

WATERLOO STORIES



AUGUST 22, 2018

Top Canadian students enter Waterloo STEM programs on scholarship

Schulich Leaders are excited to grow their entrepreneurial skills at Canada's most innovative university

By Lucas Dunlop

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Four first-year students finding their way to campus this September will be doing so with an extra spring in their step — one worth between \$80,000 and \$100,000.

The four students are winners of Schulich Leader Scholarships, the largest scholarships for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs in Canada. The incoming Schulich Leaders distinguished themselves with high grades, leadership roles in their communities, and participation in entrepreneurial ventures.

This year there were more than 1,400 nominees from across Canada vying for the 50 scholarships. Seymour Schulich, founder of the program, said the scholarships cover university expenses so some of the brightest students in the country can focus their energies on their studies, research, extracurricular activities and entrepreneurial ventures.

Read more about the four University of Waterloo winners below:

David Gu

Richmond Hill, Ont.

Software Engineering - \$100,000

“I decided to attend the University of Waterloo because of its world-class faculty, strong industry connections and significant support for entrepreneurship. Resources like the Velocity incubator, combined with a culture of innovation makes Waterloo the ideal university for me to pursue my entrepreneurial endeavors.”

David Gu is a high school student with a variety of interests and a lot of passion. He has launched a startup called LearnVR that helps beginner programmers learn about Virtual and Augmented reality. Gu also created a smartphone-based augmented reality platform to help train health professionals. He has spoken at conferences about his products and has won hackathons. He created a virtual reality software platform to improve exercise for seniors, winning a Grand Prize at the MIT Reality Virtually Hackathon. At high school, Gu started two clubs, became the first student at his school to take four Higher Level IB courses concurrently and wrote programs to help visualize molecular structures and practise second languages online — all while maintaining a 98 per cent average. He achieved the highest graduating average in his year, and received the Governor General’s Academic Medal. When asked about future career prospects, David responded: “I am passionate about innovation and changing the world with technology. With the help of the Schulich Leader Scholarship, I can bring my entrepreneurship to next level. My goal for my future career is to solve the world's most pressing problems with technology and innovation.”



Atif Mahmud

Kitchener, Ont.

Software Engineering - \$100,000

“The myriad of opportunities that exist in this city cannot be overstated. Several of which could not have existed without the aid of the University and for that, I will be forever grateful ... I aspire to be among the group of people who make practical, tangible and meaningful change in the way people lead their lives, and Waterloo excels at this.”

As a high school student, Atif Mahmud explored academic opportunities that most undergraduates don’t get to experience. Mahmud completed a full-time undergraduate level research assistantship, and also collaborated with



members of multiple faculties on his own personal projects. He is CEO and lead developer for Flowi, a startup based in Waterloo that is an advertising solution for businesses located in dense city centres. It allows local businesses to send push notifications for deals from nearby stores if the user is connected to the free Wi-Fi network. Mahmud also developed a machine learning model to predict harmful algal blooms in fresh and saltwater ecosystems. This project, called NeurAlgae, has been recognized by the Canada-Wide Science Fair and is currently being considered for adoption in national waters through cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. When asked how he balances all of these many responsibilities, he responded “For me, balance comes down to finding enjoyment

in everything you do, I try to be an optimist and focus on intrinsic metrics for my own success. That way I can always gauge how I’m doing without focusing on what other people think. In terms of specific strategies, I have one that I live by: don’t multitask. Focusing my energy into only one thing at a time has done wonders for my mental health and helped me find balance in my everyday life.”

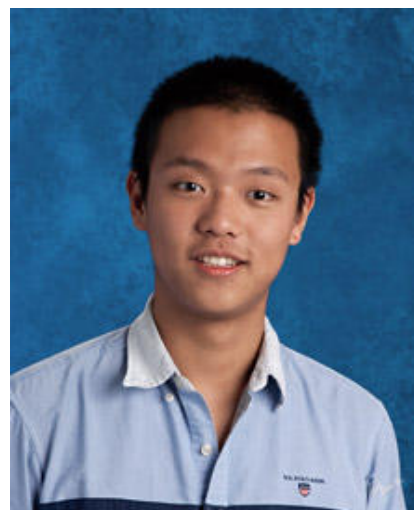
Robin Wen

Saskatoon, Sask.

Mathematics - \$80,000

“The University of Waterloo has world-renowned mathematical and physical science programs, and it offers the best co-op education across Canada. This program gives students the precious opportunity to obtain abundant working experience and learn crucial social skills that will benefit their future endeavors.”

Robin Wen has not only smashed academic expectations, he has also achieved many personal goals in his two short years in Canada. Wen immigrated to Saskatchewan in 2016, and describes his initial English language abilities as “far from being proficient for regular academic purposes.” He worked hard to improve those skills, and eventually became the first student to be accepted into the SAGE program in grade 12 at his school; a program focused on advanced-level topics in English and the Humanities. On top of vastly improving his English skills, Wen also displayed his mastery of the AP curriculums of his STEM courses. He achieved the highest score on his calculus, chemistry, statistics, and two physics AP exams nationally. He was the National Champion for the 2017 Fermat Contest, ran by Waterloo’s own Centre for Education in Mathematics and Computing. In addition to this contest, Wen has also qualified for the Canadian Mathematical Olympiad in both 2017 and 2018. When asked what he wants to do after his undergrad, Wen said “It is my current aim to become a physics professor, but I am also open-minded about other various options. Besides physics and math, I take interest in a great variety of fields and subjects, so I would love to explore my potential during my five-year undergraduate study.”

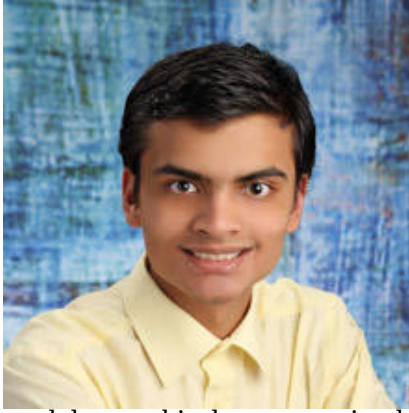


Advait Maybhate

Waterloo, Ont.

Computer Science - \$80,000

“My dream is to become a software developer and make products that solve real world problems. The University of Waterloo holds a worldwide reputation in the field of computer science and it is at the core of an excellent ecosystem that has a lot to offer to a budding software programmer.”



Advait Maybhate has excelled academically and athletically throughout high school. On top of maintaining an excellent average, Maybhate practised karate to improve his physical fitness, and placed 3rd in the Kitchener-Waterloo Meibukan Karate Tournament in 2016. Outside of school, Maybhate created an algorithm to identify DNA sequence motifs, which detected known motifs 10 times faster than the standard approach. This project won him a silver medal and the Statistics Society of Canada Award at the Canada-Wide Science Fair. He also participated in hackathons, and won the “Best Use of CockroachDB” award for creating SumNotes, a program that automatically summarizes lectures based on speech-to-text technology. When asked how he became passionate about computer science, Maybhate said: “In Grade 4, one of my classmates used Scratch, a block-based

modular graphical programming language, to create an animated presentation. This event inspired me to play with Scratch and create my very own jetpack platformer game. Later on, in Grade 6, I registered for the University of Waterloo’s online CS Circles course, which was a great introduction to Python as a programming language. Nothing is impossible in the world of computer science. You can make people fly or create evil, pink and fluffy unicorns that rule the world.”

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