

Four Schulich Leaders pursue studies in STEM fields

By Wade Hemsworth, October 11, 2017



Left to right: Jomanah Chahrour, Sam Crawford, Joshua Guinness and Nicole Wong

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A newcomer from Syria, a Christian youth leader, an aspiring tech entrepreneur and an Ontario Science Centre teacher with a penchant for puns are digging deep into their studies as McMaster's 2017 Schulich Leaders.

Jomanah Chahrour, Sam Crawford, Joshua Guinness and Nicole Wong have arrived at McMaster with a major head start: significant scholarships from the Schulich Foundation to fund their undergraduate studies in science, technology, mathematics and engineering.

McMaster is one of 20 Canadian universities selected to participate in the Schulich Leaders program, which launched in 2012. McMaster has been awarded four such scholarships for 2017 - two in engineering and two in science-technology and mathematics - as it was in 2016 and 2015.

Fifty Schulich Leader Scholarships are awarded each year to help promising students pursue their dreams and become the next global pioneers in the STEM fields. Students studying engineering receive \$100,000. Students studying science, technology or mathematics receive \$80,000.

"It means the world to me to be named a 2017 Schulich Leader, knowing that my hard work was recognized and has brought honour to my family," said Chahrour, 19. "Being named a Schulich scholar gives me more motivation to do my very best and excel in my studies."

Chahrour came to Canada from Syria in 2011, first living in Edmonton before moving to Windsor, where she graduated from Catholic Central High School. Learning English was a challenge, she said, but with determination and help from teachers and friends, she was able to flourish. Now she is planning to pursue a PhD in astrophysics and work in research.

Crawford, 18, says that being named a Schulich Leader means not only that he can graduate from university debt-free, but that he can access opportunities and mentorship and form new friendships that can last a lifetime. The engineering student and devout Christian from London District Christian Secondary School hopes to become a developer of software that may "benefit society and glorify God."

So far at McMaster, Crawford - a musician and video-game enthusiast - says he is enjoying a solid sense of community and the chance to learn independently and in collaboration with others.

Guinness, 18, is especially happy about the new opportunities and connections that come with being selected for the Schulich

Leader program. He hopes what he learns will help him start, own and operate his own tech company.

The multi-instrumental musician and multi-sport athlete, a graduate of Toronto District Christian High School, says the sense of community in McMaster's Engineering program and the range of software courses were strong draws for him.

"My approach to learning is all about challenging yourself whenever you can. Whether it is computer science, or a school sport, stepping out of your comfort zone is when you learn the most."

Wong, 18, said she jumped for joy when she learned she had been selected as a Schulich Leader.

"It's such an amazing opportunity," said the graduate of Toronto's Agincourt Collegiate Institute. "I know that the Schulich Leader Scholarship brings some of the most amazing minds to Canada's top universities."

An admitted fan of "nerdy puns," Wong hopes one day to lead a science lab. She says she was inspired to pursue science through a program called For Inspiration of Science and Technology (FIRST) and she continues to serve with the program as a volunteer. For the past four years, she has also taught science to young people at the Ontario Science Centre.

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