



Joel Pollak (left) is beginning his first year of classes in the College of Engineering. Vaidehee Lanke of Saskatoon is studying science in her first semester.

Schulich

For Vaidehee Lanke and Joel Pollak, their summers spent at the University of Saskatchewan were among their most memorable experiences during their high school years.

By JAMES SHEWAGA

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Being awarded Schulich Leader Scholarships has helped bring them back to campus this fall.

The two first-year U of S students are among 50 from across the country who were selected this year to receive the prestigious Schulich scholarships, awarded annually to graduating high school students enrolling in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs in university.

Lanke, a graduate of Saskatoon's Aden Bowman Collegiate, has received \$80,000 over four years to study science at the U of S.

"This is something that I am very grateful for," said Lanke, who had an outstanding 97.7 per cent academic average in her final year of high school, earning the Governor General's Academic Medal, an International Baccalaureate Learner Profile Award and the Grade 12 Proficiency Award for highest average. "A university education is something that I always wanted to pursue, but there is a huge financial cost to it and knowing that financial support is there is something that I am very grateful for. But in addition, Schulich also offers internships and support and guidance and opportunities and that is also something that I am very excited to explore.

“And coming to the U of S equally excites me because their combination of programs really interests me and I really like the interdisciplinary nature of the research programs.”

During her time in school, Lanke co-founded Saskatoon’s first Speakers Bureau, a youth group supported by Plan International Canada to create gender equality solutions, and was a regular participant in city and provincial science fairs. It was during a science fair that Lanke met professor Troy Harkness in the College of Medicine and was invited to take part in a U of S student research internship in the summer of 2015. Lanke worked with Harkness and his team on a Canadian Cancer Society-funded research project into multiple drug resistance in breast cancer chemotherapy.

“My experience was wonderful and not only did I get hands-on research experience and worked in the lab for two months, but I also was able to see how the scientific process works,” said Lanke, who turns 18 this month. “Every week we would analyse our results and then discuss where we are going to go from there. And one of the most insightful parts of this experience was I actually got to see cancer cells growing because I would culture them every week and it was fascinating how fast they would grow.

“What really drew me to his lab is also what intrigues me about science and its power to solve problems. If we ask questions, we can figure out not only the answers, but also have a greater understanding of our world. So, the idea of researching big problems is very intriguing to me.”

Like Lanke, Pollak’s positive experience on campus in the summer of 2016 proved to be a key factor in choosing to come back to the U of S, where he took part in the SHAD month-long program to sample science, technology, engineering, arts and math learning opportunities at Canadian universities.

“I wanted to come to the U of S because in 2016 I attended SHAD there, so I got to see the campus and I loved the campus and I loved the people I met and I was just really impressed with all the facilities,” said Pollak, a 19-year-old graduate of Blyth Academy in Waterloo, Ont., who has been awarded \$100,000 over four years to study engineering at the U of S. “I walked away really happy from my experience at SHAD at the U of S. And the Schulich scholarship gave me the chance to go back there, so I’m very grateful.”

Pollak said the scholarship will also afford him the opportunity to dabble in courses outside of the College of Engineering curriculum, something he is anxious to take advantage of.

“It gives me the freedom to try courses that I otherwise wouldn’t, so I am able to take biology, for example, and explore other areas outside of engineering that interest me,” said Pollak, an accomplished student who was also a finalist for the Prime Minister’s Youth Council advisory board created by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2016. “So now I am able to take more risks academically, which is one of the great things about the Schulich scholarship.”

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