

DC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT



DURHAMCOLLEGE.CA/ALUMNI









Durham College is situated on the traditional lands of the First Peoples of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. These lands are covered under the Williams Treaties and rest within the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg. We offer our gratitude to the Indigenous Peoples who care for and, through the treaty process, share the lands on which we live, learn, teach and prosper today.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from Dr. Elaine Popp, DC President	4
Message from Drew Samuels, DCAA President	5
DCAA STRATEGIC PLAN	
2021-2024 DCAA Strategic Plan	6
DCAA Board of Directors' Update	7
ALUMNI PROGRAMS & EVENTS	
Alumni Initiatives	9
DC Alumni Connect App	10
Becoming an Alumni Leader	12
Alumni Events: Connect, Inspire and Celebrate	13
ALUMNI AWARDS	
2025 Premier's Award Nominees	17
2025 Alumni of Distinction Recipients	18
2024-2025 DCAA Leadership Awards	20
ALUMNI & COLLEGE NEWS	
Hot off the Press	23
APPENDICES	
2024-2025 Board of Directors	25
Finance Report	26





DR. ELAINE POPP, DC PRESIDENT

The Durham College Alumni Association (DCAA) continues to be a driving force behind our community's success, and I am often inspired by the impact our alumni make across industries and around the world. This year, Durham College (DC) proudly surpassed 120,000 alumni—a milestone that reflects the strength, reach, and legacy of our incredible graduates.

In 2025, we welcomed five individuals to the long list of outstanding graduates who have been recognized as DC's Alumni of Distinction. Jeremy Burns, Law and Security Administration (2004) and Penology and Youth (2005); Aaron Dale, Police Foundations (2005); Chris Cull, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning Technician (2007); Shawn Small, Sports Administration (1998) and Paula Sojo, Video Production (2024) and Photography (2025) were honoured at our Spring Convocation. Looking ahead, we're also excited to celebrate our 2025 Premier's Award nominees, Jeremy Burns and Aaron Dale. The dedication and achievements of these notable graduates are a testament to the transformative power of education and the enduring value of our alumni network.

A college milestone I'm particularly proud of is the launch of our bold new Strategic Vision—a five-year roadmap shaped by input from students, alumni, employees, and community partners. Launched last spring, this vision reaffirms our commitment to preparing career-ready graduates and experience that align with industry demands and contribute to our local and global communities. It's a plan that sets out our four goals: future-focused, sustainable, people-centred, community-connected.

The achievements shared in this report, along with countless others, demonstrate the power of a DC education and the strength of our DCAA community. I encourage you to explore the inspiring stories in this report and reflect on the incredible journey we've shared.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elaine Popp

President, Durham College





MESSAGE FROM DREW SAMUELS, DCAA PRESIDENT

As I reflect on the past year, I am both proud of the work we've accomplished and excited to see many plans come to life in the next year. It's an exciting time to be on the Durham College Alumni Association (DCAA) Board of Directors as we've been working on the association's next Strategic Plan and embarking on an Alumni Engagement campaign. The common thread of these two major projects is evolution. We're committed to listening to the needs of our fellow Durham College (DC) graduates and ensuring we're working to build an association that provides value at each stage of their lives and careers.

Looking forward, the 2025-2030 DCAA Strategic Plan positions us well for continued growth, and for discovering innovative ways for you to stay connected to your alma mater and inspire us all to carry our DC pride wherever life takes us.

Work continues on our Alumni Engagement campaign. The Board of Directors has contracted a creative branding agency to redefine the DCAA brand while developing a multi-channel communication strategy and an impactful campaign. During Phase One, we're building on insights from the 2023 Alumni Engagement Survey to define and establish a strong brand foundation for the DCAA. Stay tuned for updates as we move into Phase Two and Three in the upcoming months.

It's been a pleasure working with the entire Board over this past year as we continue to strengthen the DCAA. I would like to recognize retiring Directors, Kyle Douglas and Gaia Ninzatti, for their steadfast guidance and commitment in helping the Board to achieve its goals and the Advancement and Alumni Relations team for their support.

And finally, I would like to thank all of you. The work outlined in this report would not be possible without your feedback as, together, we build an alumni association you are proud to be a part of.

Sincerely,

Drew Samuels

Paralegal, Class of 2011

President, Durham College Alumni Association

2021-2024 DCAA STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR MISSION

Bringing the Durham College (DC) community together.

OUR VISION

We are a diverse global network of DC alumni that supports and encourages its members to stay connected by inspiring collaboration, engagement, giving and a commitment to success for future generations.

OUR VALUES

The DCAA Board of Directors are guided by the association's values: **service**, **diversity**, **inclusion**, **integrity** and **professionalism**.

LOOKING FORWARD: 2025-2030 DCAA STRATEGIC PLAN

The current plan is now available. Keeping in sync with the college's 2030 Strategic Vision, the new DCAA Strategic Plan embraces a **purpose**, which will guide the efforts of the DCAA Board of Directors and DC's Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations for the next five years:



We foster a lifelong sense of belonging through connection, engagement, and shared pride in Durham College.

DCAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS' UPDATE

The Board of Directors has continued to work on the execution of its Strategic Plan. Together, with the Advancement and Alumni Relations (AAR) team, the following projects were launched or developed further:

- » The Board established a Strategic Plan team that worked with AAR employees to create a new, five-year plan. The process included surveying alumni membership and conducting focus sessions with alumni and key stakeholders to obtain feedback.
- » In 2024, four teams were established composed of DCAA Board Directors, DC employees and alumni to find new ways to support alumni and students in specific areas: Indigenous Alumni, International Alumni, Business and Special Projects.
- » The Board skills matrix was reviewed and updated to ensure the Board composition reflects the alumni community and all Academic Faculties are represented. Specific gaps were identified and filled including international and business community representation.
- » As part of the Alumni Engagement Plan, an Alumni Engagement Data Management Guide was created by AAR to serve as a framework for defining, measuring and enhancing engagement. The guide provides structured guidelines for assessing alumni attitudes, engagement trends, and strategic initiatives to strengthen engagement.
- » The DCAA recognizes graduating students through special leadership awards, which will be presented at the 2025 DCAA Annual General Meeting: 20 recipients were selected for the DCAA Leaders of the Future Award, two recipients were selected for the DCAA Outstanding CICE Graduate Award, and one recipient was selected for a new award established this year, the DCAA Outstanding Indigenous Graduate Award. See list of recipients on page 20.



ALUMNI PROGRAMS & EVENTS

ALUMNI INITIATIVES

The DCAA Board of Directors and DC's AAR team work diligently each year to proactively engage with alumni and our communities to build opportunities for connection and directly support the success of future graduates. Examples of work accomplished this year include:

- » Over the past year, 128 alumni returned to the classroom to share their expertise and advice with current students. This is a 27% increase from the previous year.
- » The Alumni Mentorship Program connects students and recent graduates with established alumni professionals. Currently six programs, 49 mentors and 76 mentees are involved in the program. This is a 105% increase in the number of mentees participating in the program compared to the previous year.

"I have been a mentor through the Alumni Mentorship Program for six years now. It is incredibly rewarding to help students navigate through the thoughts and ideas they have for a future career. I see myself years back in their position and take pride in helping students feel that there is a light at the end of the education tunnel. I also use the program to help stay in touch with the college and learn from others."

— Cole French, Chemical Engineering Technology, Class of 2013

- » DCAA provided \$30,000 in matching funding to support two priorities at the college: DC's Food Access Bursary, which provides immediate assistance to students who are navigating unforeseen financial challenges, and the Student Experience Fund, helping DC refresh, expand, and acquire innovative new equipment and technology in learning spaces.
- » The DCAA supported 16 events this past year involving DC students, employees and alumni. Events included the Music Business Management Gala and Reunion 25th Anniversary; Faculty of Science Engineering Technology Hackathon; and Surviving Addiction, organized by DC's Social Impact Hub, featuring alumnus Chris Cull as a member of the panel followed by a screening of his docuseries.
- » In collaboration with the Faculty of Hospitality and Horticulture Science, the First Peoples Indigenous Centre, and the Barrett Centre of Innovation in Sustainable Urban Agriculture, the DCAA supported a new event in recognition of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: Healing through Food with DC grad Tamara Green.
- » The DCAA Board and AAR team began building a package to support alumni entrepreneurs and small business owners. This resource will include Marketplace on the DC Alumni Connect app, an alumni discount for small business insurance, information about investment opportunities, and access to programs and resources from DC's Office of Research Services, Innovation and Entrepreneurship.
- » As part of the upcoming package for alumni entrepreneurs, the DCAA became an Elevation member with Angel Investors Durham providing DC graduates with the opportunity to connect with investors and corporate partners for mentorship and business development support.

DC ALUMNI CONNECT APP

In 2024, the DC Alumni Connect app surpassed 10,000 users, marking a major milestone in alumni engagement. Through the app, alumni can access discounts on attractions, restaurants, services and shopping with **more than 100 alumni perks**.

Alumni Development Officer, Mary Weller, was invited to speak about DC's success with the app platform at the Higher Education Summit Advancement Roundtable.

IN THE LAST YEAR

- » Number of users has grown from 9,467 to 11,680
- » App users viewed more than 49K perks and redeemed more than 1.790 discounts
- » **5,605** contest entries
- » 72 alumni entrepreneurs have added their business to Marketplace, the free directory available on the app.





DC ALUMNI MARKETPLACE FEATURE TIANNA MCFARLANE, OWNER, HEAL IN COLOUR BUSINESS – OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT, CLASS OF 2014

"Marketing and Project Management were courses that helped me define my brand, handle the logistics of manufacturing a project and reach my target market. I decided to add my product to the DC Alumni Marketplace to grow my sales and bring more awareness to my brand."



BECOMING AN ALUMNI LEADER

Many alumni look for opportunities to give back to DC, helping to support future generations of students through co-op opportunities, mentorship, and philanthropy. The Alumni Leaders category recognizes DC graduates who have made an annual donation to DC of \$500 or more, further building upon the lasting impact they've had on the college.



Alumni Leader and DCAA President Drew Samuels shared a bit about why he chose to give back to DC and what philanthropy means to him. A 2011 graduate of the Paralegal graduate certificate program, Drew is a licensed paralegal as well as a part-time professor at DC.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GIVE TO DC?

Often when you go through life and experience a challenging time, you ask yourself, "Why me?" I think you should also ask yourself the same question when you experience good times. For that reason, I feel it is imperative that I give back to DC. During your post-secondary educational journey, you may experience difficult times. However, some of the best times are experienced at school as well. Giving to DC can help students who are in need and allow them to fully embrace the student experience.

WHAT ROLE DOES PHILANTHROPY PLAY IN YOUR LIFE?

With the resources I am fortunate enough to have — both time and money — I am able to influence social change which will outlive me. Your legacy can certainly be your family, but it can also be accompanied by your philanthropic endeavours. What you do today will have an effect on tomorrow and quite possibly generations to follow.

THANK YOU TO OUR ALUMNI LEADERS

Brandon Bird, Olinda Casimiro, Kyle Douglas, Linda Flynn, Lorraine Fuller, Allen S. Gates, Sally Hillis, Kirstine Farmer, Barbara H. Howe, Vanessa A. Hughes, Suzanne Land, Stew MacDonald, DJ Mackovets, Jason Rinaldi, Adam Ruppel, Drew Samuels, Nancy Shaw, Lee Terry, Paul J. Vessey, Jonathan T. Weaver, Mary Weller, Michael R. Whittaker

To learn more about becoming an Alumni Leader, contact Sally Hillis, Senior Alumni Development Officer, Advancement and Alumni Relations, at sally.hillis@durhamcollege.ca.

ALUMNI EVENTS: CONNECT, INSPIRE AND CELEBRATE

The AAR team executed a wide range of DCAA events, bringing unique experiences to alumni and students while strengthening partnerships across our campuses and communities.

2024 DCAA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

In addition to presenting the DCAA Annual Report, this event gives attendees an opportunity to connect with the DCAA Board of Directors, celebrate leadership award winners and socialize with fellow alumni. The 2024 AGM & Social was hosted at the Whitby campus and included a networking reception and tours of PROTO and the Vanhaverbeke Family EV Training Centre.

APPRENTICESHIP CELEBRATIONS

Celebration for apprenticeship programs take place throughout the academic year. This year, 289 graduates were recognized across nine celebrations.

DC ALUMNI HOCKEY NIGHT

More than 170 DC alumni, employees, and their friends and families attended this fun annual event at the Tribute Communities Centre in January to reconnect and cheer on the Oshawa Generals.

DC TALKS: ALUMNI SERIES

A hybrid event series held in The Rotary Global Classroom at DC's Oshawa campus, the DC Talks: Alumni Series invites alumni speakers from across the globe to share their career journeys and industry insights.

During November's event, attendees took time to reflect on *The Importance of Giving Back* as they heard from DC alumni from varying industries who have demonstrated a commitment to their communities. Panellists included 2024 Premier Award nominees, Chris Cull, Shelby Nelson, and Paula Sojo, as well as DCAA Board Director and G.W. McLaughlin Award recipient Kyle Douglas.

In March, four alumni demonstrated *The Zigzag Career Path* by sharing how they leveraged the skills and connections they made during their time at DC to help propel them into the next, sometimes unexpected, chapters of their careers. Panellists included Adam Hare, Karey Anne Large, Leslie Seeley and Kirsten Walker.

"Younger me didn't know it was okay to change the dream. You all have a dream right now, but things are constantly evolving. Be okay with that."

- Adam Hare, Multimedia Design, Class of 2006

FINALS FUEL FEST

AAR team members connected with current students at both the Oshawa and Whitby campuses to provide them with a sweet treat and beverages during their busy exam weeks.

CAREER LAUNCH

DC helps students gain not only industry-specific skills, but also provides invaluable opportunities to hone soft skills, make connections and prepare for life beyond the classroom. From January to March, AAR teams up with Career Development, Student Development, and International Education to host a series of events to help students and alumni develop confidence and smoothly transition from college to the workplace.

The Career Launch series includes LinkedIn 101, Pitch Perfect, Etiquette Dinner, International DC Talks, Student Leadership Summit and a Financial Literacy Workshop hosted in partnership with TD Insurance. Also a part of this series is Countdown to Grad, an annual event where students can register to graduate and learn about continuing education opportunities as well as their alumni benefits.

CONVOCATION

During Fall Convocation, two alumni returned as guest speakers to inspire and share advice with graduates: Adam Ruppel, Business – Human Resources, Class of 1997, and Rachael Wraith, Public Relations, Class of 2007.

"Stay curious, seek knowledge, and be open to new experiences. At DC, you have been equipped with skills and training that will serve you well into your career, but your education shouldn't stop here. The world is constantly evolving, and so should you."

- Rachael Wraith, Public Relations, Class of 2007

In June, DC proudly celebrated the largest graduating class in its history during Spring Convocation as well as honoured five exceptional individuals as Alumni of Distinction, highlighted for their outstanding contributions and leadership within their fields and communities.















ALUMNI AWARDS



2025 PREMIER'S AWARD NOMINEES JEREMY BURNS AND AARON DALE

The Premier's Awards for outstanding college graduates honour the important social and economic contribution that graduates make to Ontario and throughout the world. The awards are administered annually by Colleges Ontario.

DC alumni and Toronto police officers Jeremy Burns and Aaron Dale have created a pioneering initiative designed to support Canadian military veterans in their transition to civilian life and the program is now being adapted for veterans around the world. They are the co-founders of the Military Veterans Wellness Program (MVWP) which is addressing a critical need for support for veterans.

Both veterans themselves, Jeremy and Aaron drew on personal experience to create the program after recognizing that no formal mechanism or training existed to help veterans.

Aaron completed the Police Foundations program in 2005 and Jeremy graduated from the Law and Security Administration program in 2004 and Penology and Youth program in 2005.

Although they both attended DC, the pair didn't meet until they both joined the Toronto Police Service where they discovered a shared interest in developing a program to support other veterans.

They began working on the MVWP in 2019 on their own time and at their own expense spending two years developing the program by speaking to police leaders, health care professionals, veterans, social services and stakeholders. They presented it to the Toronto Police Chief in 2020.

As of May 2025, more than 200 veterans in Ontario have received help through the MVWP. The program is now part of mandatory training for Toronto police officers and more than 18,000 people have participated in the training in Canada. The program has been adapted internationally and is in the process of implementation in Australia, Ukraine, and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

2025 ALUMNI OF DISTINCTION RECIPIENTS

Each year, we recognize outstanding alumni whose extraordinary contributions are making a difference in their community and beyond. The 2025 Alumni of Distinction Award recipients are:



JEREMY BURNS & AARON DALE

Building on their college education and military service,
Toronto police officers Jeremy Burns and Aaron Dale
co-founded the Military Veterans Wellness Program (MVWP),
designed to help law enforcement members support veterans
in crisis. MVWP has been endorsed by organizations including
Veterans Affairs Canada, National Defence's Canadian Armed
Forces Transition Group, Royal Canadian Legion, and is now
part of mandatory training for Toronto police officers.



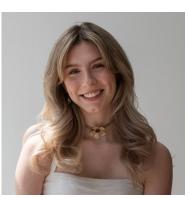
CHRIS CULL

Founder of Inspire By Example, Chris Cull's inspiring achievements are rooted in his personal transformation from addiction to recovery and advocacy. In 2014, Chris overcame a near decade-long addiction to opioids and cycled across Canada to raise awareness for mental health, addiction, and the opioid crisis. Chris has shared his expertise and advised numerous institutions and is a member of the World Health Organization's Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Mental Health, Neurological and Substance Use Conditions.



SHAWN SMALL

Founder and President of RISE Integrated Sports + Entertainment, Shawn Small has built an agency that champions diversity, inclusion, and innovation in sports partnerships. Throughout his career, he has spearheaded major sponsorship initiatives for organizations, including Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, Northern Super League, and the Canadian Elite Basketball League. Beyond driving measurable success for sports organizations, he is helping to guide the next generation of sports leaders.



PAULA SOJO

At the age of 18, Paula Sojo was diagnosed with a severe case of Crohn's disease, resulting in 17 surgeries and a permanent ostomy. Determined to help others, she teamed up with her brother to found Ostome Fashion, a thriving business that provides fashionable and empowering options to all ostomy users. With help from family, friends and mentors, she has not only changed her life, but promoted representation and acceptance and empowered her community.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Learn more about the most recent Alumni of Distinction recipients at durhamcollege.ca/alumniofdistinction. Read their full bios and hear their advice for new graduates in the 2025 Alumni of Distinction video.



2024-2025 DCAA LEADERSHIP AWARDS

DCAA LEADERS OF THE FUTURE AWARD

This award is presented annually to graduating students who have demonstrated their leadership skills by enhancing the student life experience for their peers, acting on behalf of other students to create positive change, motivating others to become engaged in campus life, and demonstrating care for others by encouraging divergent viewpoints and multiple perspectives.

Congratulations to the 2024-2025 recipients:

Izza Adil Monique McDonald

Maya Austin Maxwell Morrow

Faheema Begum Brendan Obilo

Nicole Bisschop Riya Parikh

Josiah Chung Darshan Patel

Emmanual Echoga Sajida Rana

Olivia Flanagan Tanya Serdiney

Nikhil Goyal Ryan Sopha-Wright

Aizlon Halliday Kenza Taylor

Sleiddy-Gerrold Joseph Jan Maegan Veneracion

DCAA OUTSTANDING CICE GRADUATE AWARD

This award is presented annually to graduating students from the Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) program who have displayed a commitment to making a positive impact on the program inside and outside of the classroom.

Congratulations to the 2025 recipients:

Victoria McDonald

Naveen Shelliya

DCAA OUTSTANDING INDIGENOUS GRADUATE AWARD

This award is presented annually to a graduating Indigenous student who has demonstrated consistent and outstanding leadership within the Indigenous community.

Congratulations to the 2025 recipient:

Brooke Wheeler











ALUMNI & COLLEGE NEWS

HOT OFF THE PRESS

- » 2011 Human Resources Business Administration graduate Kyle Douglas was named the 2024 G.W. McLaughlin Award recipient by the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce, recognizing the profound impact he has made in his community.
- » DC alumna Victoria Rinsma was named the Canadian finalist in the S. Pellegrino Young Chef Academy competition and is headed for the world competition in Milan, Italy, this fall.
- » Mackenzie Naccarato, a DC alumna who now teaches Communications in the Faculty of Social and Community Services, guided the next generation through career-shaping experiences at the annual Justice Games. As a former Protection, Security and Investigation student, Naccarato once competed in the Justice Games herself—an experience that helped her build confidence, professional networks, and even land a role with the Canada Border Services Agency after graduation.
- » Animation grad Daylan Belsey won top spot in the Ubisoft Toronto NEXT Challenge, landing him a coveted internship at Ubisoft Toronto.
- » DC was well represented at the second annual TEDxOshawa event in May. The co-founders and organizers of the event are both DC alumni. Faris Mahoon Siddiqui is a 2024 graduate of the Firefighter Pre-Service Education and Training program, while Chad Andress recently completed the Electrical Engineering Technician program. Together, they've created a stage for the changemakers of Durham Region to share their expertise.
- With funding from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Foundation and Mitacs and invaluable support from DC's Social Impact Hub, alumnus Chris Cull has launched Season 2 of Surviving Addiction. This docuseries explores the different perspectives of those touched by addiction, from those in recovery to the family and friends who support them and the doctors who treat them.

Get the latest college news, alumni success stories, and information about alumni events and perks. Visit <u>durhamcollege.ca/alumni</u> to ensure your contact information is up to date to receive the monthly Alumni Newsletter in your inbox.

CELEBRATE OUR CAREER-READY GRADS

These new members of the DCAA shared a little about their experiences as a student and what's next for them now that they've completed their credential.





APPENDICES

2024-2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Drew Samuels, President

Paralegal, Class of 2011

Jesara Holla, Vice President 1

Journalism - Print, Class of 2006

Prachi Verma, Vice President 2

Project Management & Data Analytics for Business Decision Making, Class of 2024

Cassie-Jean Dillon, Past President

Fitness and Health Promotion, Class of 2018

Heather Brown, Director

Social Service Worker, Class of 2021 & Human Resource Management, Class of 2022

Kyle Douglas, Director

Business Administration – Human Resources, Class of 2011

Paul Fritzsch, Director

Horticultural – Food and Farming, Class of 2023

Talia Lane, Director

Journalism, Class of 2000

Patrick Lyver, Director

Graphic Design, Class of 2002

Jennifer McCool-Closs, Director

Advanced Care Paramedic, Class of 2011 & Primary Care Paramedic, Class of 2007

Gaia Ninzatti, Director

Public Relations and Strategic Communications, Class of 2023

Christy Stone-Curry, Director

Human Resources Management, Class of 1997

Liam Croft, Student Representative

Mechanical Engineering Technology, Class of 2025

Ariel Sully

Associate Vice President, Advancement and Alumni Relations, Durham College

Sally Hillis

Senior Alumni Development Officer, Advancement and Alumni Relations, Durham College

FINANCE REPORT

REVENUE	BUDGET	PROJECTED 8/31/25	VARIANCE
AFFINITY PARTNERS TD Insurance incl. sponsorship Manulife	203,200 3,000	236,814 2,882	117% 96%
EVENTS DC Alumni Hockey Night Etiquette Dinner	3,500	3,514 1,133	100%
OTHER Tax rebates Convocation flowers GIC interest revenue TOTAL REVENUE	5,500 5,300 10,000 230,500	5,714 5,570 8,029 263,656	104% 105% 80% 114%
EXPENSES GIVING	EXPENSES	PROJECTED 8/31/25	VARIANCE
Scholarships Campaign Pledge: CSTT YR 4/5 Enactus DC Sponsorship DCAA Leadership Awards Matching donations	15,000 50,000 5,000 5,000 7,000 30,000	15,000 50,000 5,000 12,427 6,150 30,000	100% 100% 100% 249% 88% 100%
EVENTS AND PROGRAMS DC Talks: Alumni Series DC Alumni Hockey Night Convocation Career Launch Alumni Mentorship Program Alumni at Work AGM & Hail and Farewell Alumni of Distinction & Premier's Awards	1,000 11,000 12,000 15,500 2,500 5,000 8,500	770 14,397 14,351 10,302 1,125 11,179 2,782	77% 131% 120% 66% 45%
OTHER Alumni swag Videography Advertising Strategic Plan Alumni Engagement (AE) campaign AE part-time contract Miscellaneous TOTAL EXPENSES	OTHER 17,000 20,000 4,000 3,000 17,000 2,000 230,500	13,554 14,737 1,859 603 21,848 19,665 2,904 248,653	80% 74% 46% 20% 116% 145% 108%
Surplus/(Deficit) Estimated bank balance a/o 8/31/25		15,003 372,200	

WE KEEP GROWING 1 20,000 CALUMINI

After a record-breaking 4,858 graduates received their credential at the 2025 Spring Convocation, Durham College celebrated reaching more than 120,000 graduates since opening its doors in 1967.



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