

Year in Review

The Experiential Learning in Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship (ELITE) Program for Black Youth is driven by a passion to support Black youth in reaching their highest professional potential. Each year, the ELITE Program welcomes talented high school and undergraduate students looking to develop their scientific and entrepreneurial skills, build networks, and explore career pathways in STEM. This year was no exception. Our small but mighty 2024 cohort of interns made contributions to projects in a variety of fields from engineering to biological and linguistic sciences.

Our vision is to establish training pathways for Black youth pursuing STEM. This year, our work to strengthen the STEM pipeline for Black youth expanded to include elementary aged students through a partnership with the [Fred Otto DiscoverE Program](#) in the [Faculty of Engineering](#) at the University of Alberta. Together, the ELITE Program and the DiscoverE program funded 10 summer camp spots for Black youth in Grades 1 to 6.

In our fourth year of operation, the ELITE Program continues to innovate in our approach to building knowledge and professional capacity in Black youth. This report contains a snapshot of our short-term impact and a signal of our future ambitions.



ELITE Program interns and staff at the 2024 Final Technical Presentations

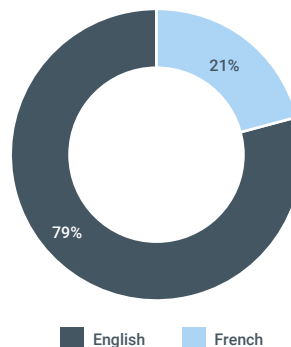
Interns and Internship Hosts of 2024

Total Number of Interns in Work-Integrated Programming: 29
Total Number of Interns in Program Evaluation Exercise: 58

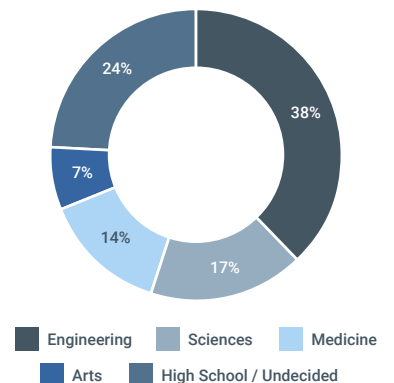
This year's cohort was composed of a diverse, dynamic and unique group of students.

From aspiring engineers to budding researchers and future fashion designers, a wide spectrum of interests and talents were represented in the group. These interests were met by 16 unique internship hosts who provided interns with opportunities to meaningfully contribute to projects with real-world applications.

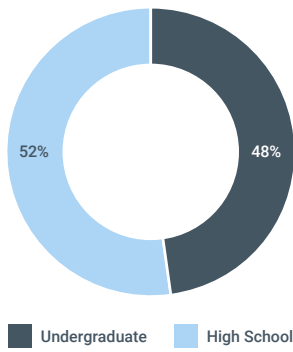
Language Demographics



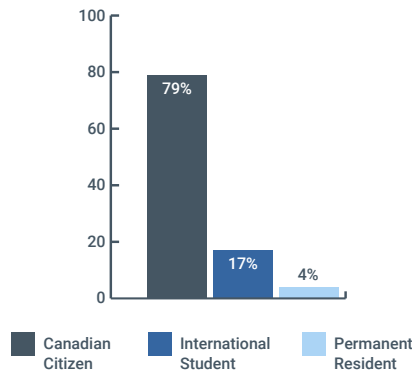
Areas of Study



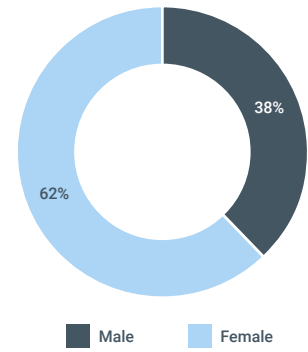
Academic Level



Citizenship Status



Gender



Interns eating lunch together at Final Workshop

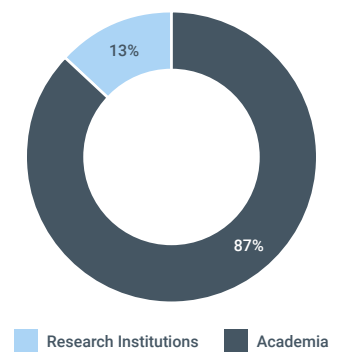


Interns participating in the Entrepreneurship Design Series

With support and technical training from internship hosts, interns had a vast array of research projects to choose from. From the rehabilitation medicine research of the [Rehab Robotics Lab](#) to the linguistic analysis of [Espace LiFT](#) and the thermal spray coatings research of the [Advanced Heat Transfer and Surface Technologies Lab](#), interns were offered the chance to leave their mark on enduring work across a variety of disciplines.

In parallel with our standard summer programming, the ELITE Program also launched a research study and program evaluation in 2024. The evaluation study's goal is to examine the program's impact on participants of the ELITE Program since its inception, four years ago. The study focuses on the benefits, and broader impact, to interns as they transitioned from school to professional careers. Results from the research and evaluation study will be shared broadly and used to further refine the program design and operation.

Internship Hosts



"If you're someone that wants to get involved and likes working with people and wants to do something meaningful, I would say do this program."

Albert Chimdindu 1st year Engineering student

The ELITE Impact

At the beginning and end of each summer, the ELITE Program administers a survey to understand how interns have evolved over the course of their internships. The data this year shows that after their ELITE Program experience, students in the 2024 cohort felt more confident in their professional abilities.

- » 95% of interns reported feeling more prepared for the workplace after their internship. This is higher than the national average of 69% for similar programming.
- » At the beginning of the program 65% of interns reported confidence in their problem-solving skills. By the end of the summer, this number rose to 79%.
- » Interns also reported significant increases in their ability to collaborate with others, their creativity, and their communication skills – hallmarks of strong socio-emotional development in this cohort of future Black STEM professionals.
- » This cohort saw a significant increase in their digital literacy skills from a 68% confidence rate at the beginning of the summer to an 84% confidence rate by the end of the summer.



Audience of community members at Edmonton Unlimited headquarters watching the Entrepreneurship Design Series Final Showcase



Interns receive a demonstration at Token Naturals

"[In the ELITE Program] You could be like 14,15,16 working in a professional setting, working alongside really established professors with PhDs and that's just really cool. It really gives you an inside scoop."

Hamid Ali Grade 12 Student

Community Corner

Without the support of our community partners, the ELITE Program would not be what it is today. This is truly a university-community-government initiative. We are particularly grateful to the [Black Business Ventures Association](#) and [Edmonton Unlimited](#) for leading the delivery of the Entrepreneurship Design Series for another year. We are also thankful to RBCx, the [African Canadian Civic Engagement Council](#), [VersionMe Media](#), and [Token Naturals](#) for participating as coaches and expert judges during the pitch workshops for the Entrepreneurship Design Series.

Our 2024 sponsors include:

- RBC Foundation Future Launch Program
- The Counselling Foundation of Canada
- Future Skills Centre
- Edmonton Regional Innovation Network
- University of Alberta
- Carleton University
- Government of Canada Summer Jobs Program
- MITACS
- Alberta Innovates Institutional Support of Entrepreneurship Education Program
- Enbridge Inc.
- Stantec



Funding and Finances

The ELITE Program for Black Youth employs a robust sustainability campaign to raise funds and leverage resources to support intern salaries and program activities. In 2024, we secured nearly \$510,000 in new cash funding, compared to approximately \$290,000 in 2023. This represents a 75% annual increase in funding.

Our efforts to support interns in securing scholarships for their post-secondary studies have also been successful. For the fourth year in a row, ELITE Program interns were recipients of RBC Future Launch Scholarships for Black Youth. Three out of four interns submitted from the 2023 cohort were recipients of this scholarship, which provides \$10,000 annually to students for up to four years of post-secondary education and training. This represents a 75% success rate for ELITE Program interns.



ELITE interns pose for a photo while taking part in the Entrepreneurship Design Series

ELITE in the News

This year, the ELITE Program was highlighted and endorsed in content from partners, collaborators, and allies, including the President of the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Engineering and Design at Carleton University:

- » [From the President's Desk: Black History Month | The Quad](#)
- » [Opening Doors and Shaping Futures for Black Youth at Carleton University | Faculty of Engineering and Design](#)
- » [Conference Board of Canada Future Skills Podcast](#)

For more ELITE Program news, including intern profiles, program news, and interviews with partners, visit the [news and media page](#) on our website.

"Overall, it's a fantastic opportunity to develop new skills, connect with like-minded people, gain industry experience, and explore exciting career opportunities."

Onami Ademola 3rd year
Computer Engineering student

What's Next: Vision for 2025

To date, the ELITE Program has supported almost 200 interns and trainees. Our commitment to advancement extends to the development of the young professionals who support program operations, including Black program managers, communications coordinators, and psychologists in training. Looking to the future, we are excited to continue our partnership with the DiscoverE Program to provide Black elementary aged youth with opportunities to explore the world of STEM. This early intervention is key to building a sustainable and comprehensive pipeline into STEM for Black youth. We are also committed to continued investments in research. Insights from quantitative and qualitative research studies conducted on the Program and its impact in Black communities and broader society will have applications not only for improvement of the ELITE Program but also for other similar initiatives, contributing to knowledge mobilization around training and development of Black youth across Canada.

To Learn More About the ELITE Program for Black Youth:

Visit us at www.eliteprogram.ca

Follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#)

Contact us at elite@ualberta.ca