

Seneca Innovation: Supporting our Students and our Community during the Pandemic

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The Seneca Innovation team has been working diligently over the summer to continue Seneca's applied research, entrepreneurship, and innovation focus and activities. Like many others, our team has been working remotely in home offices, but due to the essential nature of some of our work, team members have been working on certain projects on campus. The emergence of innovation and its impact on our everyday lives amidst the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be ever-present.

Early in the pandemic, applied research funding agencies responded quickly, establishing programs to innovate solutions in response. Seneca Innovation became laser focused on advancing applied research initiatives with industry partners as this critical time. And now, we are pleased to announce that a significant portfolio of funding applications were successful. Since March, Seneca Innovation was successful in securing several new applied research grants supporting a total of 19 projects engaging faculty, students, and industry. Specifically, COVID-19 focused projects include:

- Development and Characterization of COVID-19 vaccine candidate
- Machine learning and blockchain-backed optimized assignment matching for PSWs to improve understaffing and risk during the COVID-19 outbreak
- Recombinant protein production in prokaryotic and eukaryotic heterologous hosts for serological assays for COVID-19
- Modification of In-Situ Monitoring System for Water Treatment Utilities and Regulators to support testing for COVID-19



HELIX responded quickly to the pandemic, ensuring our students and community continued to receive support and engage in the extracurricular innovation events. Within a week, all mentor and coaching sessions were 100% online to ensure HELIXers continued to receive the support in developing their ventures. Since the end of March, all HELIX events have been delivered online.

New Career Recharge sessions focused on relevant topics including *How to set up a home office* and *How to develop a venture during COVID-19* were developed and delivered through WebEx.

The fourth annual HELIX Summer Institute was completely virtual this year. The six-day design jam resulted in solutions to real business problems faced by Southlake Hospital due to COVID-19. More than 30 cross-disciplinary participants engaged online with facilitators, mentors, and key stakeholders at Southlake to develop and pitch their solutions.

In addition, our HELIXers have been active during the pandemic. To learn more about the ways HELIXers have given back to frontline workers and pivoted their businesses to support others, please check out the Seneca News story, "[HELIXers offer burritos, coffee, masks and more.](#)"

Finally, Seneca Innovation launched a new innovation program for Seneca employees called *Seneca Innovates*. Through *Seneca Innovates*, all employees can submit their ideas, inspirations, and suggestions for solving a problem, improving a service or process, or just changing something for the better at Seneca. The program engages a team of volunteer innovation reviewers and champions to help other employees build their innovative ideas and bring them forward for consideration. We started *Seneca Innovates* with a call for ideas



related to COVID-19 and remote working. Since the program launched in June, we have received more than 20 innovative ideas from faculty and staff at Seneca. Submit your idea at



<https://www.senecacollege.ca/senecainnovates>.

View the [September 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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