

OCTOBER 2020

# What is the Innovation Hub?

September 2019 and Beyond



## Our Mission, Vision, and Values



### OUR MISSION

To improve campus life through student-centric design.



### OUR VISION

A campus experience designed for every student to flourish academically, socially, and personally.

### OUR VALUES



#### Listen to Student Experiences

*... so student stories are the fuel that drives social change at UofT*



#### Inspire with Meaningful Data

*... by using evidence-based approaches that foster empathy and help develop prototypes rooted in student needs.*



#### Support Collaborative Learning Environments

*... where students and partners can strategize, connect, and plan in transparent and team-oriented processes*



#### Design Accessible Opportunities & Materials

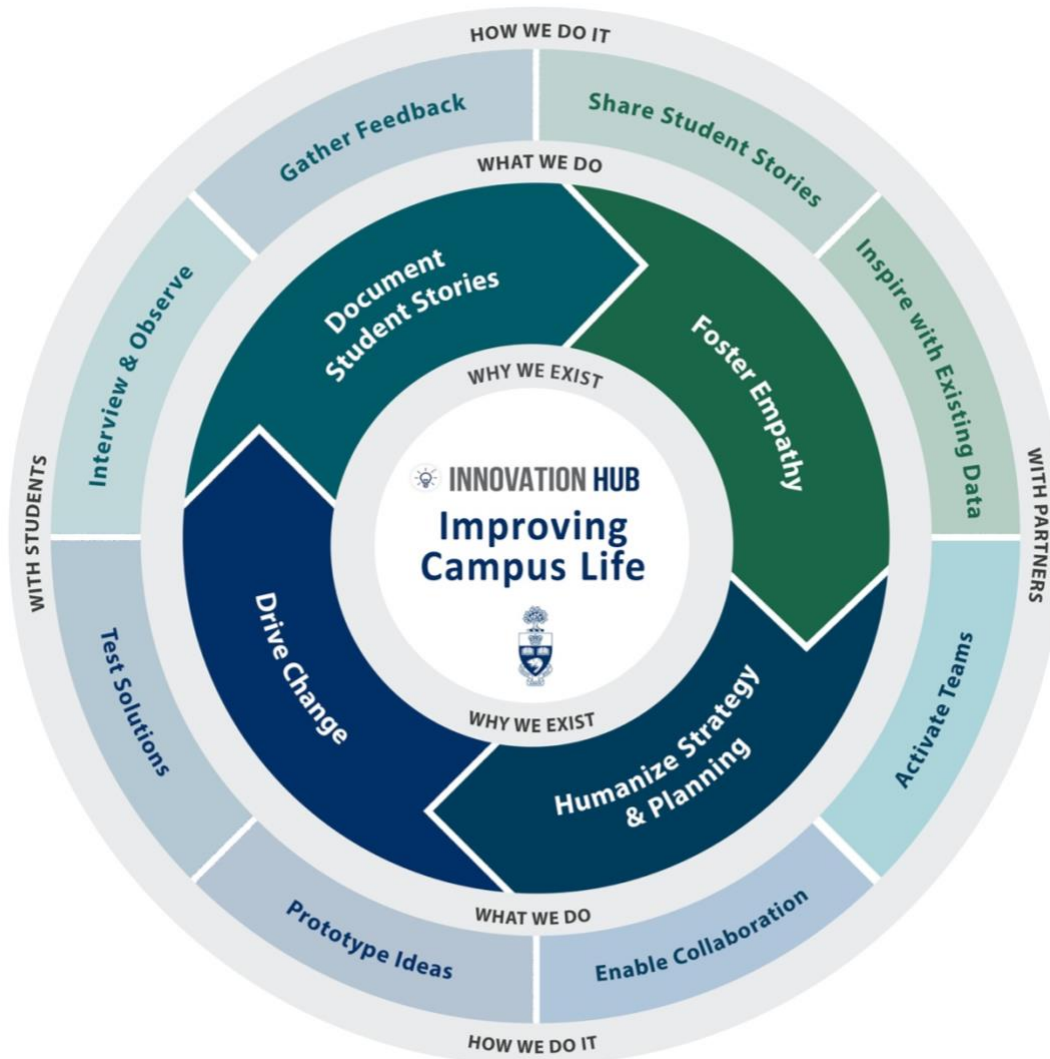
*... that are accessible visually, physically and logistically for a variety of spaces and audiences.*



#### Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

*... will continue to be foundational elements in our work when designing with students and community partners.*

# Our Strategy



## 1) WHY WE EXIST:

To improve campus life at U of T

## 2) WHAT WE DO:

- Document Student Stories
- Foster Empathy
- Humanize Strategy & Planning
- Drive Change

## 3) HOW WE DO IT:

- Interview & Observe
- Gather Feedback
- Share Student Stories
- Inspire with Existing Data
- Activate Teams
- Enable Collaboration
- Prototype Solutions
- Test Solutions

## Our Context

We acknowledge that certain contextual factors shape how we work. This can include:

- Working amongst decentralized services, decision-making & budgets with a large and diverse student population
- The institution's need to adhere to government and funder expectations
- Navigating the tension between the research mandate at this institution and the student experience
- Working with consideration to overall trends in Higher Education

## Domains of Innovation

We give scope and focus to our work by working in our five domains of innovation:

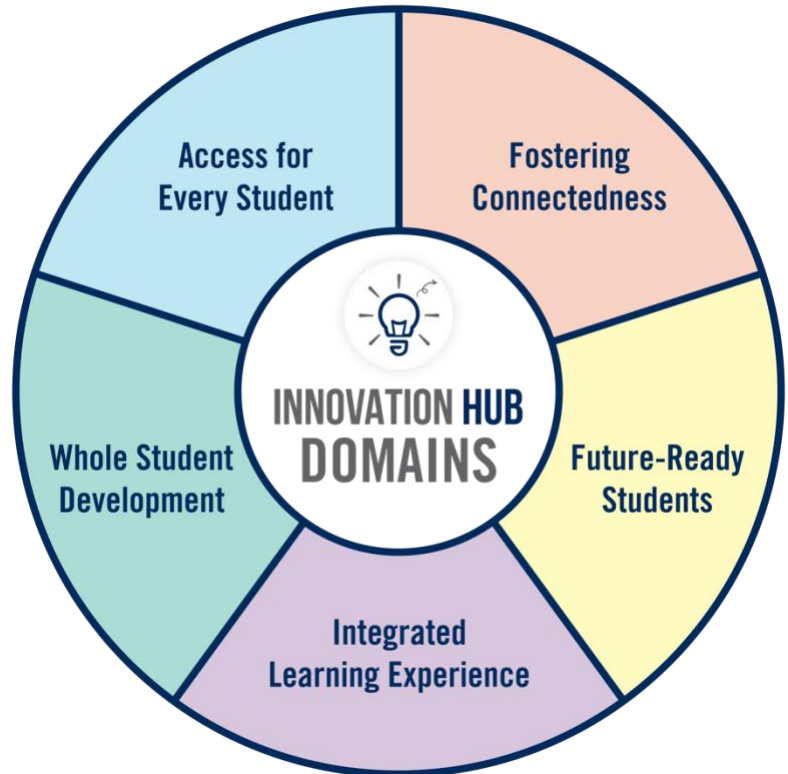
**Access for Every Student:** students of all abilities and backgrounds have equitable access to programs, services, resources, and spaces

**Fostering Connectedness:** students experience a sense of belonging and connection within and to the U of T community

**Future-Ready Students:** students have opportunities to develop their skills and build their confidence beyond academics

**Integrated Learning Experience:** students have access to engaging learning experiences both in and outside of the classroom

**Whole Student Development:** students receive the support they need for their holistic well-being (physical, psychological, social and emotional)



## Methodologies

To do this work, we employ the following methodologies:



**Human-Centred Design Thinking:** Design thinking build empathy with the users by observing and interviewing them to better understand what they truly want and need and then works to brainstorm creative solutions, prototype the solutions, and test them by getting user feedback.



**Ethnographic & Empathy-Based Research:** We are interested in how students live their lives at U of T and conduct ethnographic research using interviews, observation, and group discussion with hundreds of students to understand their hopes, fears, desires, needs to form foundation of our work.



**Integrative Thinking:** An approach to problem-solving that aims to constructively confront the tension of opposing ideas and generate a creative resolution that leverages existing models to come up with previously unimagined ways of thinking and doing.



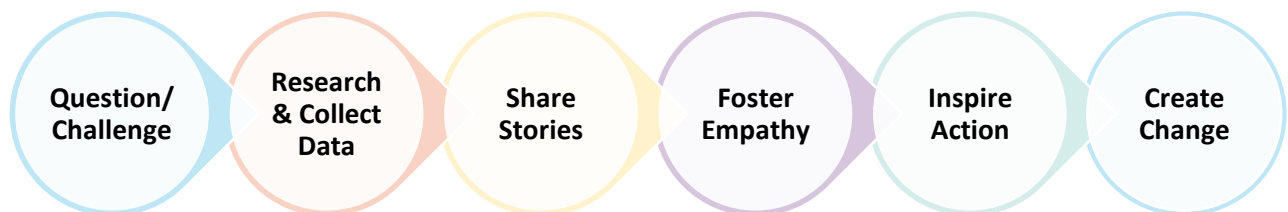
**Community-Based & Collaborative Practices:** We work with students across all programs and degree levels who engage with other students, faculty, staff and community members to generate data and ideate potential solutions to meet their needs



**Equity & Anti-Opressive Practices:** We are committed to making the work we engage in and the space/community we create as equitable, inclusive, and accessible as possible in line with the university's approach to equity.

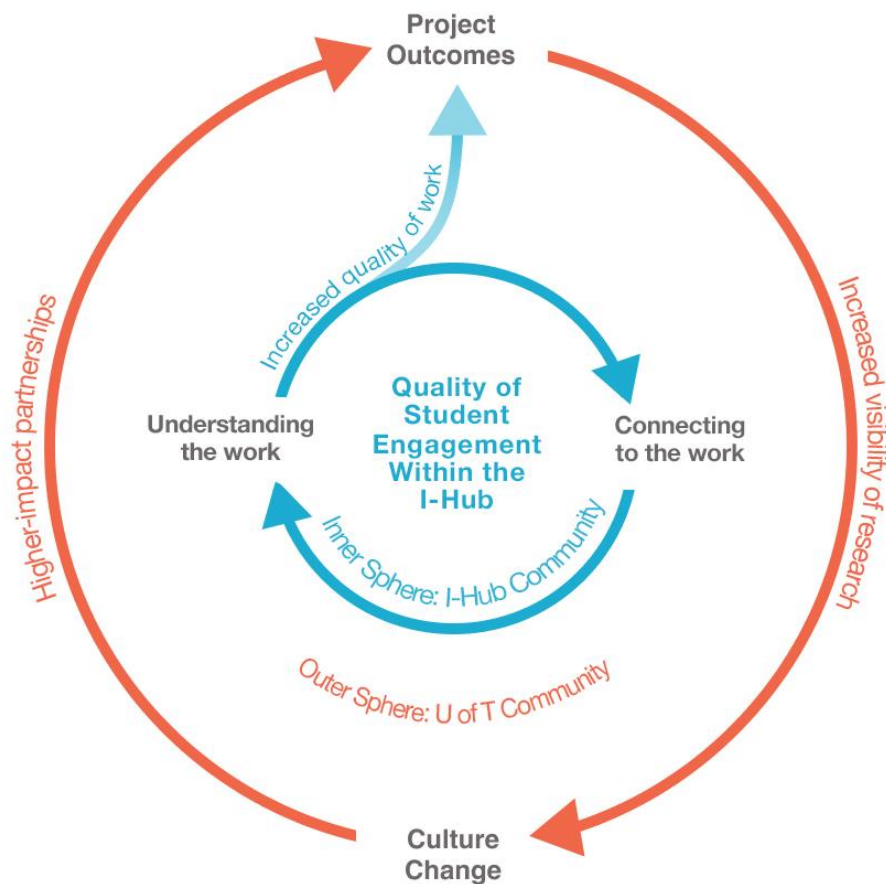
## Theory of Change

Our theory of change posits that by understanding the depth and nuance of U of T students' lives on campus, we motivate decision-makers to implement changes to programs, services, policies and spaces that are directly connected to student needs on campus. In our work we:



## Spheres of Work

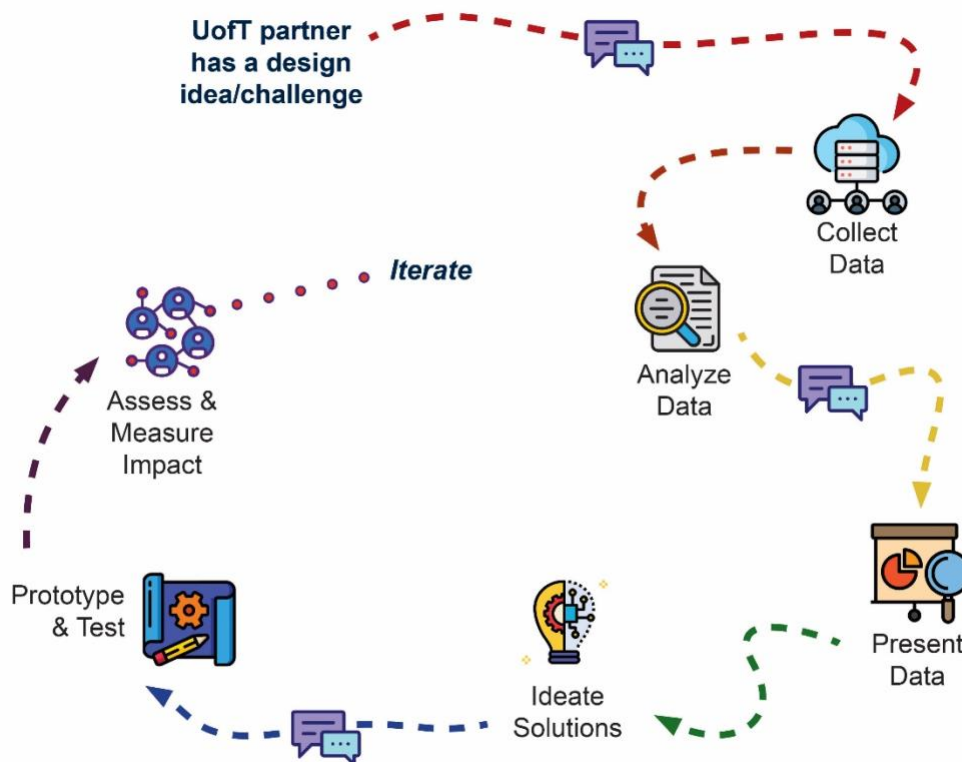
As an organization that works across departments and faculties, unites students from undergraduate to doctorate levels, and assists initiatives across the St. George campus and beyond, the implications of our processes are far-reaching. In order to help reign in the work that the Innovation Hub does, our work can be visualized through the following model, dividing the project into two, interconnected spheres of work and influence: the “Inner Sphere”, or within the Innovation Hub community, and the “Outer Sphere”, or the larger UofT community.



**The purpose of this model is to reinforce the understanding that the value we provide external partners is contingent on the value of the experience we provide student staff and volunteers.** Therefore, our internal processes (i.e. the “inner sphere”, or Innovation Hub Community) form the core of the model. When the core of the work is solidified through effective understanding, meaningful connection, and quality output, the external community (i.e. the “outer sphere”, or UofT community) reaps the benefits. The goal of the Innovation Hub is to bring the student voice into conversations surrounding administrative decisions that affect them, which is reflected in our partnered project outcomes.

## Process of Innovation

With our process of innovation *partnership* and *storytelling* are integral throughout. A project begins by connecting with a UofT partner that has a design idea/challenge that needs a collaborative, innovative process. Storytelling allows for the steps in our process of innovation to be engaging, connected to community members, and be designed specifically for the project and partners we collaborate with.



### Steps in our Process of Innovation:

- A UofT partner has a design idea/challenge
- Collect Data
- Analyze Data
- Present Data
- Ideate Solutions
- Prototype & Test
- Assess & Measure Impact

✓ *meaningful storytelling is involved throughout our process*

For more information, or to work with the Innovation Hub, please contact Julia Smeed at [julia.smeed@utoronto.ca](mailto:julia.smeed@utoronto.ca) or 416-978-8619, or visit our blog at [uoft.me/innovationhub](http://uoft.me/innovationhub)

Imagery designed by the Innovation Hub.