

Supporting Student Health and Wellness

YEAR IN REVIEW 2024-2025



CHRIS LEWIS ('24)

Meet Chris Lewis

2024-2025 Meighen Centre Post-Grad Intern

Chris Lewis ('24) wants to be a doctor. Pediatric medicine and helping children have long been his passion and goal — and the reason he earned his Bachelor of Science at Mount Allison University.

Lewis was active in student and community life — delivering orientation programming for incoming students, volunteering with a local food bank, working with student government, playing on the University's lacrosse team, and conducting research with two Biology professors. He spent his first two years of university balancing academics with hockey as a member of the Amherst Junior A Ramblers, and for several years now has coached U13 soccer in his hometown of Moncton and volunteered in the pediatrics unit at the Moncton Hospital.

This past year, Lewis was the Post-Grad Intern at Mount Allison's Meighen Centre for students with disabilities. In this one-year position, interns work the front desk at the Meighen Centre, providing a welcoming face to visitors and first point of contact for students looking to access supports and services. The interns also deliver key Meighen Centre resources and typically identify and develop a special project to address opportunities or gaps in programming.

Lewis created *Limitless Learning* — a podcast on disability awareness. In each episode, Lewis speaks with a Mount Allison student and explores personal experiences of dyslexia, epilepsy, autism, chronic pain, and other diagnoses.

"I had used Meighen Centre resources as a student and knew first-hand how valuable the Centre can be," says Lewis. "Still, I had so many learning moments while working as the Post-Grad Intern. I became more aware of the many disabilities that bring students to the Centre and realized I didn't understand enough about what these individuals were going through. I thought: If I feel this way, others probably do too. That is why I created the *Limitless Learning* podcast — to confront stereotypes and highlight how each person's experience is unique."

Lewis is thrilled that the podcast is another way Mount Allison can spread awareness and foster a culture of care on campus.

During the internship, Lewis also managed the Meighen Centre's notetaking service, which provides students with long- and short-term disabilities high-quality notes from their academic course lectures.

Fellow students are hired as notetakers, and that is another positive of the program because those students now have even more motivation to attend all their classes and pay careful attention to the material so that the notes they submit are comprehensive.

"Working as the Meighen Centre's Post-Grad Intern was an invaluable experience," says Lewis. "I learned so much about confronting stereotypes and the importance of equitable learning. It was also an important experience for my future in the medical field — helping me see and understand different perspectives and develop empathy and a deeper understanding of individuals' experiences."

Lewis begins studies at Dalhousie University Medical School this fall.

What is the Meighen Centre?

Mount Allison's Meighen Centre supports students with disabilities and medical conditions, permanent or temporary, by providing academic and campus accommodations. It also offers an orientation for new students and personalized support in making the transition from school to careers. The Centre supports hundreds of students each year.

Historic Project

Mount Allison names new Centre for Health and Wellness

In June, the University proudly announced the naming of the future Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Centre for Health and Wellness, in recognition of a transformative \$5 million philanthropic gift.

Donors Scott McCain ('78) and Leslie McLean ('81) are longtime supporters of Mount Allison and advocates for the importance of active, healthy lifestyles.

"Working in the health field has been my life's passion, so anything I can do to help facilitate the wellness of others is something that is very important to me. I could not be more grateful to be a part of it," says McLean.

The Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Centre for Health and Wellness is part of a broader campus revitalization plan that includes the renewal of the R.P. Bell Library and enhancement of recreation facilities.

In its initial phase, the facility will serve as the Interim Library, providing a much-needed temporary library space on campus while the R.P. Bell Library undergoes construction from 2027–2030. Following that, it will serve as a long-term sport and recreation facility, contributing to the health and wellness of students, faculty, staff, and the wider community.

The fully accessible centre will include 26,000 square feet of versatile playing space, high-performance sport flooring, removable turf, and a walking track.

The Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Speaker Series will also launch this fall, bringing prominent voices to campus to explore the vital connections between physical health, community well-being, and leadership.



EXTERIOR DESIGN



INTERIOR DESIGN



(L-R): Scott McCain, Leslie McLean, President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Ian Sutherland, and Chair of the Board of Regents Cheryl Hodder.



HEATHER MacTAVISH ('25)

Public Health Impact

Heather MacTavish ('25) investigates disease transmission and rural health care delivery

Heather MacTavish ('25), from Barrie, ON, chose Mount Allison because of its size and research opportunities.

"I had never heard of Mount Allison until my mom saw the article in *Maclean's* about it being the country's top undergraduate university," says MacTavish. "Then I met an admissions officer in Toronto, and he mentioned how you can get involved with research early on in your program compared to other schools — that was when I got hooked on the idea of coming to Mount Allison."

MacTavish earned her Bachelor of Science, honours Biology, minor Data Science, and during her degree made important contributions to health research and communications.

While a second-year student, she secured her first research assistant position, working with a professor and a master's student on a bioinformatics project. The following summer, MacTavish collaborated with Data Science professor Dr. Matthew Betti on a project looking at flu trends throughout Canada and modelling the impact of non-pharmaceutical COVID-19 interventions on flu incidence. MacTavish's work on the project earned her the award for Best Scientific Communication at the 2023 Science Atlantic student conference and co-authorship on an upcoming journal article.

MacTavish is passionate about exploring and modelling health data, communicating findings to the public, and uncovering opportunities to improve health care. She is grateful Mount Allison let her combine her interests in data science and biology and provided her the foundation for a meaningful career.

In 2024, MacTavish examined and modelled data from a survey on the barriers to health care delivery in New Brunswick. Her resulting presentation, *Overcapacity and Understaffed: The Struggle for Healthcare Access in New Brunswick*, won first place at the annual University of New Brunswick Data Challenge, an event that had 112 applicants from throughout Canada.

"After I won, I got a lot of people saying how glad they were that I was talking about a topic so important to our province," says MacTavish, who hopes her findings and recommendations encourage action, particularly in the development of community clinics and better services in underserved and rural areas. As part of the Data Challenge, MacTavish's presentation was shared with the Government of New Brunswick.

For her honours thesis, MacTavish examined disease landscapes in Atlantic Canada from the 1920s to 2024, focussing on vaccine preventable diseases, and her work was recognized with another Science Atlantic top award.

MacTavish will build on her undergraduate research experience when she begins her master's in epidemiology and applied health research at Dalhousie University, where she hopes to focus her graduate-level research on neurodegenerative diseases.

MacTavish is just one example of how Mount Allison students and faculty explore topics of health and wellness with impact far beyond our campus.

SUZANNE CRAWFORD RESIDENCE LIFE ZONE

The new Suzanne Crawford Residence Life Zone between Harper Hall and Jennings Hall opens to all residence students this fall and includes both study and socializing space. It features a great room with comfortable furniture and a fireplace, and two large gaming rooms, one wired for electronic gaming and one outfitted with a pool table, foosball, and other gaming tables. The space supports Mount Allison's exemplary residence experience and the health and wellness of students. Mount Allison donors made the Suzanne Crawford Residence Life Zone possible. The space is dedicated in memory of Suzanne Crawford ('79), who from her time as a student to her service on the Board of Regents, and many moments in between, was one of Mount Allison's greatest advocates.



NEW STUDENT SPACE



RENÉ MAPELU ('25)

STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS

René Mapelu ('25) shares a Navigate MtA update

Navigate MtA is a powerful student-led initiative that promotes help-seeking behaviour, mental health resources, and a strong and supportive Mount Allison community. Programming includes mindfulness sessions, therapy dogs, workshops on managing stress and harm reduction, along with peer-to-peer wellness outreach throughout the year and during special events such as Homecoming and Halloween.

In 2024-25, a team of six students led Navigate MtA and reached hundreds of their peers with programming. One of the student team leads was René Mapelu ('25).

"Some of my most cherished memories include running our Halloween outreach booth and the homecoming refreshments stand at Alumni Field," says Mapelu. "Whether handing out water and snacks to dehydrated students or sparking conversations about safe substance use, I felt connected to the student body in a powerful way. These moments reminded me just how impactful peer-to-peer support can be, especially when paired with compassionate, informed outreach. I also deeply appreciated being part of events like the therapy dog sessions, which brought so much joy and calm to campus."

While a student, Mapelu also served as an assistant don for Edwards House residence, worked with the students' union including as international student representative, and was a campus ambassador leading tours for prospective students.

"Navigate MtA was another way to serve my peers and community and was an experience I will carry with me for years to come," says Mapelu. "I'm grateful to the donors and to everyone that supports programs like ours — programs that meet students where they are, uplift them, and show them that their well-being truly matters."

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS STRATEGIC PLANNING

Mount Allison is working on the creation of a new Mental Health and Wellness Strategy. This past year, a leadership group of students, staff, and faculty was formed, and they identified the values, challenges, and opportunities that will help the University update its Mental Health and Wellness Strategy.

In recent years, Mount Allison has made important investments in the well-being of our people and campus. This strategic planning ensures we continue to support a caring campus.

MEDAVIE SUPPORTS STUDENTS

The Medavie Health Foundation has made a gift of \$90,000 to Mount Allison to support our registered social worker position and one-on-one consultative care that addresses the diverse needs of students. The gift furthers Medavie's mission to improve the wellbeing of Canadians, and Mount Allison is deeply grateful for this donation.

"Medavie's support has made a real difference in our ability to meet students where they are," says Cindy Crossman, Mount Allison's acting director of Accessibility and Student Wellness. "We are better equipped to support students facing challenges and to work collaboratively across campus to remove barriers to success."



DR. NONA ROBINSON

NEW VP STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dr. Nona Robinson is Mount Allison's new Vice-President, Student Affairs. She has spent more than two decades advancing student success, equity, wellness, and engagement, serving most recently as vice-provost, students at York University.

As Mount Allison's Vice-President, Student Affairs, Robinson plays a vital role in student life and academic success — from enhancing wellness services and campus inclusivity to supporting international students and global partnerships.