

The following information is an excerpt from the Letter of Intent submitted to the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation in response to the RECODE Request for Proposals of Spring 2014.

# Dalhousie University

## Introduction

Founded in 1818, Dalhousie University is one of Canada's oldest universities, currently attracting more than 18,000 students from around the world each year. Located on Canada's Atlantic Coast, the university blends world-class academic programs with leading-edge research and is internationally known as one of North America's most welcoming university environments.

This proposal is a collaborative partnership between Dalhousie University's *College of Sustainability* and the Starting Lean Initiative driven by the *Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship (NNCE)* housed in the Faculty of Management. Through this collaboration, we aspire to build on existing strengths in both programs and implement a social innovation and social entrepreneurship zone (SI Zone) that leverages outcomes and achieves impacts beyond the capacity of each individual partner.

### Dalhousie College of Sustainability

Over the past five years, Dalhousie University's *College of Sustainability* has developed and implemented an innovative, transformative model for sustainability education, which ensures all graduates of the program have the conceptual tools and interdisciplinary perspectives needed to lead sound decisions on sustainability issues.

The College of Sustainability offers an undergraduate double Major in Environment, Sustainability and Society (ESS) in seven Bachelors' degrees, across five Faculties (Management, Architecture and Planning, Arts and Social Sciences, Computer Science, and Science) and the University of King's College, in conjunction with over forty other subject areas. Teaching faculty are jointly appointed to the College and draw on expertise from multiple subject areas. In five years of operation, the ESS Major has engaged more than 2,000 Dalhousie students, with over 150 graduates to date and 500 students currently pursuing the ESS major as one of their two subjects. The College recently launched a Sustainability Leadership Certificate, and is developing an ESS Graduate Certificate. The College offers students and faculty a common place for working on sustainability challenges with a solutions-focused program model. The interdisciplinary nature of the College allows students to learn from faculty and other students from across campus in shared core courses. The College's weekly Thursday evening lecture series forms an integral part of first- and second-year ESS classes and presents internationally-distinguished speakers to the public and the Dalhousie community.

The College offers a second-year problem based learning course, a third-year internship course and a fourth-year "capstone" course that gives student teams a year-long opportunity to collaborate with government, industry and community agency partners on real-world social, environmental and financial sustainability challenges.

Our goal *is not* the training of an elite group of sustainability specialists, but rather the engaged education of a broad class of curious, motivated and informed citizens active across a wide spectrum of civil society, equipped to lead change towards a sustainable future. With its five-year track record

of successful innovation in academic and community engagement, the College of Sustainability is internationally recognized for its innovative approach to interdisciplinary change-oriented education. We have been formally recognized as one of “25 World Good Practices in Education for Sustainable Development” at the *UNESCO World Conference* on ESD, Bonn, 2009; and are the winners of the *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)* 2013 Case Study award for a four-year or graduate institution with more than 10,000 full time students.

### Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship, Dalhousie Faculty of Management

Dalhousie’s Faculty of Management is an internationally acknowledged centre of ‘values-based management’ graduating private and public sector leaders who manage with integrity, focus on sustainability and make things happen. The *Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship* is an enabling organization housed within the Faculty of Management with a mission to build a vibrant entrepreneurial culture among students, faculty and the community at large, embracing innovation while seeking to understand the nature of global change.

Dalhousie’s “Starting Lean Initiative”, was established based on the outcome of a SSHRC/Industry Canada knowledge synthesis grant in 2012 and a review of university and community innovation hubs at Stanford, Berkley, Waterloo. University of Toronto, The Next 36, MIT, MassChallenge and Harvard. Since the fall of 2012 we have been active participants in the international Lean Movement and have adopted a methodology that moves participants from thinking to doing, from solving other peoples’ problems to leading new initiatives that embrace innovation and create value. We are inculcating skills that allow participants to build repeatable and scalable ventures. The Starting Lean Initiative co-working space represents a key node in the Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship ecosystem at the campus level and supports the establishment and advancement of additional SI and SE nodes within Dalhousie University and beyond.

Over the past year (2013-14), the *Starting Lean Initiative* has had a total of 5,003 contact points with students and community members, 120 participants at two Start-up Weekends, 72 students attending the Starting Lean immersive entrepreneurship course, 30 project teams moving ideas forward from both the Starting Lean and the Innovation courses, and 18 teams from universities across Canada participating in Canada’s Business Model Competition hosted by the Starting Lean Initiative.

## **Our Vision**

### Social Innovation

Our proposal builds upon what we have learned in the existing innovative programs developed by the College of Sustainability and Faculty of Management to address the need for education that assists students in caring for the planet and for its people. We envision developing a new dimension to our programs that builds upon four areas of key learning outcomes: multiple literacies; an understanding of complexity; interdisciplinary practices for creative collaboration; and self-awareness and engagement. Our plan is to build upon our successful models to reach new community organizations, and disseminating the skills and ideas of our students, staff and faculty to address the urgent environmental and social needs of our time.

## Social Entrepreneurship

This proposal builds upon existing experiential and immersive social entrepreneurship programs and problem-based learning collaborations within the university and in the local and regional community. We envisage an integrated network of social entrepreneurship nodes woven into the fabric of Dalhousie University's ecosystem and connected to a larger network of social entrepreneurship nodes in the community and in other post-secondary education systems nationally. Our plan is to scale the reach of our existing social entrepreneurship program to a broader base of students

## **Opportunities for Growth and Expansion**

### Proposed activities, practices, programs and/or structures

Our proposal builds upon the established accomplishments of both the *College of Sustainability* and the *Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship's* Starting Lean Initiative with two new program components and an enhanced evaluation component to ensure learning outcomes are being achieved.

### **Leading Change Storefront**

The Leading Change Storefront will be a place to house a multidisciplinary collection of students, academics, businesses, NGOs, charitable organizations and community residents interested in developing innovative ideas for global social, environmental and economic sustainability. The Storefront will be a key node of Dalhousie University's social innovation zone, providing a place for collaborations between and among people interested in the exchange of opportunities, knowledge and ideas and mobilizing those ideas into action. The Storefront will initiate, facilitate and host SI/SE networks at the city, provincial and Atlantic regional levels, and will collaborate with the national SI/SE network envisioned by RECODE.

The Storefront will offer a matchmaking service to connect community challenges and opportunities to potential project teams and academic settings (courses, internships, research projects, etc.). Teams of students, community members, faculty members, business leaders, public sector representatives and members of not-for-profit agencies will collaborate to incubate and create innovative solutions to address challenges identified by local and regional partners. The Storefront will offer formal and informal meeting spaces, support for outreach activities and public meetings, and a clear sense of place and identity to the Social Innovation community. It will offer information on Social Innovation and Social Enterprise in general, and will document and exhibit projects and activities to inspire and inform other projects.

### **Changemaker Program**

The Dalhousie University Changemaker program will be adopted as a new collaborative program offering by the College of Sustainability. This course builds upon the Changemaker program offered by the School of Sustainability at CAU Kiel University, Dalhousie University's strategic partner.

We envision Changemaker as a two-stage program, designed to provide an open-source platform for interdisciplinary groups of students to team together to address social and environmental challenges, through an innovation and social entrepreneurship lens.

*Phase 1* is the idea and project design phase, created by student teams with mentors, leading to the development of a project proposal for submission to a local competition for seed funding. This phase will fulfill a single course credit for Dalhousie University students and will be open to all students across campus. It will draw upon substantial practical SI/SE input, strong project planning content; MOOC support material, and regional/ local team networks and mentors. The MOOC was developed and implemented by CAU Kiel for over 5,800 students across Europe and is currently being translated into English. Phase 1 of the Changemaker course will include a module aimed at the creative communication of ideas using film, video, music and other art forms. We envision partnering with Nova Scotia College of Art and Design for the creative communications Module. We also envision eventually scaling the competition to allow students from across the country to enter their Changemaker projects in the competition.

A panel of judges will assess the proposals and award winners with seed funding to be used for the implementation of their projects. Priority will be given to those projects that are innovative, drawing upon interdisciplinary ideas, and which address social and environmental sustainability through SI/SE.

*Phase 2* of the Changemaker program is the project development and implementation phase, using competition funding. Students who do not win the competition may still complete Phase 2 provided they are able to secure their own funding. Phase 2 will fulfill a second course credit.

### **Social UP Program**

The Social UP Program builds on existing social entrepreneurship and social innovation initiatives, competitions, courses (Innovation and Starting Lean courses), external lectures and workshops in the community, and mentoring and will be adopted as the University's new campus-wide social entrepreneurship student accelerator. The for-credit curriculum components of Social UP include:

- a) A campus-wide Innovation course (MGMT 2902) (using Design Thinking and Creative Problem Solving (CPS)) offered in both fall and winter; and
- b) A campus-wide experiential entrepreneurship course (Starting Lean) using Lean LaunchPad business model canvas and other human-centric tools (MGMT 3902 and 5902) offered in both fall and winter.

The Social UP Program is comprised of three key elements:

1. *The Social UP Student Accelerator* is intended for early stage student-led social entrepreneurship start-ups. The goal of the Social UP accelerator is to help increase the chances of long-term success for student-led social innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives by providing an early opportunity for mentorship, knowledge, and support. The Social UP accelerator consists of a series of mentored workshops using Lean LaunchPad, Design Thinking, and collaborative entrepreneurship models offered in both the fall and winter term with the goal of successfully launching social entrepreneurship ventures. The Social UP accelerator is open to students from all faculties interested in launching social enterprises and offers support through intensive mentoring and workshops. Events will be rotated around locations on the Dalhousie campus, including the Leading Change Storefront work space, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sandbox, the Faculty of Agriculture sandbox, as well as community-based locations.

2. *Social UP Community-based Connections and Networks*: The Dalhousie Social UP program builds on existing collaborations with community-based organizations focusing on social innovation and entrepreneurship, including our collaboration with the Deshpande Foundation, Common Good Solutions, B-Corp, the Nova Scotia Black Business Initiative (BBI), Enactus, Futurepreneur.
3. *Social UP Seed Capital Fund*: The Dalhousie Social UP program will build and greatly enhance our capacity to launch innovative social entrepreneurship ventures addressing real world social problems and will provide seed funding to student-led social entrepreneurship ventures that complete the Social UP student accelerator program and are ready and committed to launch a social entrepreneurship venture.

## Alignment with Existing Initiatives and Strategic Priorities

Our proposal aligns with the current strategic priorities of Dalhousie University, which emerged following an extensive, campus-wide collaborative process launched by incoming President, Dr. Richard Florizone and which were adopted by the Board of Governors this month ([Link: #DalForward](#))

The University's strategic priorities in the realm of "service" include the desire to:

- a) promote a culture of service and engagement among students, faculty and staff;
- b) maximize the opportunities for students, faculty and staff to contribute to the community both inside and outside of the university; and
- c) contribute to cultural and economic vitality, locally and globally, by fostering creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

The Leading Change Storefront program and the Changemaker courses will build upon the applied, student-led, community engaged learning approach of the College of Sustainability. Students in ESS are coached in team building skills, problem-based learning (PBL) approaches, and in applied learning throughout their undergraduate studies.

Similarly, the Social UP program scales the Starting Lean Initiative's existing programs, events and community collaborations to enhance students' engagement and understanding of social innovation and social entrepreneurship, help them to become engaged citizens, and provide them with life-long skills in problem solving, team building, and community engagement.

Following is a sample of current courses and initiatives by both the *College of Sustainability* and the *Faculty of Management*:

- A campus-wide *Innovation* course offered by the Faculty of Management where students work in teams and utilize *Design Thinking* and *Creative Problem Solving (CPS)* tools and techniques to co-create collaborative solutions to complex real world problems
- A campus-wide experiential entrepreneurship course (*Starting Lean*) offered by the Faculty of Management where students use the *Lean LaunchPad* business model canvas and other human-centric tools to undertake customer discovery and validation. The *Starting Lean Initiative* has a successful track record of launching student-led social entrepreneurship ventures that create real value in the local and regional economy.

- *Sustainability and Environmental Research Symposium (SERS)*: The College co-hosts this forum for the exchange of ideas on recent advances in research, theory and practice in environment and health research with the Elizabeth May Chair in Environmental Health.
- Connections with local companies, public agencies and social sector organizations:
  - The *Starting Lean Initiative* works collaboratively with a wide variety of industry, government, community agencies, academic and NGO partner organizations including the Deshpande Foundation, Enactus, Futurepreneur, formerly the Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF).
  - The *ESS (Environment, Sustainability and Society) Capstone* class is the crowning experience for College of Sustainability students at Dalhousie. The Capstone class offers the opportunity to integrate the ESS academic curriculum with a real-world sustainability problem, opportunity or challenge. Students work for six hours per week over two semesters (September through April) in small, inter-disciplinary teams on a specific project identified by the client and scoped and scaled by the students. Clients to date include: Boyne Clarke LLP, Green Schools Nova Scotia, Clean Nova Scotia, Credit Union Atlantic, NS Assoc. of Regional Development Authorities, A.C. Coverts Distributors, Teachers Plus Credit Union, HRM/QUEST, Black and MacDonald Limited, Marine Stewardship Council, Minas Energy, NS Economic Regional Development Tourism.
- Student competitions including social entrepreneurship ventures supported by the *Starting Lean Initiative* (e.g., the Innovative Ideas Competition, Social Enterprise for a Day Competition (SE4D) Canada's Business Model Competition, workshops and dialogues, including Common Good Solutions, the Black Business Initiative (BBI), Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED), and others.
- The *RBC Sustainability Leadership Certificate* program open to all Dal students, provides a three-weekend modular approach to change leadership.
- Seed funds for new ventures: Dalhousie's *Starting Lean Initiative* provides seed funding for student-led social innovation and social entrepreneurship projects and ventures emerging from the campus-wide innovation course, the Starting Lean course, or independently.
- Actively engaged student groups and networks: the *Starting Lean Initiative* supports Dalhousie's Enactus team which has a social entrepreneurship agenda and is part of the largest global network of student entrepreneurs.

## Partners

The College of Sustainability is a partnership of Deans, faculty and students from across the Dalhousie University campus. Our students engage in applied projects throughout their undergraduate career and addressing sustainability challenges faced by our partners within municipal and provincial government, and, the business and for-profit sector, community and not-for-profit agencies, and with interested citizen groups. We also partner with on-campus colleagues and including but not limited to the following: the Dalhousie Student Union Sustainability Office (DSUSO), Dalhousie Office of Sustainability, and other Universities worldwide, including Christian Albrecht University Kiel, Germany and Arizona State University.

The *Starting Lean Initiative's* community partners include (for example), Deshpande Foundation, Enactus, CYBF, Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED), Black Business Initiative (BBI), B-Corp, Common Good Solutions Inc., and the Dobson Foundation.

This project will also provide the opportunity to engage new partners such as Imagine Sustainability, a new multi-disciplinary consulting cooperative (which consists of College of Sustainability Teaching Assistants and alumni, Environmental Science and Faculty of Management graduate students) focused on developing deep sustainability solutions for the private and public sectors

## **Further Investment**

Dalhousie has identified innovation as a strategic lever in driving economic prosperity for the regional economy. Dalhousie will continue to allocate people, time, and resources as we scale our already existing footprint in social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and sustainability leadership. In addition, we will commit to providing space in a suitable location on campus for the Leading Change Storefront and Social UP that will be the initial node for the Social Innovation Zone and will connect with existing nodes both within Dalhousie and in the local and regional community. Financial and research resources, staff and faculty capacity from both the College of Sustainability and the Starting Lean Initiative within the Faculty of Management will support the SIZ in its planning and initial implementation stages.

## **Impact on Teaching, Research and Student Experience**

Dalhousie University has made a strong commitment to campus-wide approaches to innovation and entrepreneurship, and has made great strides in advancing these initiatives. When funded, this program will considerably extend the impact and reach of existing programs at the *College of Sustainability* and the *Starting Lean Initiative* within the Faculty of Management, to the university as a whole and to the broader community.

This SI Zone will provide experiential and immersive learning to a larger number of students, resulting in increased rates of participation and larger impact as Dalhousie students progress in their journey to become innovative thinkers and global citizens. The zone will facilitate efforts across campus to create a shared culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability.