides of campus

2018

Bachelor of Science is launched

2020

Outtatown Discipleship School program ends

2023

Bachelor of Social Work is launched

CMU
2025

Bachelor of Education is launched
Poettcker Hall residence is renewed



CMU: A legacy in action

Over the past 25 years, and for decades before that, CMU has lived at the intersection of church, community, and public life. Thousands of graduates now live and work in 78 countries, carrying with them not only knowledge and skill but also a deep sense of responsibility for the common good. CMU alumni have also made their mark close to home, contributing to Manitoba's economic growth and social vitality, strengthening local organizations and faith communities.

CMU education **is** made possible by the generosity of over 10,000 donors and hundreds of congregations, investing more than \$100 million in education, scholarships, and facilities, mirrored by government investments. These

resources ripple outward in the form of healthier communities, stronger organizations, and more just societies. With over 2,000 experiential learning placements and hundreds of funded faculty research projects, CMU has been both a training and a testing ground for ideas that matter — to lives and livelihoods, to communities, and to making change for the betterment of all.

CMU alumni and supporters give living witness to education that equips people to engage the pressing challenges of our time with imagination, courage, and care.

Over **15,000** alumni
(CMU and colleges)

GIVING
Since 2000

10,000+ donors

\$108.6M
in donations and earnings
(total)

PROPERTY/CAPITAL
Since 2000

193,000
square feet of space
transformed

\$26.4M
raised for capital projects

BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS
Since 2000

210
donor-initiated scholarships
and bursaries

\$11,764,164
of scholarships and
bursaries

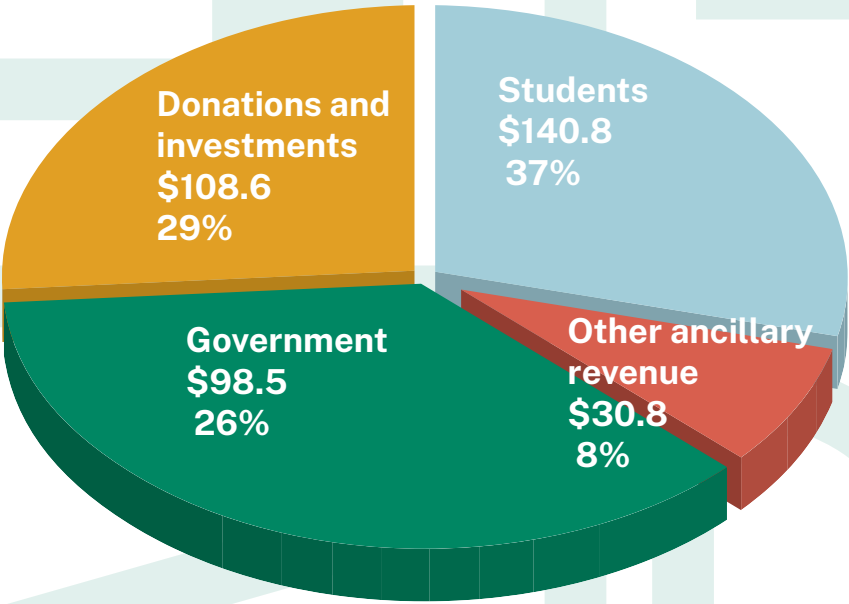
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
Since 2000

100% of students
have work-
integrated
placements

1,154 Work-integrated
learning partners

Total 25 Years' Funding

Dollar figures in millions.



RESEARCH

Hundreds of externally
funded research projects

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Canada Research Chair
- Research Manitoba

FAITH COMMUNITIES
Students from

1,100 congregations

113 denominations

These resources ripple outward in the form of healthier communities, stronger organizations, and more just societies.



Seven callings from CMU25



Rev. Vince Solomon, CMU Elder in Residence

“Though many things have changed, CMU continues to embody the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is not afraid to call itself a Christian university in the Anabaptist faith tradition. As an Anglican priest I love giving blessings. May God be seen wandering around CMU halls. As you walk into a classroom, as a student or visitor, may there be excellence. May teaching and learning abound in much fruitfulness. May a vibrant community life continue to develop. May the place build change makers. May the vocations in which you are called be fulfilled and may you prepare for those here. May God bless this place with his grace and may his presence be felt everywhere within the teachers, administration, staff, and all students.”



Lia Campbell-Enns, Student (Mathematics and Peace and Conflict Transformation)

“In this time of political and social divide, acting in unified ways is vital so that we can make decisions about our future together. A challenge in our world today is finding common ground with those with whom we disagree. Acting with unity means that despite these differences, we can work together towards similar goals. I encourage CMU to continue to be a space where all voices are heard in a peaceful and respectful manner. We can stand up for what we believe without leaving behind those who disagree.”



Cordella Friesen, CEO YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, CMU alum

“What are the stories we tell ourselves? What are the stories we are consuming or creating? CMU has always been a place where stories are taken seriously. Whether it's the Sermon on the Mount, a musical masterpiece in the chapel, philosophical reflections in the dorm rooms, or a novel that keeps you awake long after midnight, storytelling is where faith and inquiry meet. Stories remind us that our lives are a part of something bigger and give us space to consider the possibilities. The next 25 years will ask CMU to write new chapters that equip students and lifelong learners to face a rapidly changing and disconnected world. Just as CMU has taught us to read the world carefully, it must also teach us to author it wisely.”



Geoff Wichert, Chair, Board of Governors, CMU alum

“Students arriving today have been exposed to experiences, perspectives, and a scale of information that would have been inconceivable a generation ago. Inspiring and equipping them for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation from our mission means preparing them for this historical moment. The first line of our mission statement says that CMU is an innovative Christian university. Innovation needs to keep happening. We need to work constantly to translate for today's world what it means to be sustained in the life and teaching of Jesus with roots in Anabaptism.”



Art DeFehr, Order of Canada, Order of Manitoba, Founding Board Member and Visionary

“The creation of CMU required the Mennonite community, the founding colleges, and the government of Manitoba to think in a different way. We needed to imagine something new, different, and sustainable. The world moves on, and the challenges of tomorrow will be different than those of the past, but there will always be space for imagination and for creating something beyond the present. That is my challenge to the next generation.”



Honourable Renee Cable, Minister of Advanced Education and Training, Province of Manitoba

“Continue seeking truth. We're in a world that is increasingly filled with fake news, false information, false idols, lack of transparency, lack of trust – things that aren't real. In this space you've created safety for everyone regardless of age, gender, faith, or ethnicity, with space to become their whole selves and to find truth. I implore you to keep doing that. Thank you for being those people who stay true to who you are as you also embrace change. That's hard to do and you do it with grace, kindness, and compassion. Manitoba and Canada and the rest of the world could learn a lot from what happens here.”



Rev. Doug Klassen, Executive Minister, Mennonite Church Canada

“Don't be timid, don't be shy or embarrassed or ashamed. Don't be apologetic for being who God is calling CMU to be. You are not walking alone but with others, including the churches who bore earlier iterations of CMU into existence. What was a parent-child relationship has changed over time. Today it may be better named as companionship. Companions in Latin means those with whom we share bread. In walking together and breaking bread together, we share a vocation to nurture young faith, leadership, and theological reflection for the wider Church. With a wide-angle view of God's redeeming purposes, we form a people to follow Christ, serve others, and bear witness to God's peace and justice in the world.”

The new CMU visual identity: built on tradition, bold for the future

The new CMU brand officially launched in September 2025, marking the university’s 25th anniversary. However, the project started nearly two years earlier through an extensive process of comprehensive research and stakeholder engagement to define a new visual language that better aligns the university’s mission and future direction within today’s context.

The new visual identity strikes a balance between being distinctive and familiar through the careful consideration of visual attributes such as types

of identity marks, colour and typography choices, graphics, and imagery.

The new brand draws on both modern and traditional design elements to create a flexible and authentic identity that conveys a welcoming and contemporary community to young people in their late teens and twenties, while maintaining the formality and gravitas of an established, well-respected university. Just as importantly, the new CMU brand reflects inclusivity and modernity without abandoning its Mennonite Anabaptist roots.

Primary Logos

The primary logos of CMU are the most versatile and recognizable elements of its visual identity, designed to represent the university across a wide range of applications. This set includes the icon, small logo, primary logo, and primary logo with tagline, each tailored for specific use cases while maintaining a unified appearance. The icon provides a bold, standalone mark for compact spaces, while

the small logo balances simplicity and clarity. The primary logo offers a complete representation of the university, and the tagline variation combines CMU’s commitment to academic excellence, student supports, and both spiritual and personal growth with a call to action. Together, these logos ensure a consistent and impactful brand presence.

- **A bold and confident logo** that reimagines, refines, and modernizes the current identity.
- **Flame symbol** is placed above the ‘U’ to emphasize “University” while also creating forward movement and an initial launching point.
- **The custom-designed U** further emphasizes “University” while echoing the flame’s sense of forward movement.
- **Font that is academic yet approachable** and friendly.



Flame Symbolism:
Education Knowledge / illumination / enlightenment
Faith Light in darkness / divine presence / transformation
Community Warmth / comfort / unity / passion

Typography



The new CMU brand incorporates **Antonia** and **Public Sans** as its primary typefaces, blending tradition with modernity to reflect the university’s values and vision.

Antonia, with its elegant and refined design, conveys a sense of heritage and academic excellence, making it ideal for headlines and key statements.

Public Sans, a versatile and approachable sans-serif, provides clarity and accessibility, ensuring readability across digital and print platforms. Together, these typefaces create a harmonious balance, supporting CMU’s commitment to fostering connection, innovation, and inclusivity in all aspects of its identity.

Colour

The CMU brand reflects a commitment to academic excellence, community engagement, and spiritual growth through a cohesive and versatile colour palette. The combination of formal, primary, secondary, and athletics palettes work together to create a distinctive visual identity that embodies both professionalism, trust, and inclusivity (community).

Primary

Dark Green

CMU Green

Action Green

Warm Grey

Light Warm Grey

Secondary

Soft Blue

Light Blue

Bright Orange

Warm Yellow

Bright Warm Gradient

Primary colours establish a consistent and strong brand identity.

Secondary colours create vibrancy and flexibility. The Gradient is reserved for the flame icon and special situations.

Graphics

Elements of the flame icon are utilized to create custom graphics for guilloche patterns and colour fills, adding a distinctive visual language to marketing materials, formal seals, and the website graphics. These intricate and dynamic designs echo the university’s identity, blending tradition with creativity while ensuring consistency across applications. The custom shapes provide a unifying aesthetic, enhancing the visual appeal of the CMU brand while reinforcing its values of integrity, innovation, and community engagement.

Wavy Lines (x3)

Flame Outline

CMU incorporates line art graphics into its identity through wavy line patterns and single line work—both made from the outer shape of the CMU flame icon.

Flame Segments



The new Blazers logo — used for internal audiences and casual, fan-centred context when the CMU identity is clearly understood — can be used for low-key gear like warm up shirts and marketing.



The formal CMU Blazers version is used for external audiences and formal contexts — official announcements, press releases etc. — where institutional affiliation is required.



The condensed logo is also a primary logo used as a formal crest for jerseys, shorts, jackets, and coaches polos.



The CMU wordmark is used for away jerseys and benches that help to establish or differentiate CMU.



Supplementary Marks include the **Branded Tagline**, **Flame Icon**, and the **Blazers Emblem**. These are used to help bring life to marketing, social media, and merchandise.

Join us as we **BLAZE THE WAY**

With the new visual identity, the Blazers brand builds on the strength of our athletics programming, both on the field and academically. The strong primary colours reinforce the values of athletics at CMU — unity, energy, and success. Our brand honours our connection to place and our commitment to growth and sportsmanship.



Men's volleyball nationals

The CMU Blazers men's volleyball team had an historic 2024/25 season, making it to the national championships and tying for fifth place, matching the highest finish in the tournament a Manitoba team has ever achieved.

The 2025 CCAA (Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association) Men's Volleyball National Championship brought eight top teams from across Canada to Niverville, MB, where Providence University College hosted the tournament March 5–8. The Blazers earned their spot after a strong MCAC semi-final win and a wild card entry.

In a thrilling first game, the Blazers defeated the Cégep de l'Outaouais Griffons from Québec, becoming the first MCAC (Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference) team of any sport or gender to win its opening match and advance to the semi-final at a CCAA National Championship.

"We had all worked as hard as we could to prepare for that game, and in executing our game plan, we were able to come out with the win as the underdog team. Being able to represent CMU at the national level and to perform well while doing so is something we are all very proud of and hope to do again this year," says Duncan Petrie, fifth-year right side and captain, who earned Player of the Match for the game.

"They were a top-ranked team in the country and featured the national player of the year, so to defeat them was special," agrees Don Dulder, former head coach. "For me personally, it was extra special for it to happen in Niverville where I had spent my entire teaching career prior to coaching at CMU."

It was the last victory of Dulder's CMU career, as he retired later that spring after 11 years of coaching Blazers men's volleyball. Under his direction, the program flourished—they won the MCAC title in 2017 and have featured in the MCAC Final every year since then. In 2022, he led his team to the

CCAA National Championship in Québec City, the first MCAC men's volleyball team to ever compete at that level.

With this year's competition taking place on home province turf, Blazers fans brought their energy to the gym. The team, however, faced powerful opponents from BC and lost their following games to the Douglas College Royals and the College of the Rockies Avalanche—but not without holding their own, making their opponents work hard, and keeping the score close.

"In a conference of our size and an athletics program that is still developing, the achievement of winning a first-round match at a national tournament is significant. This is a real testament to the dedication and commitment of Don and his coaching team and to all the student-athletes, past and present, that continue to drive the program forward through their own commitment to excellence," says Director of Athletics, Russell Willms.





Phil and Ilse at the CMU Golf Classic

is the heartbeat of the CMU campus—a place where academic excellence, personal growth, community, and spiritual formation intersect. Here, students live and study together. By leveraging this holistic experience, CMU equips graduates to thrive in life and career with integrity, purpose, and resilience.

Phil knew how integral this intersection was—how the blending of intellect, character, and faith creates leaders who serve with vision and courage. His gift ensures that this vital synergy will continue to flourish for generations to come.

Over the decades, Phil generously supported the acquisition and renovation of Assiniboine Castle, the construction of Marpeck Commons, and way back, the Mennonite Heritage Centre, home to Archives and Gallery. Today, the earnings of the Ens Endowment Fund strengthen CMU overall. To honour this breadth of vision and sacred trust, CMU has renamed its Centre for Career and Vocation the *Ens Centre for Career and Vocation*.

Phil believed that flourishing lives and livelihoods are built through community. That's how he led Triple E, and that's how he supported CMU. His legacy lives on in every student who walks through the CMU doors with greater access to opportunity and a future filled with hope.

A Legacy That Opens Doors:

Honouring Philipp R. Ens

By Cheryl Pauls

When I reflect on the future of CMU, I think of the trust of Philipp R. Ens.

Years ago, Phil, a longstanding, generous, visionary CMU supporter said to me, “You will need earnings from major investments to keep the university viable and to sustain a thriving learning community over the years.” Some years later, Phil and his wife, Ilse, set up an endowment for this purpose: equip students to pursue vocation, to find livelihoods, to create work for others across sectors, and overall, to build strong communities by fostering learning across business, music, science, theology, and more areas of study. Phil took interest in supporting tuition offset, namely, the university's capacity to sustain a breadth of education and to set tuition rates that are accessible and reasonably competitive within Manitoba's post-secondary sector.

Through gifts totalling \$8 million, Phil's estate has made a lasting and far-reaching impact on the CMU mission. The Philipp R. and Ilse K. Ens Endowment Fund of over \$6 million supports CMU, ensuring the sustainability and vitality of CMU and its mission for generations to come. This foundational support made it possible for CMU to launch a bold initiative: free residence for all first-year students, beginning Fall 2026 (cmu.ca/free-dorm). It's a tangible expression of Phil's commitment to extending opportunity for all students.

An additional \$1.8 million supports the Uphold campaign, which helped renew the Poettcker Hall student residence into a vibrant, welcoming space for learning and living. This space

Free Dorm

CMU is making life more affordable for students.

Starting in Fall 2026, free dormitory housing will be offered to all first-year undergraduate students. Yes, free—as in no cost, whether the students are from Winnipeg, elsewhere in Canada, or are coming from somewhere international.

“CMU is investing to create conditions where students can thrive academically, socially, and personally starting their first day at CMU,” Dr. Cheryl Pauls, CMU President, says.

“It reflects our commitment to academic excellence and creating an environment where curiosity ignites, friendships thrive, and community takes root.”

This first-of-its-kind program in Canada will not only save students roughly \$3,000 in on-campus living fees, but the advantages go further, and its impacts can be felt in students' academic performance as well.



Students who live in residence at CMU generally graduate 25% faster, earn higher GPAs, are twice as likely to participate in co-curricular activities, and report having stronger mental health and deeper social relationships than those who live off campus.

To be eligible for free dorm, students must be enrolled in 12 credit hours (four courses) per semester and be registered for the full-board meal plan with the university's cafeteria.

CMU is holding over the meal plan pricing from this year to the next, meaning the cost of rent in the dorms is not buried in other fees. There are no hidden costs, and a law degree isn't required to read the fine print; free means free.

For more information about the free dorm program and to apply, visit cmu.ca/free-dorm.



Poettcker Hall is revamped!

After nearly 70 years, Poettcker Hall has been given new life through a renovation that combines accessibility, sustainability, and collaboration.

The \$8.4 million renewal project, which included upgrades to washroom facilities, temperature control, electricity/connectivity, and accessible spaces, also saw the first-of-its-kind in Manitoba installation of CMU's new geothermal field.

Sixteen kilometres of geothermal pipes were installed in the ground as part of a project that converted the mechanical systems of the Poettcker Hall residence and a portion of the South Hall building from gas-fired boilers to the new geothermal ground loop system.

Poettcker Hall was CMU's most carbon-intensive and least energy-efficient building. By replacing the natural gas boiler with a net-zero-carbon and net-zero-energy geothermal ground loop system, CMU projects that the upgrade will reduce campus-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 17% annually.

With more than \$3.2 million of the \$3.75 million campaign goal already donated or pledged by 240 supporters, as well as a lead gift from Phil and Ilse Ens, the project reflects the shared commitment of donors and the CMU community.

This project also received \$351 thousand from the newly announced Manitoba Climate and Economy Solutions Program, a collaborative funding initiative between the Government of Canada and the Manitoba government that falls under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund.

CMU would specifically like to thank Rob Froese, project manager; Southern Comfort Mechanical, led by Paul Neufeld; Ben Sawatzky Electric; SMS Engineering; Ed Lohrenz of GeoOptimize; and construction partners including Von Ast Construction, Swift Underground, and Reimer Roofing.





CMU professor awarded King Charles III's Coronation Medal

Dr. Stephanie Stobbe, Associate Professor of Business and Conflict Resolution Studies, has been awarded the King Charles III's Coronation Medal for her work on the Hearts of Freedom: Stories of Southeast Asian Refugees exhibition.

The Hearts of Freedom project was a nearly two-year travelling exhibition that moved throughout various cities in Canada, telling the stories of Southeast Asian refugees.

The exhibition shared the accounts of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian refugees who came to Canada between 1975 and 1985, fleeing conflicts like the Vietnam War.

"The award acknowledges the significance of Canada's history of immigration and how the Canadian government

and people stepped up to do the right thing to assist in humanitarian crises," says Stobbe.

Between 1975 and 1997, Canada welcomed 210,000 Southeast Asian refugees, undertaking the largest and longest non-European resettlement in its history.

"I want this work



to represent Canadians who came to this country under incredibly difficult circumstances," Stobbe says. "It is their story, and it is important for those stories to be heard by all Canadians."

CMU professor selected for major financial literacy research committee

Dr. Jerry Buckland, CMU Professor of Economics and International Development Studies, was recently selected to be a member of the International Network on Financial Education (INFE), a leading organization in the field of financial literacy and education.

The INFE is a project of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an organization with headquarters in Paris and approximately 70 member countries, which works to measure and improve financial literacy around the world.

He was appointed to the network's research committee, a body that meets four times per year and comprises 10–15 members. The research committee supports and guides the OECD/INFE's research, which focusses mainly on measuring financial literacy and evaluating the impact of financial literacy programs.



"Financial services and products have so rapidly changed, especially in the last 20 years ... things are becoming more financially sophisticated and complicated," Buckland says. "Financial education is the antidote. We need more education to empower people."

Buckland has been researching in this realm for a long time. He's looked particularly at financial exclusion, including which populations don't have decent access to credit, savings options, and information about financial

"Financial education is the antidote. We need more education to empower people."

products. "Why is it that certain people, most notably low-income people, racialized minorities, Indigenous people, tend to be excluded from accessing banking services?" he asks.

Through the Canadian Financial Diaries Research Project, he and his team have been trying to better understand the finances of vulnerable Canadians through financial diaries filled by study participants. The aim is to amplify the voices of low-income Canadians and improve financial empowerment policies and resources.

This lens shapes the way he approaches his work, and Buckland hopes to bring his particular knowledge and experiences to the OECD/INFE research committee.

CMU professor awarded grant for dementia research

Dr. Heather Campbell-Enns, Associate Professor of Psychology, has received a \$200,000 grant co-funded by the Alzheimer Society of Canada and Research Manitoba for her work in dementia research. It will specifically support her current project, A Pilot Study of Ethnocultural Approaches to Family-Provided Dementia Care, which explores how caregiving is shaped by cultural knowledge, traditions, and intergenerational experiences.

Campbell-Enns is Associate Professor of Psychology at CMU and a Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Families and Aging. She has been studying family-provided care for older adults, particularly in the context of dementia, for several years and has received funding from the likes of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and other organizations.

This latest award, the New Investigator Grant, is part of the 2025 Alzheimer Society Research Program (ASRP). It is meant to boost the careers of researchers who are in the first six years of their initial faculty appointment and doing vital work in their sectors. The ASRP annually funds dementia researchers across Canada through a variety of grants. In 2025, it distributed over \$5.1 million to 37 researchers nationwide, with the assistance of donors and partners that collaborate on funding.

"I am grateful to the Alzheimer Society Research Program for this support," Campbell-Enns said. "This funding provides essential stability for a new research program, enabling me to hire research staff and trainees, and to offer honorariums to cultural experts and community

participants who make this work possible."

Campbell-Enns' study aims to better understand intergenerational family-provided care for persons with dementia across different cultural groups, since caregiving is influenced by cultural knowledge, preferences, and resources. It will also test how feasible and suitable it is to use multiple research methods, such as family group interviews, to study these experiences.

Family members will be invited to collaboratively create and share digital stories about their dementia caregiving experiences from their cultural perspective. "Encouraging your family carers to describe their experiences for use in research leads to supportive programs and services for future families experiencing dementia," Campbell-Enns told the Alzheimer Society of Canada.



Encouraging your family carers to describe their experiences for use in research leads to supportive programs and services for future families experiencing dementia



CMU professor received new funding from Research Manitoba

Dr. Christine Kampen Robinson, Assistant Professor of Education and of Social Sciences and Director of the Centre for Career and Vocation at CMU, is the recipient of new funding as part of Research Manitoba's latest initiative, New Investigator Operating Grant (NIOG).

The new program has seen Research Manitoba investing nearly \$1.8 million to support 24 early-career researchers in Manitoba.

Kampen Robinson is one of the recipients who will receive two years of operating funding for her research project, "Narrating Future Selves: Student Narratives of Identity and Purpose in Experiential Learning."

"[The project] looks at how students narrate their understanding of purpose in the context of career development in connection to their experiences with experiential learning," Kampen Robinson says.

Experiential learning is an umbrella term for gaining knowledge and skills through hands-on experiences. Within that, there are specific categories, such as work-integrated learning, community engagement learning, and faculty-supervised research, to name a few.

Kampen Robinson says her study will specifically look at how Manitoba undergraduate students characterize their experiences and negotiate their identities within the context of these experiences.

To Kampen Robinson, this research is a semi-continuation of another international project she contributed to, focusing on how first-generation university students understand work and its implications in the context of education.

She notes that in this research, students raised questions about values and identity while they were in these learning environments. She thought, "What happens if we focus on it and we ask about it specifically?"

"I'm really interested in purpose and understanding, this sort of secular version of vocation," Kampen Robinson explains. "And understanding what that means to [students]."

"I think the more opportunity students have to experience ways of being outside of the classroom and how what they've learned in different environments," Kampen Robinson says, "the more effectively they can start narrating their own experiences and thereby see what kinds of possibilities are out there."

In a way, Kampen Robinson says this research is an extension of CMU's broad, interdisciplinary pedagogy. "Experiential learning can be a bridge," she says.

"You can take classroom learning out into the world in a way that's really helpful for all sorts of organizations, and it can bring like applications of that learning back into the classroom."

Kampen Robinson says data will be gathered in a few ways. Through a combination of surveys, writing samples, discourse-based interviews, and vlogs, she hopes that the range of data collection will reveal the nuances of how students negotiate their identities as they narrate their experiences over time.

While this study is not focused on employability or skill development, it takes a more holistic approach to understanding students' (including those from equity-deserving groups) lived experiences and will have far-reaching implications.

In terms of what she hopes to find from the data, Kampen Robinson expects the unexpected.

"I've been working in career development now for 11 years, so you know, I've talked to a couple of people in that time, so there are patterns, but still, there are always ways in which people surprise me."

CMU welcomes new faculty across disciplines and says goodbye to a long-standing educator



Dr. Anneli Loepp Thiessen, Assistant Professor of Music

As a musicologist, Loepp Thiessen's research focuses on congregational song, with particular attention to women's experiences in the Christian music industry and how identity shapes music-making communities.

"CMU's new tagline of Expect More captures the enthusiasm I have for innovative pedagogy and faith-integrated learning," she says.



Dr. Travis Goron, Assistant Professor of Biology

Goron values teaching that blends science with reflection and purpose. "I appreciate how [CMU] encourages students to think across disciplines and reflect on the ethical side of

science," he says.

His research interests include plant biology and sustainability, while his passion lies in mentoring students. "Teaching is always changing, and that keeps it interesting. I enjoy working with students and seeing them grow in confidence and understanding."



Dr. Felicia Owadara, Assistant Professor of Social Work

With a PhD in Social Work, Owadara brings expertise in community-based mental health, inclusive policy, and culturally responsive care. Her scholarship and practice highlight

ways education can equip students to respond to diverse needs while promoting equity and justice.

"CMU's commitment to reconciliation, justice, and holistic education deeply resonates with my values," she says.



Opeyemi Ogunyomi, Teaching Assistant Professor of Psychology

Ogunyomi specializes in motivation, self-efficacy, and academic engagement, and brings prior training in guidance and counselling to his teaching and mentoring on a two-year appointment.

"CMU's mission to integrate faith, learning, and service resonates deeply with my own philosophy of education," he says.



Wenyu Qian, Teaching Lecturer and Lab Steward

Qian is trained in organic chemistry with a focus on synthetic methodology development and homogeneous catalysis. He taught general and organic chemistry at the CEGEP level in Quebec prior to

joining CMU.

"As a scientist, I believe that our goal is the pursuit of objective truth, no matter how uncomfortable it might be. With sufficient depth in science and an open mind, one can and should naturally find harmony between Christianity and science."



Congratulations to CMU faculty **Dr. Christine Kampen Robinson** and **Michelle Yaciuk** on their appointment as co-chairs of the new Bachelor of Education. Both their backgrounds and specializations within education as interdisciplinary scholars will be instrumental as the program grows and evolves. Their continued work at CMU ensures that the development of the Bachelor of Education will align with CMU's mission and vision.



Retirement: Verna Wiebe Teaching Assistant Professor of Music; Director of Community School of Music & the Arts / Coordinator of Individual Applied Music Studies

After many years of dedicated service Verna Wiebe retired from CMU in July 2025. Verna has been at the heart of CMU's collaborative music scene, helping students bring both skill and spirit to their performances. Whether coaching ensembles or leading handbell groups, Verna has always encouraged students to work together, explore their creativity, and find joy in making music.

As Director of the CMU Community School of Music and the Arts, Wiebe grew the program in exciting ways—offering lessons in instruments and voice, acting and musical theatre, home school programming, and even music therapy services. Her vision has opened doors for learners of all ages and backgrounds, helping them connect with music in meaningful ways.

Beyond CMU, Wiebe is a familiar face in Winnipeg's music community. She has played piano for the Winnipeg Singers and performed with groups like the Winnipeg Philharmonic, Mennonite Festival Chorus, and Pembina Trails Voices.

"We're grateful for everything Verna has contributed to CMU and our community, and we hope her retirement is filled with as much music, laughter, and joy as she has given to so many over the years," said CMU President Dr. Cheryl Pauls.

The CMU bachelor of Social Work makes a difference

Nya Dubyk never thought she would be a social worker. But, after finishing her first year at CMU taking courses in Social Services, she found herself drawn to the comprehensive cross-program learning at the heart of the CMU Bachelor of Social Work and decided to switch.

“The fact that we get to look at social work from so many different perspectives will be really helpful for working with a broad scope of people in the future,” Dubyk says.

This vision for a panoramic program is something that Dr. Alexander Sawatsky, Professor of Social Work at CMU, says is part of CMU’s distinct perspective.

Already established as a heavily interdisciplinary university, CMU’s courses are designed to encourage independent and practical critical thinking skills necessary for success in an ever-evolving job market.

Sawatsky says the intentionality of the curriculum opens the students to engage with different communities and cultures in a way that’s more equitable and more respectful of different notions of what human nature may be.

He says CMU’s program tries to “get at this in a way that is more holistic and sees all of these other ways of knowing as equally valid understandings of culture and community and individuals.”

“We need people that actually care legitimately about these human beings that are experiencing harm and want to help do something about that,” Sawatsky says.



Indigenous Council and program design

The CMU Indigenous Council was officially formed in 2023 to guide CMU in upholding the university’s commitments to reconciliation, learning, and right relationships with Indigenous peoples. It grew out of a much longer history of engagement, including CMU’s relationship with Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and the CMU Indigenous Initiatives and Action Committee, a group of students, staff, faculty, and external partners.

The 2025/26 edition of the CMU Indigenous Council consists of seven members from across Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The council has consulted on CMU program design and curriculum creation, first reviewing all Indigenous courses and then consulting on the development of the social work and education programs.

“The creation of CMU’s Indigenous Council signifies a deliberate and enduring commitment to reconciliation,” says co-chair Ben Borne. “It is a tangible expression of our Anabaptist values and CMU’s commitments. The council’s guidance helps CMU walk a lifelong journey of ensuring that governance, student life, and academics meaningfully reflect and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing.”

In addition to playing a key role in this detailed academic work, the council helps shape CMU’s vision. It is responsible to the CMU Board of Governors and advises the university on living into its responsibilities as a charter partner of the Manitoba Collaborative Indigenous Education Blueprint.

“I hope our work helps create spaces that invite the whole CMU community to learn, unlearn, and practice reconciliation in ways that are humble, relational, and ongoing—both now and into the future,” Borne says.



Innovative Bachelor of Education program

CMU announced a new Bachelor of Education after-degree program this summer, and is hard at work preparing to welcome its first cohort in August 2026. These students will complete their studies by December 2027 and be certified teachers in the classroom by January 2028.

The program is in many ways innovative and unique in its field. The condensed 16-month structure will enable graduates to enter the teaching workforce sooner than graduates from any other education programs currently offered in Manitoba.

The intensive format also allows courses to be taught by active educators and practitioners. “Having people who can say, ‘On Tuesday I tried this in my class and it didn’t work, so I would do this instead’ ... is a way of bringing the classroom in even without students being there,” says Dr. Christine Kampen Robinson, Faculty Lead on Program Development and Assistant Professor of Education and Experiential Learning. “We are working to maximize experience as much as possible, as transformative and liberatory pedagogy.”

The program features 28 weeks of practicum placement, more than any program in the province. Since CMU’s curriculum covers all grades rather than age-specific specializations, students must complete four placements, making sure to cover each category: elementary, high school, urban, and rural. The placements are strategically scheduled to operate intuitively within the K–12 school cycle, rather than the unhelpful timing that commonly comes from



incompatible post-secondary and K–12 calendars.

Kampen Robinson worked with Stephanie Penner, Assistant Vice-President Academic Program Development, to develop the program, but says “it certainly has been a community project.” Together, they consulted alumni, administrators, and teachers working in schools, community partners, current students, the Indigenous Council, and faculty and staff both within and beyond CMU.

“We wanted to shape something that was responsive and grounded in the strengths that we have as an institution ... Anabaptist values of challenging status quo, seeing our students as whole people, taking seriously the huge impact that a program like this can have,” Kampen Robinson



says, emphasizing their intent to “root the program in relationships so our grads feel equipped with a community of practitioners who they can draw upon as resources throughout their careers.”

The condensed 16-month structure will enable graduates to enter the teaching workforce sooner than graduates from any other education programs currently offered in Manitoba.

The curriculum emphasizes inclusive education, restorative justice, adaptive teaching approaches, and Indigenous perspectives. “All Indigenous pedagogy is inherently experiential,” she says. There is a lot of recent talk and excitement about experiential education, “but Indigenous people have been doing it for thousands of years.” The program development team sought advice and direction from the CMU Indigenous Council early on in the process and consulted Elders, First Nations educational representatives, and other Indigenous community members throughout. Kampen Robinson worked closely with the Indigenous Education Policy Framework, Mamahawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With, and how it intersects with the revised Manitoba curriculum.

“We are delighted to open the door for our first cohort to become educators who will inspire curiosity, foster healthy connection, and leave a lasting impact on schools and communities, shaping a brighter future for us all,” said Cheryl Pauls, President.





CMU's annual fall festival and a ribbon cutting

Hundreds of people visited the CMU campus on September 20 to catch all the usual highlights of Fall at CMU—the MennoCross cyclocross races, the farmers and makers market, food trucks, a bouncy castle, an ultimate tournament, art workshops with the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, and more.

The annual event, which launches the start of the new academic year, was particularly special this year as CMU celebrated its 25th anniversary. In addition to the typical 60-, 50-, 40-, 30-, 20-, and 10-year class reunions that gathered throughout the day, the university hosted a free supper for these groups and all CMU-era alumni. The class of 2015 numbered 60 people when they met for dinner, filling the library with the buzz of conversation and children playing. This noteworthy reunion also hosted a variety concert in the afternoon, catching a glimpse of the student coffee houses of a decade ago.

A unique highlight of the day was the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly renovated Poettcker Hall. Upgrades to the residence building nearly 70 years after its construction include improved washrooms, accessibility, temperature control, air circulation, windows, and of course, sustainability. CMU is the first post-secondary institution in Western Canada to use a district geothermal energy system like the one built as a part of this project. “Poettcker Hall is just the first of many buildings we will connect to the district geothermal

system on our journey to a net zero campus,” said CMU President Dr. Cheryl Pauls.

Representatives from government, design, construction, and CMU staff spoke to the trailblazing nature of this historic milestone. “I want to thank Efficiency Manitoba and the university for taking these steps,” said Ed Lohrenz, GEOptimize President. “It’ll serve as a demonstration for a lot of future projects. There are other projects being considered in the city, but this is by far the first one.” MLA for Tuxedo Carla Compton thanked CMU for its leadership in the community. “When we talk about climate change and taking action for bringing down our carbon emissions and trying new technologies ... it requires faith. It requires hope. It requires courage,” she said. “If you want to talk about innovation, CMU is a leader.”

CMU is the first post-secondary institution in Western Canada to use a district geothermal energy system like the one built as a part of this project.



Your Impact at CMU

Donors are the heartbeat of the CMU mission

At CMU, every student’s journey is shaped by the generosity of donors who believe in the transformative power of Christian higher education. Your support doesn’t just fund programs, it fuels possibility. From accessible tuition and a vibrant campus life to spiritual formation and leadership development, your gifts make CMU a place where students belong, flourish, and prepare to serve the world with courage and compassion. Thank you for being part of every story that unfolds here.

Access to education

Thanks to donor support, students from diverse backgrounds can pursue rigorous academic programs without financial barriers. Your generosity ensures that tuition remains accessible, financial aid is plentiful, and every student has a chance to thrive.

Support beyond the classroom

Learning at CMU is holistic. With your help, students benefit from spiritual care, mentorship, mental health services, and a vibrant campus life. Whether it’s through athletics, residence life, or peer support, your gifts nurture the whole person—mind, body, and spirit.

Spiritual growth

Faith is central to the CMU mission. Your generosity sustains chapel gatherings, small groups, meaningful connections with spiritual mentors, and opportunities for theological reflection. These spaces help students explore their beliefs, deepen their convictions, and grow in their understanding of how faith intersects with learning and life.

Leadership development

Your support empowers CMU students to engage with real-world challenges. They are equipped to lead with courage, compassion, and clarity through internships, service-learning, and community-based research. Graduates go on to serve in churches, nonprofits, businesses, and global initiatives, carrying forward the values they’ve cultivated at CMU.

Campus renewal

Poettcker Hall has long been a cornerstone of the CMU student experience. Through the Uphold Campaign, donors like you are breathing new life into this beloved residence building. Your gifts are transforming aging infrastructure into vibrant, welcoming spaces that will serve students for generations to come.

Sustaining the everyday

From warm classrooms to clean study spaces to bright residence halls, your generosity powers the daily rhythms of CMU. It’s the quiet, consistent support that makes possible the day-to-day necessities for a thriving campus that is safe, inspiring, and welcoming to every student.

CMU 2024/25 At a glance



Undergraduate Degrees:

CMU offered six undergraduate degrees—Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Music, and the only Bachelor of Music Therapy program in the prairies.

20 BA Majors:

Including psychology, environmental studies, communications and media, Biblical and theological studies, peace and conflict transformation, arts and science, English, history, and more.



Faculty:

40 full-time faculty,
50 part-time instructors

Faculty-Student Ratio:

1:18, including first- and second-year courses



Geographical Representation:

75% from Manitoba (13% First Nations, Inuit, or Métis)
25% International (30 countries)
and from other Canadian provinces

Faith Representation:

70% from Christian traditions
30% from Mennonite/Anabaptist traditions
5% from other faith traditions
25% no faith disclosed



2024/25 Enrolment:

10% overall increase of students on main campus (40% increase of incoming)
694 students on main campus (630 full-time equivalent)
125 full-time equivalent students at Menno Simons College (CMU courses in UW degree programs)

On-Campus Housing:

Up to 200 students live on campus in dorms and apartments



Financial Aid:

Over \$760,500 to be awarded in 2024/25
More than 50% of students receive financial aid

2024/25 Tuition:

Undergraduate: \$640.98 per 3-credit course
Graduate: \$899.00 per 3-credit course
International: \$1,122.00 per 3-credit course (both undergraduate and graduate)



Student Financial Aid

\$840,753

Total distributed to students through established bursaries and scholarships

\$376,422

Total distributed from endowment earnings and donations to specific awards

225 Number of students receiving bursaries
230 Number of students receiving scholarships



340
Total number of students receiving a scholarship and/or bursary

\$230,000

Total from Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative

\$447,932

Total bursaries (need based)

\$392,821

Total scholarships (merit based)

\$234,331

Total from CMU Budget

\$121,147

Total distributed through church matching grants and external scholarships



New Scholarships and Bursaries

Mera and Leonard Neufeldt Social Work Scholarship – recognizes students studying in the social work program

Weston Foundation Scholarship – supports students pursuing their music therapy degree

Doug and Arlene Brown Science Merit Scholarship – funds a science merit scholarship

Edward and Alice Cornelsen Memorial Scholarship – helps a student majoring in science, business, theology, or social work

Henry Janzen Memorial Bursary – assists students in undergraduate or graduate programs, studying theology, business, or math

Supervised Psychospiritual Education Bursary – supports students in the Master of Arts in Spiritual Care

Giving to CMU

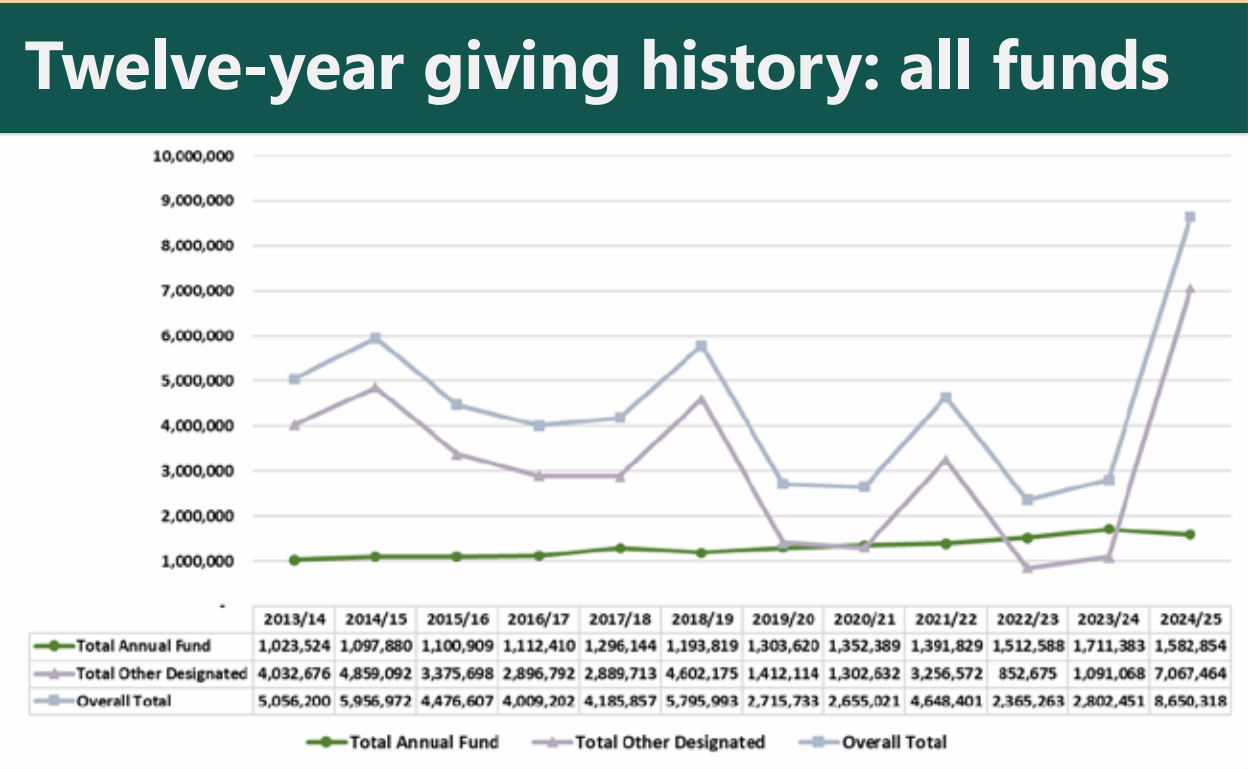
Thank you to all of our supporters who continue to give generously to the CMU Fund for annual program and operations. These gifts make the health and sustainability of CMU possible.

Giving to All Funds:

Fiscal Years 2013/14 to 2024/25

The chart below reflects giving from individuals, corporations, and church bodies to the CMU Fund for annual program and operations, as well as to many other designated initiatives including scholarships and

bursaries, capital projects (notably Marpeck Commons), various programs (notably the Redekop School of Business), endowments, bequests, and gifts-in-kind. Generous giving in support of constructing Marpeck Commons and support for the Redekop School of Business form a bulk of 'Other Designated' giving from 2013 to 2024.



853 donors/donor households supported the Annual Fund for annual program and operations



610 alumni (representing 444 households) gave to Annual Fund for annual program and operations



\$1.58 million was gifted to the CMU Fund for annual program and operations

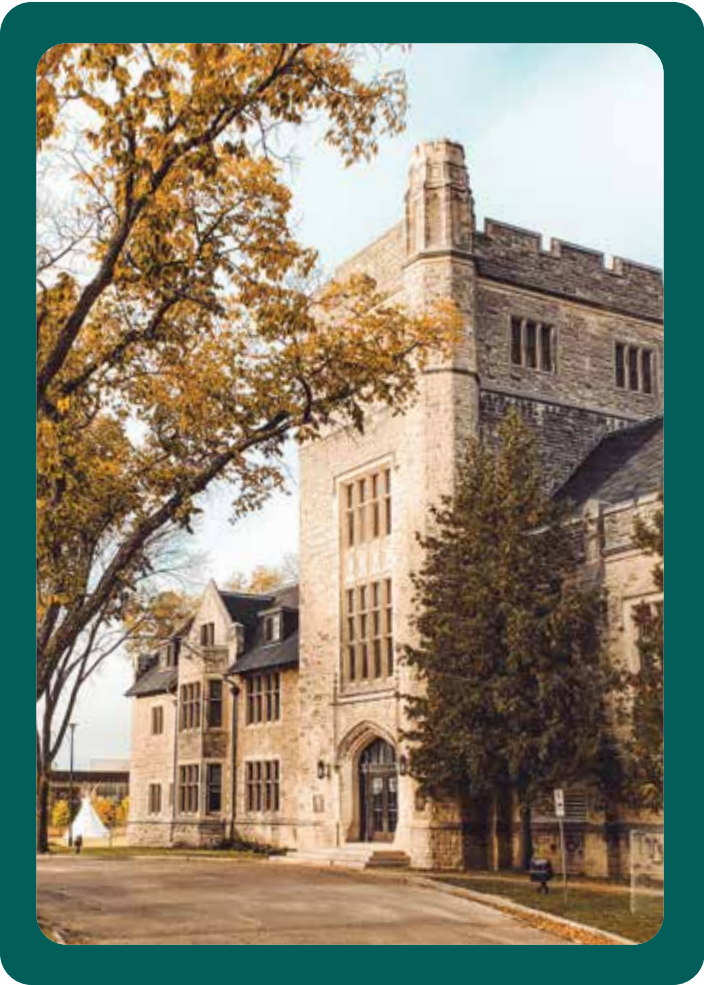


CMU Finances

A message from Cheryl Pauls, CMU President

The 25-year story of CMU finance tells of trust, generosity, and deep gratitude. In terms of revenues, three major components have made quality education possible for this quarter century. Thousands of students have paid a total of \$140.8M in tuition and fees, the generosity of more than 10,000 donors has offered a total of \$108.6M (donations and investment earnings) for all dimensions of education, capital projects, and student awards, and the Province of Manitoba has provided grants of \$98.5M. Not all universities are set up the same. In fact, the relative proportion of revenues at CMU are rather unusual. They also are remarkably durable and bode well for good health ongoing. With gratitude for generous and loyal supporters and longstanding practices of good stewardship throughout the university, CMU is able to offer high quality, affordable education, even through the current time of economic volatility.

You are most welcome to see the CMU 2024/25 audited financial statements on our website at cmu.ca/report.



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The mission of CMU is made possible by the gifts of an incredible network of generosity. Thank you to the **1,070** donors and sponsors below whose support sustains CMU programs, student bursaries and scholarships, capital projects and more.

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January 22 John and Margaret Friesen Lectures

February 2 Discovery Day

February 4 20th Annual Social Justice Fair

February 9-10 renew Conference

February 19 Open House

February 27 Discovery Day

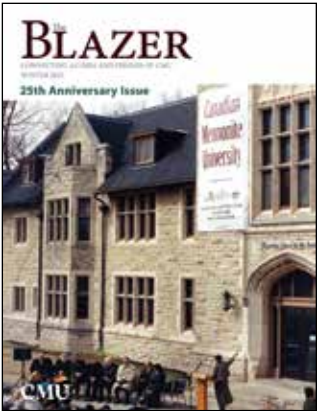
March 19 Verna & Peter Janzen Music Competition

March 26-28 Discover Weekend


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