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Ingratta, Shah named Schulich Leader Scholars

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BY ADELA TALBOT





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Luke Ingratta and Joy Shah, two of the nation's highest achieving secondary students, will begin their undergraduate studies at Western this fall as recipients of prestigious [Schulich Leader Scholarships](#).

Launched in 2012, the \$100-million scholarship program – funded by Canadian philanthropist Seymour Schulich – provides for 50 undergraduate scholarships across top Canadian universities each year. The program aims to allow the country's most promising students to pursue their dreams and become global

leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

“The Schulich Leader Scholarships recognize and nurture truly exceptional young people,” Western President Amit Chakma said. “We are pleased these students, recognized for their academic and community excellence, have chosen Western as a place where they can best develop their talents and leadership, can study alongside other excellent students from around the globe and can learn from Western’s award-winning researchers.”

Two scholarship recipients are selected at each of the 20 participating universities, with five universities receiving an additional two scholarships for attracting the most applications. Students heading into engineering receive \$100,000 while those planning to study other disciplines within science receive \$80,000. Across the country, more than 1,300 graduating high school students were nominated this year.



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Western felt like the right choice to pursue a postsecondary education for Luke Ingratta, of Strathroy, Ont., noting he is thankful to the Schulich Leadership Scholarship program for allowing him the opportunity to focus on his studies at a place that feels like home.

Ingratta, of Strathroy, Ont., graduated from Holy Cross Secondary School where he earned an overall average of 96.5 per cent while contributing to the community as an enthusiastic volunteer. He will be entering Western’s Science program and hopes to focus his studies on Physics.

“I am very honoured to be receiving this scholarship. It’s an opportunity very few people get; it’s still dawning on me what it truly means,” said Ingratta, adding the award will help him focus his attention on his coursework.

In his last year of high school, Ingratta, 17, helped coordinate its Relay for Life event, represented the school in a Rotary Seminar for Tomorrow’s Leaders, served as a member of the Student Senate and was a member of the acting ensemble for the High School Project production at the Grand Theatre, all while maintaining exceptional grades. This prompted his Schulich Leader Scholarship nomination from his high school guidance counselor, Colette McNally, who called Ingratta an “outstanding student” who exemplifies the school’s graduate expectations.

Western felt like the right choice to pursue a postsecondary education, Ingratta added, noting he is thankful

to the Schulich Leadership Scholarship program for allowing him the opportunity to focus on his studies at a place that feels like home.

“I picked Western because it feels like a home away from home. It feels comfortable to be here. The faculty here is awesome and everyone has such a positive attitude,” he said.

Pauline Barmby, Acting Dean for the Faculty of Science, is pleased Ingratta has chosen Western for his studies and is confident he will succeed and contribute to the faculty’s success.

“Western Science is proud to welcome Luke, who is among the highest achieving students in Ontario. The opportunity to introduce a Schulich Leadership Scholarship recipient into our community further raises our collective level of innovation, dedication and academic excellence,” she noted.



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Joy Shah, of Corunna, Ont., was attracted to Western’s built-in support systems, especially for Engineering. “I feel like it’s a group community – you move together throughout your degree and that’s what I wanted,” said the Schulich Leader Scholar.

Shah, of Corunna, Ont., graduated from Great Lakes Secondary School in Sarnia, Ont., and plans to study Engineering. He chose Western because of its common first-year program.

“Western’s first-year (Engineering) program is very appealing to me. I’m not sure what discipline I want to go into, but right now, I’m looking towards mechatronics or software engineering as my upper-year specializations,” he said.

Shah, 17, has competed in the Lambton County Science Fair since he was in Grade 4, earning three trips to the Canada Wide Science Fair, twice earning bronze medals at the national competition. He is interested in engineering because of its potential to solve problems and impact lives. Because of this scholarship, and his choice of school, he feels he is well positioned for success, he added.

“Western has a lot of built-in support systems, especially for Engineering. I feel like it’s a group community – you move together throughout your degree and that’s what I wanted,” Shah said.

“Receiving (the scholarship) means I won’t have to worry that much about my financial needs for next year. It also opens up a bunch of doors for me so I can get internship and co-op opportunities at different places,

whereas otherwise, it would have been harder to get those. It makes it easier for me to reach those leadership opportunities.”

While in high school, Shah maintained a grade average well above 95 per cent, balancing hours of academics with extra-curricular activities. He was involved in the Key Club and Reach for the Top programs and was a member of the soccer, badminton and tennis teams. Outside of school, he has volunteered as a team mentor and referee at the regional First Lego League tournament and with Cogeco TV.

He is thankful to be a recipient of such a prestigious award, he said, adding a nomination from his guidance counselor alone was a great honour.

Andrew Hrymak, Engineering Dean, expressed excitement at not only what this scholarship means for the school today, but potentially for society years afterward.

“These young people are among the best and the brightest students,” Hrymak said. “Therefore, we are thrilled to have Joy join Western Engineering and hope he will thrive and become an innovation leader.”

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