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## Construction begins on The Grove, a new space dedicated to student wellness

Construction is now underway on phase one of The Grove, a new outdoor recreation and wellness space at the University of Lethbridge, supported by a [\\$500,000 grant](#) from the [Embark Student Foundation](#)\*.

Today's milestone marks the transformation of The Grove into a vibrant, inclusive outdoor space at the heart of campus, where connection, engagement and well-being are central to the experience.

Supported by the Embark Major Grant, the shared space is purposefully designed to strengthen relationships by inviting students, staff and community residents alike to experience the vibrancy of campus life, while giving students a deeper sense of place and belonging within the region.



“Countless studies have shown that loneliness is a worldwide issue, with young people being among the most impacted,” says Mark Slomp, Executive Director, Student Services. “Intentional spaces where people can gather, connect and build community are important for all populations and essential in post-secondary settings where many students are new to their surroundings and seeking connection.”

Located east of Markin Hall, The Grove is a centrally located, currently under-utilized grassed field at the core of the ULethbridge campus, with paths from University Hall, Markin Hall, the Students' Union Building and Science Commons converging to the area. Together, these elements will create flexible space for study, reflection, events and informal gatherings.

The master plan for The Grove concept involves seven elements, all designed with purpose to strengthen student belonging and engagement, provide areas for outdoor study and reflection, and create a community gathering space for celebrations, performances, markets and other outdoor events.

## Grove Features

### Phase 1

- **Gateway** — Vertical elements at the north and west entrances to provide visual reference and wayfinding for the area.
- **Coulee Lookout Plaza** — At the heart of the Grove, a focal point for gathering at the convergence of the connecting pathways.
- **The Hangout** — A social space with a harvest table nested between trees.

### Phase 2

- **The Gathering** — An outdoor fireplace sheltered by planting and topography.
- **Coulee Lookout Structure** — A contemporary pergola offering a sheltered gathering space.
- **Natural Amphitheatre** — An outdoor amphitheatre space with cliffstone seating, it will be named the Dr. Dennis Connolly Amphitheatre after the late legendary mathematics professor
- **Hammocks** — A flexible space with hammocks and moveable furniture to accommodate impromptu gatherings and larger events.

“What is so lovely about this transformation of The Grove is that it reflects another meaningful step forward for students and for the overall campus experience,” says Alejandro Figueroa, University of Lethbridge Students’ Union President. “It is phenomenal to see an underused outdoor space become a place where students can slow down and feel a stronger sense of belonging on campus. That is what makes this project so meaningful, because the spaces between classes are often where community is built and where students begin to feel more connected to the campus they call home.”

The support by Embark Student Corp. affirms the group’s commitment to helping schools realize innovative approaches to enhancing student well-being.

“Congratulations to the team at ULethbridge for creating indoor and outdoor spaces where students can make positive connections and memories that will last a lifetime,” says Andrew Lo, President and CEO, Embark.

The vision of the Grove concept was guided by and aligns with Indigenous principles of land stewardship, which emphasize reciprocity, balance and care for future generations. Today’s symbolic planting of an Indigenous tree honours the University’s commitment to reconciliation and marks the beginning of phase one construction with a targeted date of completion in September.

“We’ve already begun fundraising for subsequent phases of this project to fully realize the vision we have for this very important area of campus,” adds Slomp. “Anyone interested in contributing can reach out to [philanthropy@uleth.ca](mailto:philanthropy@uleth.ca) or visit [go.uleth.ca/grove](http://go.uleth.ca/grove).”

*\*The Embark Student Foundation Major Grant Program provides funding for innovative programs, initiatives or services that support student success before, during and beyond their post-secondary years. Through this grant program, Embark wishes to partner with post-secondary educational institutions in their efforts to advance access, agency and innovation that will empower students to take hold of their future.*

*Embark Student Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation and owner of Embark Student Corp., a proud Canadian resource for education savings and planning.*

**PHOTOS:**

Grove-Render-1 — A look at some of the amenities in the proposed development

Grove-Render-2 — A rendered version of the proposed Dr. Dennis Connolly Aphitheatre

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/construction-begins-grove-new-space-dedicated-student-wellness>

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*Our University’s Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.*