

## Introduction

In 2025, the [\*Experiential Learning in Innovation, Technology, and Entrepreneurship \(ELITE\) Program for Black Youth\*](#) celebrated half a decade of equipping the next generation of Black leaders in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) and entrepreneurship. Over five summers, our interns have contributed more than 65,000 hours in expert-leading academic labs, major for-profit technology corporations, and government agencies. We have expanded internship host representation across the University of Alberta campuses and beyond to startup companies and established enterprises. Through paid hands-on summer internships, community building events, and wrap-around training, our interns have discovered new passions, honed their technical and soft skills, and broadened their professional horizons and networks.

### Video: [\*Celebrating 5-years of the ELITE Program\*](#)

As we mark this significant milestone, we celebrate the interns who have stretched their limits, the researchers and industry project teams that opened their doors, and the sponsors and donors who made it possible. Each cohort of ELITE Program interns brings unique perspectives and experiences, further enriching our growing community. Looking toward our sixth year of operation, our commitment to facilitating opportunities for work-integrated career development, curiosity-driven learning, and building a talent pathway for Black youth in STEM remains unwavering.



Partners and participants of the ELITE Program celebrate five years of ELITE Program impact

## Steering Council Statement

For the past five years, we have had the privilege and honour to guide and support decision making for the ELITE Program for Black Youth. While our reasons for participating on this Council vary, we share a commitment to ensuring that all of the activities and initiatives of the ELITE Program are strategic, well-aligned, and impactful to support the upward mobility of Black youth.

From the start of the Program during the COVID-19 pandemic when virtual internships were offered, to developing research outputs and strengthening partnerships with community groups, we have witnessed the rapid and successful growth of the ELITE Program. Consistent across these years of expansion has been the ELITE Program's dedication to ensuring that every component of the Program addresses a gap in the experience of Black youth pursuing STEM careers. It is gratifying to witness the ELITE Program achieve this major 5-year milestone, and we remain fully dedicated to ensuring that the ELITE Program continues to have a transformational impact on the lives and futures of Black youth for many more years to come.



**Dr. André McDonald**  
Director



**Dr. Adetola Adesida**  
Co-Director and Health Sciences  
Program Lead



**Dr. Sophie Yohani**  
Coaching and Counselling Lead



**Dr. Sédami Gnidehou**  
Francophone Lead



**Dr. James Kariuki**  
Professor



**Ms. Gabrielle Engli**  
Assistant Principal



**Mr. Hugh Magande**  
Technical Principal (Research)



**Mr. Rick Marsden**  
Senior Integrity Engineer



**Dr. Ioanis Nikolaidis**  
Professor



**Dr. Mahdi Tavakoli**  
Professor



**Dr. Natacha Louis**  
Assistant Professor



**Ms. Joy Thomas**  
Vice President NBCC

## THE 2025 ELITE PROGRAM COHORT

35

Total Number of ELITE Program Interns

118

Total Number of Youth Supported by ELITE Program Funding

The 2025 internship cohort was composed of 35 brilliant high school and undergraduate students who worked across 19 unique internship hosts from academia, industry, and government. In addition to the 35 ELITE Program interns, 21 additional students received ELITE Program funding to work on projects across the University of Alberta campuses, including [Augustana Campus](#) and [Campus Saint-Jean](#), and 62 students were supported to participate in [Fred Otto DiscoverE \(DiscoverE\)](#) summer camp programming. In 2025 alone, a total of 118 students were supported either fully or partially by ELITE Program funding.



**Ms. Adiki Pupilampu**  
Communication Coordinator



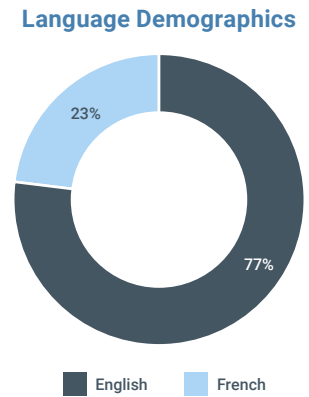
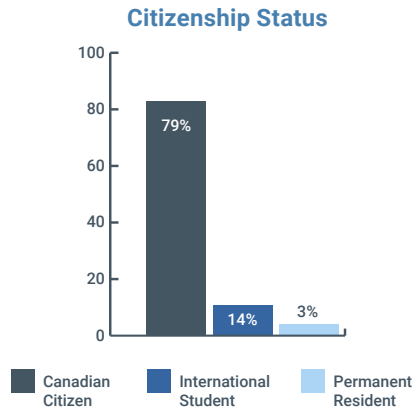
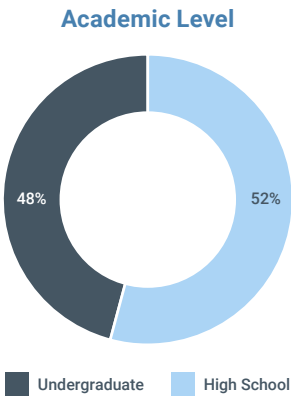
**Ms. Idara Effiom**  
Program Coordinator

*"It was truly inspiring, and I experienced a lot of personal growth through the ELITE Program. The wellness series helped me understand myself better, while the entrepreneurship series improved my public speaking skills and opened me up to new opportunities and ventures."*

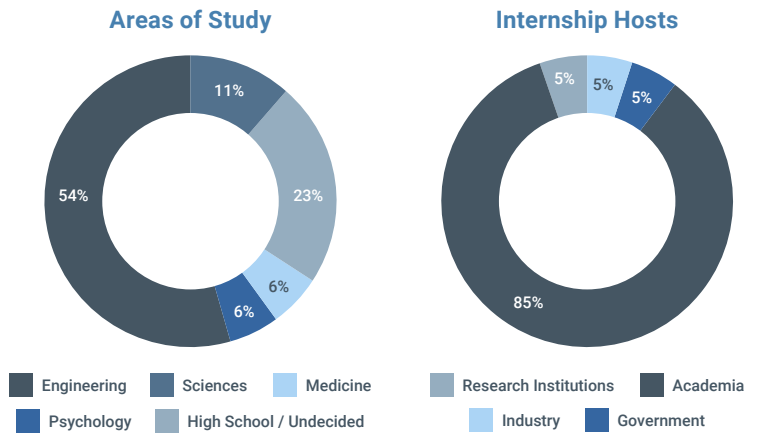
**Marvin Uwalaka**  
Undergraduate Computer Science Student

As in previous years, students in the ELITE Program cohort saw a marked increase in their confidence across various soft skills including problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity. In post program surveys, students also reported greater confidence in their digital and financial literacy.

\*The graphs below present data from the 35 ELITE Program interns



While the majority of 2025 internship hosts were from academia, we received multiple projects from industry and government agency hosts, with Imperial Oil and Alberta Health Services each taking on multiple interns. From spinal research to diabetes studies and refinery safety work, ELITE Program interns, as usual, were plugged into impactful operations across various disciplines.



Interns delivering a 2025 Entrepreneurship Design Series Pitch



Ade Morakinyo working on a 3D Printer

# THE ELITE PROGRAM IMPACT

*Through strategic partnerships with trusted collaborators, the ELITE Program has broadened to provide programming to a wider population of Black youth.*

## ELITE Program and the DiscoverE Program

The ELITE Program and the DiscoverE Program have partnered to fund summer camp placements for Black youth in Grades 1-9. What began as a [pilot program in 2024](#), with an initial cohort of 10 students, has grown into a full program partnership that supported 62 Black elementary and junior high students this summer to participate in STEM-focused camp programming in the [Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alberta](#). The expansion of this program was made possible through a [National Sciences and Engineering Research Council \(NSERC\) of Canada PromoScience Grant](#) that the ELITE Program was awarded in early 2025. This grant allows the ELITE Program to fund interactive STEM summer camp spots for Black youth in DiscoverE programming across all three campuses at the University of Alberta (North Campus in Edmonton, the regional/rural Augustana Campus in Camrose, and the Francophone Faculté Saint Jean) over the next three years with the possibility of renewal.

*"We are seeing the effort and the impact of the ELITE Program in every direction. I continue to encourage kids and youth in my community to participate in every ELITE opportunity—whether in elementary, junior high, high school, or undergrad."*

**DiscoverE Parent**



*Dr. André McDonald showcasing an aircraft engine to campers in the ELITE Program-DiscoverE Program Summer Camp Partnership*

## Elevate Science in Partnership with the ELITE Program

Our newest partnership with Elevate Science is supported by a grant from the [Edmonton Regional Innovation Network \(ERIN\)](#). Created by Kade Campbell, an incoming first year Engineering student at the University of Alberta, this student-led initiative organizes engaging events focused on spotlighting entrepreneurial thinking in STEM to students. Since partnering with the ELITE Program, Elevate Science has hosted a "Mindset Jam" where students were given the tools to envision their future selves. More events are planned for the coming months.

## ELITE Program Pathway to Law

Since 2023, the ELITE Program has supported the ELITE Pathway for Law, an initiative in partnership with the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta. With a goal of demystifying the law school experience for prospective students, the Pathway's main activity is a symposium that was held in March this year. The two-day event featured information sessions, keynote speeches, and a career panel. For the ELITE Program, lending our support to this initiative is part of our broader goal of providing Black youth, in STEM or otherwise, with exposure to various professional pathways.



*High school students complete an activity during the Elevate Science Mindset Jam*

## ELITE IN THE MEDIA

It was a busy year for the ELITE Program in media, both on our own platforms and on the platforms of our partners and collaborators.

- » We launched a [Knowledge Mobilization](#) page on our website to showcase the innovative qualitative and quantitative research that is happening under the auspices of the ELITE Program.
- » Folio produced a video spotlight focused on a summer lab visit by Black youth participating in the [DiscoverE Program x ELITE Program partnership: Video Spotlight: Summer camps spark STEM opportunities](#)
- » The [Faculty of Law launched a new Black Student Life page](#) and highlighted the ELITE Program Pathway to Law
- » Bill Flanagan, President of the University of Alberta, highlights the ELITE Program in his [Black History Month message](#)
- » The ELITE Program was featured in the [Future Skills Centre Impact Report](#) as a case study of an organization creating impact in the pursuit of a more inclusive economy
- » We recently published a [new promotional video](#) on our website to celebrate five years of the ELITE Program!

For more ELITE Program media content, visit the [news and media page](#) of our website!



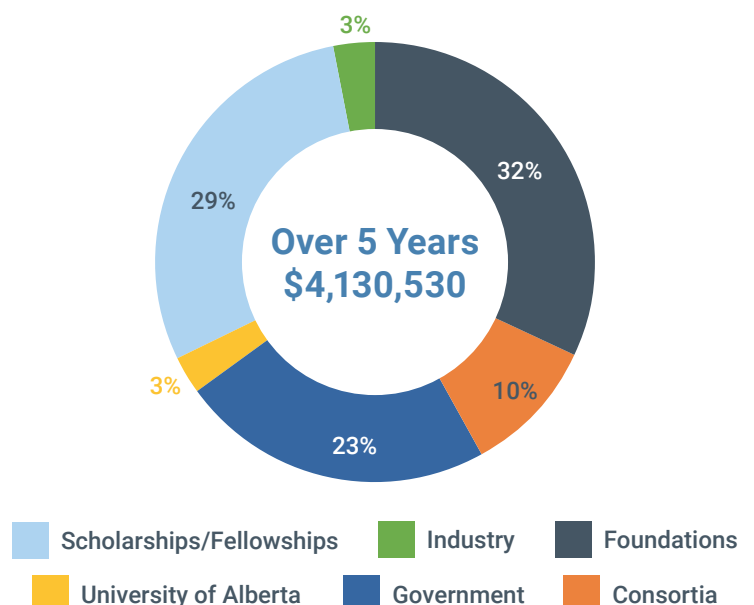
Interns at CN Rail

## FUNDING AND FINANCES

At the inception of the ELITE Program in 2021, the operational leadership team and the Steering Council devised a strategic Sustainability Plan. The plan detailed strategies to secure funding for the Program, implement leveraging tactics, pursue pathways for scholarship funding, and diversify philanthropic donation sources and government funding.

Over the last five years, the strategic campaign has been successful, enabling us to secure \$2,950,530 (average: \$590,106 per year) in cash funding and \$1,180,000 (average: \$236,000 per year) in scholarships, for a total of \$4,130,530 (average: \$826,106 per year) in revenue.

This tremendous success was due to the collective efforts of several collaborators. The Steering Council that provides guidance, network connections and programmatic advice has played a key role alongside the academic colleagues who have participated in developing grant proposals. The University of Alberta's Corporate and Foundation Relations Team in the Office of the Vice-President (External Relations) as well as donors and agencies have also generously supported us. Going forward, we aim to strengthen our relationships with industry partners in creative ways, not only financially, but also through engagement with Black youth to expand their experience, network building, and professional growth in STEM careers.



## COMMUNITY CORNER

After five years of operation, we are thankful to many key community partners who generously give of their time and talents to make this program successful. The [Black Business Ventures Association](#) and [Edmonton Unlimited](#) have expertly developed and enhanced the Entrepreneurship Design Series over the years, and we are grateful for their ongoing engagement and investment in ELITE Program interns. We'd also like to thank all the judges, panelists, and crawl hosts that participated in this year's Entrepreneurship Design Series. Other community partners such as the [National Black Coalition of Canada - Edmonton Chapter](#) have supported the ELITE Program with strategic advice, governance, and knowledge dissemination.

*"It has been such a fun and rewarding experience getting involved this year. I am excited to see the program scale and of course looking forward to see all the student success"*

**Chloe Xing Schimpf**  
VP, Banking, RBCx

The Wellness and Coaching series would not be possible without [Dr. Sophie Yohani](#), from the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, and her team of dedicated graduate students, Madison Dabbs-Petty, Evan Essapa, and Kutay Sacak. Every year, this team creates a safe space for interns to think and talk about wellness and mental health and we're thankful for their work in this space.

### Our 2025 Sponsors:

- » Alberta Innovates
- » CN Rail
- » Department of National Defence
- » Edmonton Regional Innovation Network
- » Employment and Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs Program
- » Enbridge Inc.
- » Future Skills Centre
- » Imperial Oil
- » Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- » MITACS
- » National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
- » RBC Foundation
- » Stantec
- » The Counselling Foundation of Canada
- » University of Alberta

## THE ELITE PROGRAM TIMELINE

A celebration of five years of operations would be incomplete without a look back at the journey that brought us here. The timeline below captures key moments in the ELITE Program's history. All these moments tell the story of the ELITE Program. We are motivated and excited for the future and look forward to expanded collaborations with academics, government, industry, community partners, and donors to support the upward social mobility and socio-emotional skills development of the passionate and talented Black youth who we serve.

*"Through this journey, I've not only deepened my passion for medicine, but built connections, and felt seen in a space I hope to one day lead in. Thank you for investing in us, for believing in our futures, and creating a space where young people like me can thrive."*

**Abigail Yohannes**  
Undergraduate Nursing Student

- May 2021**  
The first cohort of the ELITE Program begins with 43 interns
- May 2022**  
Entrepreneurship Design Series activities are supported by three [IBET Fellows](#)
- June 2023**  
The ELITE Program hires 53 interns (our largest cohort to date!)
- September 2023**  
The ELITE Program secures \$3M in funding in its first two years and since inception has trained over 120 Black youth and created over 120 youth jobs.
- June 2024**  
A pilot cohort of 10 students participate in the DiscoverE x ELITE Program summer camp internship
- February 2025**  
The ELITE Program is awarded an NSERC Promoscience grant to support nearly 300 Black campers in STEM programming
- August 2025**  
*The ELITE Program celebrates 5 years!*