

# Creating Dynamic Partnerships

U of T Scarborough and  
the Malvern Community



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
SCARBOROUGH



# UTSC Community Partnerships Report 2015

Our future and our community's future are undeniably linked.

That's why at U of T Scarborough community engagement is more than a way to bridge the town-gown divide. We've thought critically about community engagement in a variety of contexts – scholarship, research, teaching and service. Here, engagement is a way to build the community....together.

That requires listening to what our neighbours envision the community to look like, and working together to realize that vision. It requires partnership motivated by a desire to combine forces, to address one another's best interests and ideally result in outcomes that are greater than any one organization could achieve alone.

Partnerships are the heart of our engagement with the community. We share a purpose to serve the common good. The result is mutual cooperation and transformation.

**Engaging with the community  
isn't just what we do –  
it's who we are.**

# Executive Summary

Since its founding, the University of Toronto Scarborough has been closely identified with its surroundings, natural heritage and neighbouring communities. Civic engagement provides unique opportunities for faculty, staff and students to learn from our neighbours and to make meaningful social contributions and participate in city building. Reciprocally, communities have benefitted from the intellectual, economic and demographic strengths of the institution.

U of T Scarborough's unique approach to community engagement is characterized by an emphasis on relationship building. This approach has resulted in partnerships that foster and promote reciprocal opportunities and have proven beneficial to the campus and to the broader community.

Faculty conduct applied research with the local community, providing needed assessments and resources while learning from community members in open exchanges and dialogue. Students are active through civic engagement, participating in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that enhance their post-secondary education. These experiences are often included in their Co-Curricular Record, an institutional initiative that recognizes service-learning and volunteer activities in tandem with grade transcripts, demonstrating the development of attributes and skills that ensure success beyond the classroom.

A number of U of T Scarborough community partnerships focus on Malvern, an area with a population of over 45,000 people comprising 60 different ethnic groups. With a high proportion of new Canadians and an unemployment rate higher than the City of Toronto average, Malvern has faced a number of economic and social challenges. To address some of these challenges, U of T Scarborough has expanded its partnership with the Malvern Family Resource Centre and the TAIBU Community Health Centre in areas ranging from youth mentorship to food security.

Highlights of this year's partnerships include:

- Workshops to build capacity for small food enterprises, including skills development ranging from food handling to account keeping
- Students exploring immigrant stories and sharing food pathways
- Setting the stage for the development of an urban farm
- UTSC students mentor 610 K-12 students through an academic support program
- An academic collaboration that partnered University and local high school students working to conduct research on vital community issues from safety to green space to transit in the area



## A unique collaborative approach

At U of T Scarborough, we are committed to opening our campus to the city around us, providing resources and a foundation for students, faculty and the community to thrive. Community partnerships generate opportunities that benefit our campus and contribute to economic and social well-being in the eastern GTA.

This approach to community partnerships is part of who we are as a campus: inclusive, innovative and exemplifying the excellence for which the University of Toronto is known.

We are committed to:

- Building mutually beneficial relationships
- Enhancing the student experience
- Leveraging the expertise of our faculty, staff and students

Through unique hands-on activities and research initiatives, U of T Scarborough students gain insight into the issues and dynamics of community formation, developing skills in communication, collaboration and leadership.

U of T Scarborough networks are growing and strengthening rapidly as community partners and residents see the benefit of collaboration with the University. Faculty and student participation has increased, and more collaborative projects have emerged.



# Partnership Focus: Malvern Family Resource Centre and TAIBU

## Malvern: A community in transition

Defined by Finch and Sheppard Avenues to the north and south, and Markham Road and Morningside Avenue to the east and west, the Malvern community has a population of over 45,000, 35 per cent of whom are youth. There are more than 60 ethnic groups in the neighbourhood, with 48 per cent of the population having neither English nor French as their mother tongue. Home to a large proportion of new Canadians, Malvern has had significant social and economic challenges, including a lower median household income and unemployment rates higher than the City of Toronto's; however, it's also a very dynamic and vibrant place with many community members eager to learn, grow and contribute to the city.

As the Malvern neighbourhood transitions from a Neighbourhood Improvement Area (formerly known as a Priority Neighbourhood), U of T Scarborough has actively supported the progress, participating as a member of *1LoveMalvern* and as a member of the North Scarborough Integrated Local Labour Market Planning table.

## Malvern Family Resource Centre

Malvern Family Resource Centre (MFRC) is a social service agency that provides family and individual programming and services for children, youth, women, and seniors. In the community for 30 years, the agency has earned a reputation for integrity, quality programs and services, qualified and dedicated personnel, and committed funders.

MFRC is the parent organization to its resident engagement arm, Malvern Action for Neighbourhood Change (Malvern ANC). U of T Scarborough serves as Malvern ANC's academic partner, providing research and support, including the growth in capacity for MFRC.

**The U of T Scarborough -  
Malvern Family Resource Centre  
partnership involves  
administrative departments  
and academic programs:**

**Partnerships  
and Legal  
Counsel**

Malvern Family Resource Centre is proud to work alongside University of Toronto Scarborough. Our relationship has captured numerous focus areas including city building, neighbourhood planning, food issues, seniors' well being, and deepening our understanding and integration of our cultural and newcomer communities. The support of the university allows us to work alongside capable students. The University's role as a major institution in our backyard supports our goal of improving the quality of life of residents in northeast Scarborough.

*Alex Dow, Program Director, Malvern Family Resource Centre*

**Student  
Life**

**Health and  
Wellness**

**Sustainability  
Office**

**City  
Studies**

**Health  
Studies**

**Culinaria  
Research  
Centre**

**Environmental  
Science**

**This year, our partnership with UTSC has been instrumental in identifying a promising practice model and tool for engaging youth in community-based research and advocacy initiatives. We look forward to continuing with and building this important relationship. We commend UTSC's proactive engagement and involvement in the community in addressing barriers to health and wellbeing.**

*Liben Gebremikael, Executive Director, TAIBU Community Health Centre*

## **TAIBU Community Health Centre**

TAIBU Community Health Centre (CHC) is a multidisciplinary, not-for-profit, community-led organization in the Malvern neighborhood.

TAIBU CHC provides comprehensive primary healthcare, mental health support, and social services in combination with health promotion programs and activities.

## Community Focus: Food, Health and Learning

In 2014 U of T Scarborough and Malvern ANC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) identifying cooperative opportunities in the areas of food security, food-ways and food access.

### Small Enterprises and City Foods Workshop

On February 26, 2015, as part of the Connaught City Foods international research project at the University's Culinary Research Centre, the *Small Enterprises and City Foods Workshop* was held at U of T Scarborough. The focus was on developing strategies for providing infrastructure and resources to help launch small food entrepreneurs, particularly for new immigrants. Participants included U of T Scarborough students and faculty, with representatives from New York University and Malvern

ANC, and guests from U of T Scarborough's Culinary Research Centre, U of T Scarborough Community Partnerships, City of Toronto Economic Development and Culture Division, the Centre for Immigrant and Community Services, and Evergreen Brickworks.

The Culinary Research Centre and Malvern ANC continue their collaboration on support strategies for small food enterprises in tandem with the Connaught project, beginning with the 15 to 20 residents attending last year's workshops in Malvern. Malvern ANC has since provided residents with capacity building opportunities, including skills development sessions in food handling, menu planning, finance and account keeping. Three participants are planning to work closely with students and staff, showcasing the neighbourhood's diverse cuisines in summer 2016.





## Cuisine and Culture

In early 2015, eight students in the *Cuisine and Culture in Bengal & South Asia* course worked with eight Malvern residents, exploring immigrant stories and mapping their food paths. Some of these stories were published through the Culinaria Research Centre and were shared through the *1LoveMalvern* community newsletter, reaching close to 2,000 community members.



During the winter 2016 term, Professor Dan Bender will teach a course in Culinary Ethnographies. Through this course, a student team will carry out a research project showcasing Malvern residents' approach to food.



U of T Scarborough: Cuisine and Culture:

1 faculty member

1 course

8 U of T Scarborough students

9 stories

Reaching approximately

2,000 community members



**Working with UTSC and sharing my Goan heritage was enjoyable and gave me the platform to imagine where I could take my catering business. UTSC is a place where diversity fuels innovation and where this diversity is celebrated.**

*Local resident Adelaide Tavares*

## Urban Farm

MFRC and U of T Scarborough are collaborating on a *Farmer Learning Series* as part of a pilot urban farm project. The workshop series is a platform for relationship building and knowledge exchange between U of T Scarborough students, professors, community farmers and gardeners, elementary and high school students and interested residents.

Ten community-based workshops will provide a bi-weekly forum to develop and exchange hands-on training, skills and understanding of environmental sustainability, how to run an urban farm and grow healthy produce. Approximately 250 unique program participants are anticipated for the workshop sessions, including children and youth from four local elementary and high schools, U of T

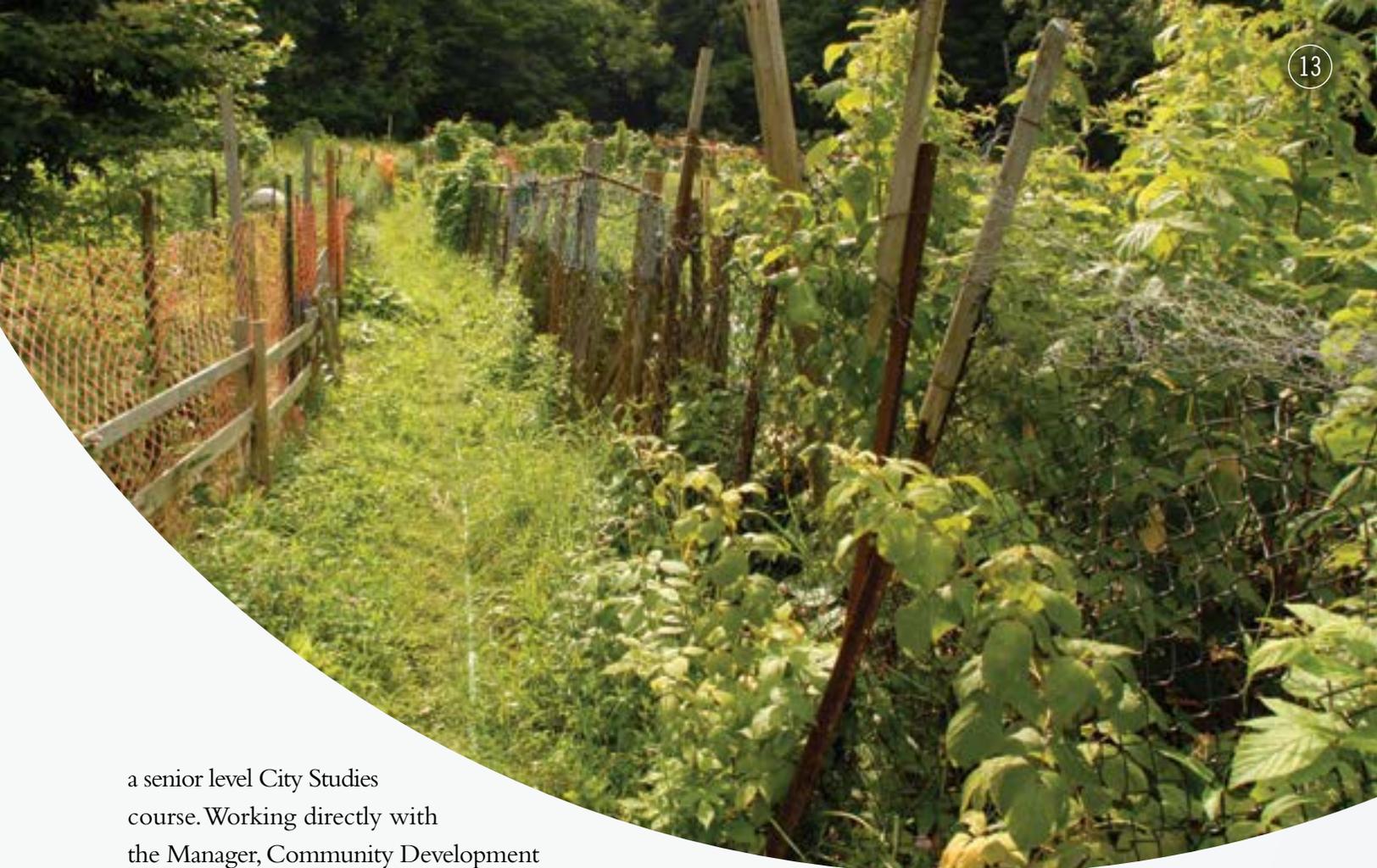
Scarborough students, community garden members, Morningside Heights urban farmers and interested Malvern residents.

Two U of T Scarborough student coordinators will assist in developing the workshops, identifying opportunities for speakers, and supporting the creation of knowledge transfer materials, such as a program webpage, blog posts and other communications tools.

U of T Scarborough faculty will share their knowledge and students will apply their research, classroom and leadership skills, while experiencing hands-on learning with the community. Elementary and high school teachers and students will learn about farming and the environment in a fun and interactive way. Farmers will gain critical sustainable management and business skills to expand the quality and quantity of their harvest.

The *Farmer Learning Series* has also provided a service-learning placement in the University's Partnerships & Legal Counsel office for a final-year U of T Scarborough student enrolled in





a senior level City Studies course. Working directly with the Manager, Community Development and Engagement, the student coordinated the logistics of the *Farmer Learning Series* with Malvern Family Resource Centre.

The knowledge gained from this program can also be leveraged and shared during the annual Eco Summit, which engages members of the community across the eastern GTA.

In addition to the *Farmer Learning Series*, Environmental Science professors have provided analysis of soil testing results, one of the more practical supports that the community needed.

U of T Scarborough and the Urban Farm:

8 faculty member participation opportunities

4 staff

1 service-learning student placement

2 U of T Scarborough students salaried opportunities

Reaching approximately

250 community members, including children and youth from 4 local elementary and high schools

**The *Farmer Learning Series* has allowed me to participate in an integral project of building local capacity that promotes the development of Malvern as a healthy, strong community. My experience taught me that social change is rooted within strong partnerships where an ongoing exchange of knowledge is central to how such projects are developed and sustained. I learned a lot and it was truthfully a great way for me to end my undergraduate journey.**

*U of T Scarborough student Rupinder Bagha*



## Service Learning

Service learning combines community service with classroom instruction. MFRC has integrated many of U of T Scarborough service-learning courses and classroom partnerships within their community development activities, such as conducting tours on neighbourhood food security and land use. Typically up to four students from a course taught by Assistant Professor Susannah Bunce engage in service-learning placements.

Students have been involved in the planning and facilitation of a community meeting to assess interest and opposition to the first community garden in the ward on city parkland. Students have also engaged with resident workgroups, attending meetings and presenting their findings.

U of T Scarborough City Studies,  
Health Studies and MFRC:

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**2** faculty  
members

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**12** students

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Reaching almost

**500**

community members



## Engaging in Health and Sport

U of T Scarborough is an active participant in the East Scarborough Multi-Sport Collaborative, which includes MFRC, Toronto Sports Council, and the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough. The collaboration aims to develop physical literacy for the pursuit of excellence in all areas of life, building community and individual resiliency.

### Sports Study for Seniors

This project, *The Role of Later Life Transitions for Increasing Physical Literacy and Sports Participation*, seeks to understand exercise and sports participation for adults who are 60+ living in culturally diverse communities, their likes and dislikes when it comes to participating in exercise and sports and what helps or hinders their use of facilities such as the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre.

While still in its very early stages, thus far students in two Health Studies courses have participated in projects engaging with Malvern community members about health and health policy issues relevant to seniors, and also assisted with ongoing projects in the Malvern community. We anticipate continuing and expanding this work, potentially developing an intergenerational physical literacy project aimed at seniors.

## East Scarborough Community Cycling Hub

U of T Scarborough is focused on reducing reliance on cars and enhancing cycling networks to use in the community. Community surveys and consultations conducted by MFRC have identified the lack of social and physical infrastructure as creating barriers to expanding cycling rates in the neighbourhood.

Building on these efforts, U of T Scarborough and the Malvern community are partners in the Community Cycling Hub, which aims to:

- Connect the community
- Develop a local cycling repair resource
- Improve knowledge of bike safety and bike maintenance, particularly for youth
- Improve understanding of the local cycling constituency through research.

### Community Cycling Hub:





U of T Scarborough students and City Studies faculty will conduct research including tracking the frequency and counts of cyclists at neighbourhood intersections, as well as study the walkability, and major origins and destination points in Malvern. This information will inform future community engagement strategies as well as Scarborough's involvement in Toronto's 10-year Cycling Network Plan.

U of T Scarborough students will also assist in the creation of a bicycle training curriculum, hosting 12 training sessions for neighbourhood youth on bike safety, repair and maintenance. The training component will include 12 hands-on sessions around bike safety, repair and maintenance to be held between May and November 2016.

Plans are under consideration for local youth to partner with the bike repair service offered on campus by U of T Scarborough's Sustainability Office, with U of T Scarborough students mentoring local youth trainees through bike mechanic apprenticeships. Other training activities will take place at the new cycling repair service space at 30 Sewells Road. The program could serve at least 100 students and local residents. Equipment purchased for the training will be available for future youth trainees.

The training sessions will equip local youth with transferable skills and enable them to access non-traditional employment opportunities. The post-training services will also provide community members an opportunity to access bicycle repairs in northeast Scarborough, an area that is currently underserved by specialized cycling repair and retail options.

*The Farmer Learning Series and East Scarborough Community Cycling Hub initiatives are funded through a TD Friends of the Environment Community Engagement Grant to the University of Toronto Scarborough.*

# LEARN Academic Support Program

This year in partnership with TAIBU, 21 U of T Scarborough students served as tutors and mentors for 610 high school and elementary students from nine schools, three community-based programs and one community health centre through the LEARN Program. An additional 312 high school students were engaged through 11 student symposiums.

This program, funded by the Trillium Foundation and administered through U of T Scarborough Student Life and the IMANI Academic Mentorship program, includes one-on-one educational assistance, helping with school assignments and working to identify students' individual learning needs. U of T Scarborough students serve as positive role models and the program includes story-telling, small and large group discussions, multi-media music production, photo-voice, drawing, spoken words, poetry, and drama.

LEARN also assists parents and caregivers to support students throughout their academic careers. Parents participated, increasing their skill sets to actively support their children's academic pursuits and improve their capacity to advocate on behalf of their children.

At the annual U of T Scarborough Student Life Leadership Conference, TAIBU staff co-facilitate sessions on an overview of the LEARN Academic Support Program and best practices in working with youth.

## LEARN Academic Support Program:

3 staff

21 U of T Scarborough students tutors

610 high school and elementary students from 9 schools

3 community-based programs

1 community health centre

11 student-led symposia engaged

312 high school students



positive role model



story-telling



## Community Impact Research Project

In fall 2015, TAIBU CHC, Blessed Mother Teresa Catholic Secondary School (BMT), and U of T Scarborough partnered on a joint Community Impact Research Project.

U of T Scarborough students were introduced to the theory and practice of community-based research and youth-led participatory action questions of community wellbeing, social infrastructure, and neighbourhood-based spatial justice.

Thirty-five students from BMT attended classes at U of T Scarborough, working with 32 undergraduate students to develop community impact research surrounding youth-friendly spaces in Malvern. Classes alternated between both schools as students designed and executed their respective research around areas such as youth well-being and recreation; safety, mobility, transportation and traffic; food pathways, food

security and healthy food options; and green spaces, parks and urban design.

Almost 1,200 community members were reached through the research.

This project increased student engagement in the community with relevant research-based learning. This was also an opportunity to showcase to secondary students, their parents and the greater community the working partnership with U of T Scarborough that enhances learning experiences and opportunities for youth.

Using the findings of the community impact research project, TAIBU CHC will continue to advance and advocate for change alongside BMT and Malvern Family Resource Centre. U of T Scarborough, BMT and TAIBU CHC are working to establish a partnership model with the Toronto Catholic School Board with hopes of developing a model/toolkit that can be widely shared for engaging in this kind of work. Discussions are also underway regarding opportunities for TAIBU CHC practitioners to teach at U of T Scarborough.

Community Impact Research Project:

1 faculty  
2 secondary school teachers  
(one is the principal)

32 U of T Scarborough  
students

35 high school  
students

8 community-based  
research areas

Approximately  
1,500 community  
members  
reached



## In Closing

U of T Scarborough has a track record of successful partnerships with agencies and organizations in the Malvern neighbourhood, and will continue to grow these relationships. By focusing University resources on real world issues in our neighbouring communities, we aim to continue working alongside our community partners to address pressing social issues and strengthen community capacity. By providing these unique civic engagement and experiential learning opportunities for our students, U of T Scarborough is able to encourage the development of life skills in communication, collaboration and leadership. By working across borders and sectors with local agencies and groups, U of T Scarborough's community partnerships make our region a better place in which to live, work and prosper.





To find out how  
you or your  
organization  
can **get involved**

please visit

[www.utsc.utoronto.ca/partnerships](http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/partnerships)



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