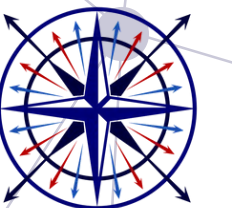




A COMPASS FOR THE FUTURE: THE DESJARDINS CENTRE FOR ADVANCED TRAINING

2024-2025 IMPACT REPORT

CENTRE DESJARDINS DE
FORMATION AVANCÉE



DESJARDINS CENTRE FOR
ADVANCED TRAINING

MESSAGES FROM LEADERSHIP

The Institute’s 2030 Vision sets an ambitious path forward to advance precision health across the life course. We are mobilizing five Research Priorities and four Enabling Priorities that together accelerate scientific discovery, improve patient care and create the conditions for research excellence to thrive.

At the heart of this vision is people. To truly advance precision health across the life course, we must cultivate the next generation of researchers and professionals who are equipped to work across disciplines, drive innovation, and help shape the future of health and research.

The Desjardins Centre for Advanced Training (DCAT) exemplifies this commitment. Through programs that align with our research priorities, DCAT prepares trainees to apply their expertise in multiple areas—whether by driving discovery in academia, advancing innovation in industry or shaping evidence-based policy in government.

Already, we see the results. DCAT alumni are strengthening Quebec’s life sciences ecosystem and contributing nationally and internationally. Their leadership is a powerful reflection of our mission at The Institute: research and training that translates into tangible benefits for health and society.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Touyz'.

Dr. Rhian M. Touyz, Executive Director and Chief Scientific Officer, RI-MUHC

When DCAT was established, my vision was to unite two outstanding institutions—the RI-MUHC and Concordia University's John Molson School of Business (JMSB)—to create a unique opportunity for advancing the professional development of our health research trainees. This initial partnership served as a catalyst, demonstrating the profound value of integrating complementary training in business administration and management with health research.

Since then, our graduates have gone on to diverse careers in academia and industry, where this interdisciplinary foundation has helped ease transitions and supported their professional success.

Today, DCAT has evolved beyond this initial collaboration, building a broad network of partnerships with training organizations across Canada. With foundational support from Desjardins, we were able to pilot and scale innovative programs that showcased our model's value. This success helped us secure additional funding from the Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). As a result, DCAT has solidified its role as a leader in professional training for health research trainees—amplifying its impact at local, provincial, and national levels.



Dr. Miguel Burnier, Director, Desjardins Centre for Advanced Training



The Institute’s trainees are exceptional & committed researchers who have taken on the significant challenge of pursuing graduate studies or postdoctoral training. This is no small feat—they invest immense time and effort into their research, earning recognition through awards, publications, and conference presentations.

Yet despite these accomplishments, many trainees remain unsure about what comes next—a pattern I frequently see in career advising sessions. This uncertainty often leads to real anxiety and confusion.

This is where DCAT comes in. We provide practical, timely, and personalized support through career advising appointments that offer actionable guidance, programs aligned with real-world opportunities, and a team fully dedicated to helping trainees. Even when someone can’t yet see what’s next, we walk alongside them—and we’ve helped hundreds find their path.

The best part? Five or ten years later, our alumni are in leadership roles across biotech, government, academia, and at the forefront of research and innovation that’s shaping the future of health and science. Our impact is unique—nearly 15 years ago, we became Quebec’s first research institute to align career development support with research training.



Emily Bell, PhD, Associate Director, Desjardins Centre for Advanced Training



ABOUT US

In the vast world of health research, trainees often begin with a destination in mind—but the path forward isn't always clear. Some realize along the way that their goals are changing. Others uncover new opportunities they never knew existed.

That's where we come in.

Our Centre is a compass—not a map. We guide, but don't direct. Instead, we help trainees navigate uncertainty, explore opportunities, and chart a path grounded in their unique strengths, values, and sense of purpose.

Whether they go on to lead groundbreaking research, shape the future of care, influence health policy, or drive innovation in the life sciences, our mission is the same:

To help them move forward —with confidence, clarity, and impact.



We help research trainees find their way—not follow someone else's.

BEYOND THE LAB: TOWARD REAL-WORLD HEALTH IMPACT



Where We're Based

At the heart of **Quebec's #1 Research Hospital**—affiliated with McGill University and the McGill University Health Centre—**our Centre supports over 1,200 research trainees per year**, equipping them to make meaningful contributions across the health research ecosystem.



What We Offer

We help students explore and access careers across government and public health, clinical trials and medical affairs, regulatory science and health product development, academic and industry research, as well as nonprofit, global health, data science, and policy sectors.



What Sets Us Apart

We are the first scientific research institute in Quebec to create space for trainees to explore career paths alongside their research training.

WHAT WE DO

Discover: The Right Skills

Career and professional development programming that builds essential knowledge and practical skills

Discover: Career Confidence

We create opportunities for career exposure that help participants explore pathways and build self-confidence

What's next: Connect into our network

Mentorship, alumni engagement, and professional exposure to career paths in science, policy, healthcare, and innovation—all through our homegrown community of experts and leaders.



900+

Trainees engaged each year



51+

Events or learnings annually



\$22,500

In awards and prizes

DCAT'S KEY PROGRAMS

Clinical, Regulatory and Medical Affairs

- DCAT program from 2019 - 2023 — supported by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund
- Evolved into the CANTRAIN Career Development Program
- DCAT remains the primary partner with Emily Bell as the stream lead
- 16 modules on support roles in drug development and related areas

- Clear evidence of career impact
- Multi-site implementation planned for 2025-2026

Future in Focus: Precision Medicine Career Discovery Program

- Piloted in Winter 2025
- Funded by Tremplin FRQ
- 8 modules provide career exposure to careers in drug development and medtech innovation

- Significant changes in participants' career objectives
- Most participants experienced increased career confidence

Webinars & Career Advising

- Consistent availability of one-on-one career advising for trainees
- Includes workshops such as Confidence in Connection, Identifying Roles in the Life Sciences, Tips for Job Searching, and Transferable Skills
- Paired with online self-paced learning

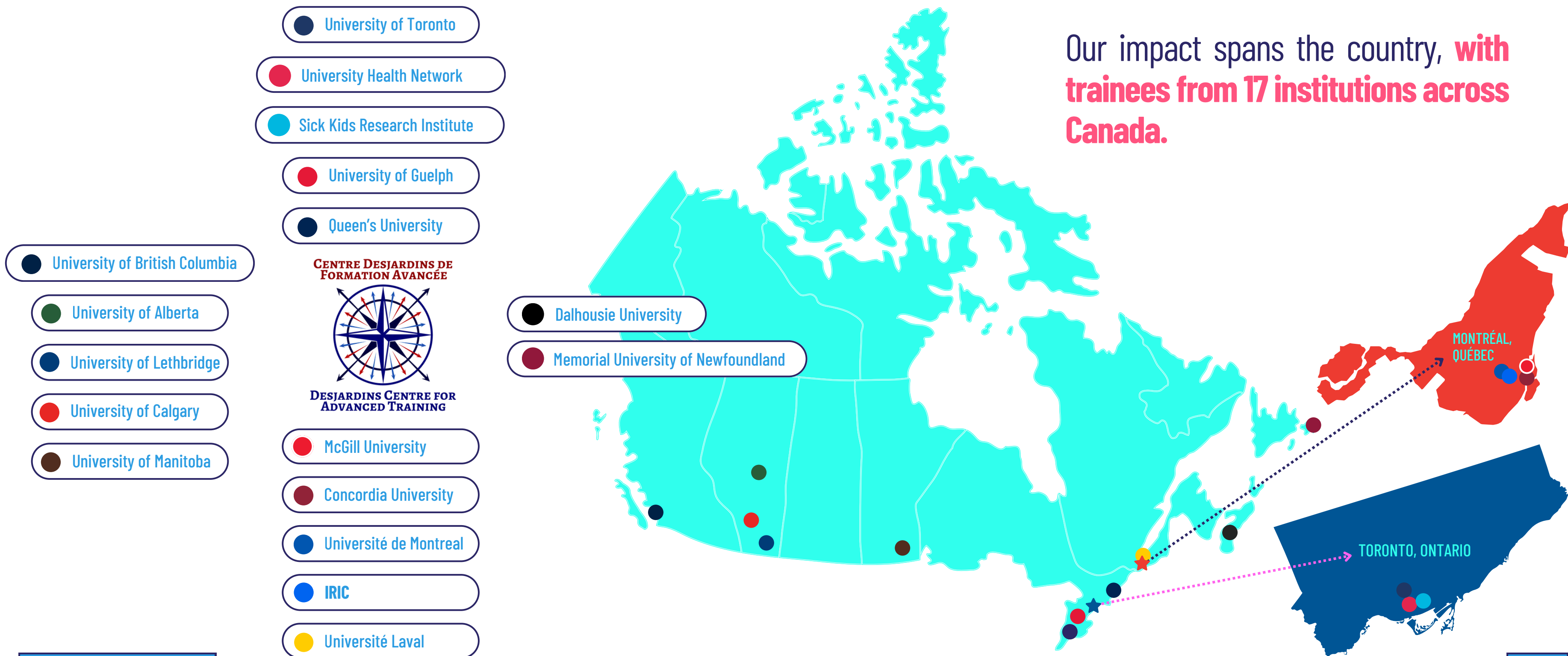
- Over 80 career advising appointments per year
- Around 20 registered students per webinar
- Serve as a common entry point for support

Networking

- Host networking activities and promote external opportunities to students
- Regularly connect students with professionals in our alumni network

- Networking is the most in-demand activity
- Relies on active alumni engagement

THE NATIONWIDE REACH OF OUR LEARNER COMMUNITY



DCAT'S PARTNER NETWORK

PARTNERS - CLINICAL RESEARCH CAREER DEVELOPMENT



CENTRE DESJARDINS DE FORMATION AVANCÉE



DESJARDINS CENTRE FOR ADVANCED TRAINING

EDI TEAM & DCAT PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE RESEARCH TRAINING



TREMPLIN CONSORTIUM OF MCGILL-AFFILIATED HEALTH CENTRES



FOCUSED TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS



OUR PROGRAMS DRIVE CAREER-READY RESULTS

Trainees Trust and Value the Programs



90-100% would recommend to a friend



93%

say it complements their formal training

They Gain Career-Ready Skills



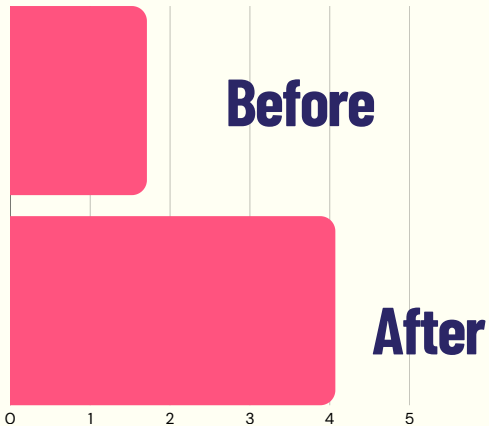
Increased knowledge of non-academic careers



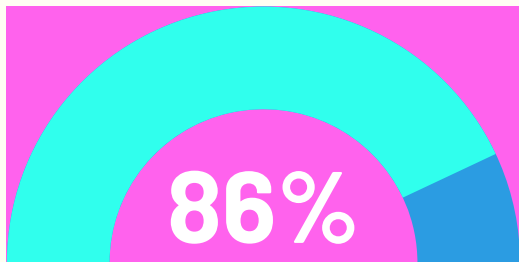
Improved career research and readiness skills

They Leave More Prepared and Confident

Able to implement job search strategies

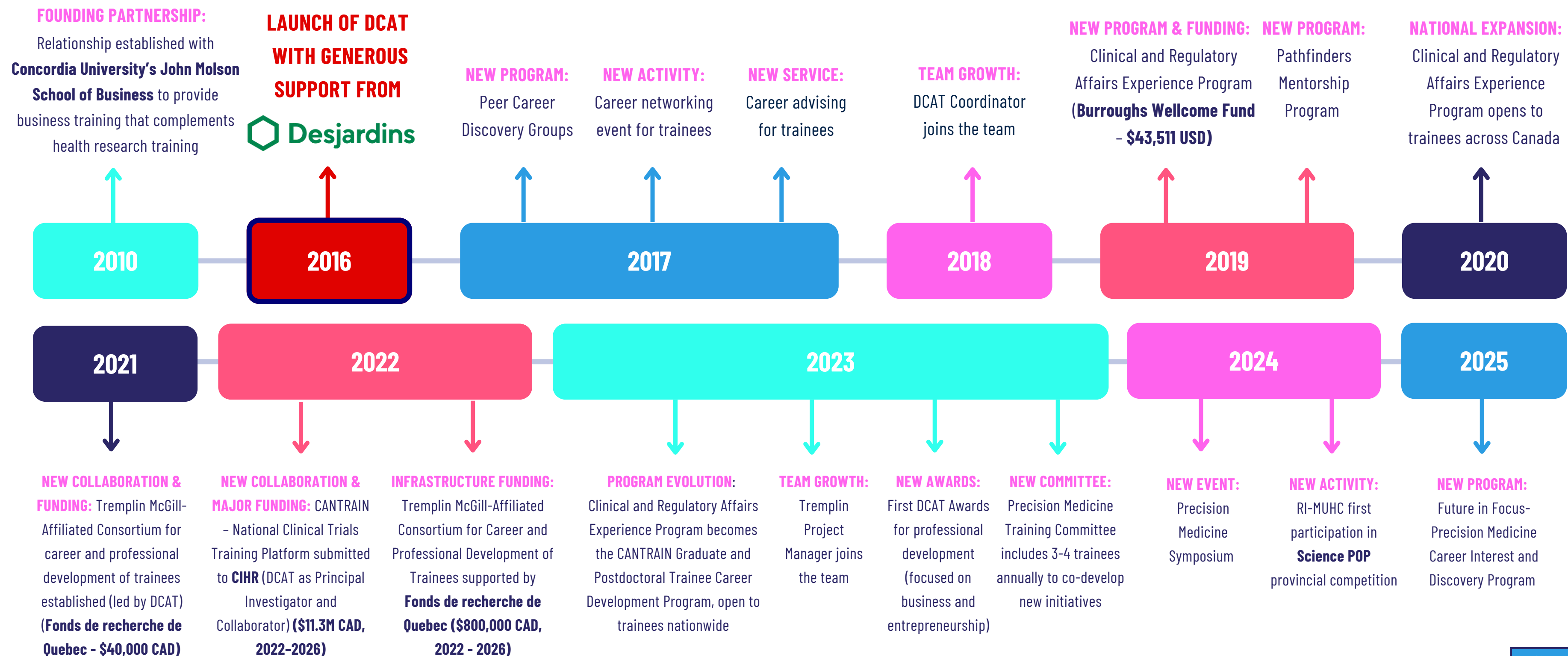


Report a boost in overall **career confidence**



of trainees report increased confidence

DCAT TIMELINE



WHAT SETS US APART

Other Institutes

- Focus on technical/scientific training
- Rely on informal mentorship for career planning
- Assumes most students will follow an academic track
- Have limited insight into opportunities beyond academia

The Institute

- Structured career development **alongside** research
- Builds **confidence and clarity** in diverse career pathways
- Encourages **ongoing, long-term engagement with The Institute**
- **Aligns training with talent needs** in health and research sectors

DCAT



VOICES OF OUR TRAINEES AND ALUMNI

Hear about the real benefits of our programs—from the people who've experienced them. From building **career confidence**, to **gaining the right skills**, to tapping into our **homegrown network**, these stories reflect the impact that lasts well beyond graduation.





YOGESH BRAMHECHA, PHD
DIRECTOR OF BIOMARKER DISCOVERY
JANUX THERAPEUTICS
PHD, EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE
(TRANSLATIONAL ONCOLOGY), MCGILL, 2018

“Over the past decade, I’ve collaborated with various biotech companies to identify early biomarkers of response for novel cancer therapies now in clinical trials. **My ultimate goal is to develop early diagnostic tools that help personalize cancer treatment.**”

“From the start, DCAT focused on **bridging the gap between academia and industry** by offering programs/workshops that introduced graduate students like me to industry-focused career paths. These experiences helped me decide to pursue a career in industry research rather than a postdoctoral fellowship. **I still remember the resume and LinkedIn workshops that helped me craft a strong professional profile.**”

“I’ve always been committed to supporting graduate trainees as they transition from academia to industry. **Recently, I participated as a speaker in DCAT’s Future in Focus program and continue to mentor several trainees navigating this path.**”

"I was part of the Fall 2019 Peer Career Discovery Groups Program cohort and I must say **it really opened my eyes to the different career paths that were possible for PhD holders.** The program was extremely well designed, and taught me about different sectors of work for scientists, **how the skills we develop in academia are extremely valuable and transferable, and provided me with a sort of blueprint for my career development.**"

"I especially appreciated the DCAT **roundtables with professionals from different sectors.** They allowed me to **speak directly with a variety of individuals who were willing to share their own experiences and give us career advice.**"

"Currently, I work on supporting governments in articulating the demand for science-based solutions to concrete health problems."



ALICE BRUNEAU, PHD
FORMER INTERN
DIGITAL HEALTH AND INNOVATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
PHD, EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE, MCGILL, 2025



RENEE YU, PHD

**CLINICAL RESEARCH AND TRIAL COORDINATOR
BC CANCER**

**PREVIOUSLY WORKED AT THE RI-MUHC'S
CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE MEDICINE
PHD, NEUROSCIENCE, MCGILL, 2023**

"DCAT played a pivotal role in shaping my career path. Through the Peer Career Discovery Groups program, I discovered a range of career possibilities outside of academia. The program encouraged me to **assess my personal strengths and interests to find a better career fit."**

"The workshops were not only useful in terms of the their content, but also a great opportunity to meet fellow trainees who had similar struggles navigating through graduate school and/or trying to pivot from academia to something different and the moral support this provided was indispensable."

"I'm now pursuing a career in clinical research thanks to completing the Clinical and Regulatory Affairs Experience Program which helped me realize that clinical research is something that motivates and excites me."

"DCAT has been instrumental in offering me opportunities to learn and grow, both within my research and beyond it. **One highlight was the full bursary that supported my participation in the Life Sciences Entrepreneurship Development Program (LSEDP).** It broadened my perspective beyond academia, equipping me with practical tools and **giving me a bird's-eye view of what a career in the pharmaceutical, private, or public sector could look like.**"

"I'm incredibly proud of our phenomenal team at **ThinkSci**, who have been instrumental in not only delivering **hands-on STEM workshops to high school and CEGEP students across Montreal and Ottawa** but, more importantly, in **building a welcoming community of mentorship and support for incoming trainees.**"

"To me, community is everything, and **real impact means giving back to the networks that have shaped and supported me.** My hope is to keep showing up for these communities, **mindful that big change often happens through small, consistent actions.**"



PHOENIX PLESSAS-AZURDUY
CURRENT MCGILL MSC STUDENT,
EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE (FAST TRACKING
TO PHD)
FOUNDER, THINKSCI
RECIPIENT OF A 2024 DCAT AWARD

FROM OUR NETWORK TO QUÉBEC'S INNOVATION SCENE

ABOUT NANOFACILE

"Nanofacile develops tools, including our flagship "Nanomedicine in a Box" kit, that simplify the encapsulation of RNA into lipid nanoparticles (LNPs), a critical technology behind gene therapies, mRNA vaccines, and targeted drug delivery. **By making these advanced technologies more accessible and scalable, we help researchers and companies translate discoveries into therapies faster.**"

THE WAYS RUBÉN GIVES BACK

"At Nanofacile, I've **hosted internships** through programs such as Tremplin, offering experiential learning at the intersection of science and business. I've also **given guest lectures and participated in panel discussions**, including sessions like Future in Focus, on translational research, biotech innovation, and career development, all with **the goal of bridging the gap between academic research and real-world impact.**"

WHY DO YOU CHOOSE TO MENTOR AND SUPPORT TRAINEE DEVELOPMENT AT THE INSTITUTE?

"I know firsthand how transformative it can be to work in an environment that supports your ideas and helps you turn them into reality."

"Giving back to trainees **allows me to contribute to that same collaborative culture and to help others navigate both the opportunities and challenges of research and entrepreneurship.** The **RI-MUHC has profoundly shaped my journey**, and I remain deeply grateful for the opportunities and experiences I gained there."



RUBÉN LÓPEZ

**CEO AND FOUNDER, NANOFACILE
PDF, MCGILL, 2020-2023**

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Your donation supports major initiatives:



Fuels real-world health impact by supporting people — not just projects.



Creates a ripple effect: empowering students today, driving lasting health improvements tomorrow.



A special thank you to **Desjardins for their generous support, which makes it possible for us to provide invaluable career programming to our graduate trainees.**

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For more information: <http://rimuhc.ca/dcat>

Contact: [Dr. Emily Bell](#), Associate Director

Email: dcat@muhc.mcgill.ca

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