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Four new undergrad scholars named Schulich Leaders

In 2012, philanthropist **Seymour Schulich** celebrated leadership and innovation by creating the Schulich Leaders Scholarship.

This \$100 million program funds 50 undergraduate STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) scholarships each year at top universities across Canada.

Four incoming U of T students were selected to receive this prestigious award – twice as many as last year. They are Trinity College's **Julia Won** and **Annie Yao**, and the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering's **Christopher Choquette** and **Daniel McInnis**.



From left: Annie Yao, Christopher Choquette, Julia Won and Daniel McInnis

U of T News asked the outstanding undergraduates about what brought them to this point.

What got you started volunteering? What have you learned from engaging with your community?

Julia Won: "I always liked helping people and getting involved. One thing that had a big impact on me was taking part in the Global Korean Youth Network, which brought a group of a thousand students of Korean heritage to visit Korea. It was amazing to meet people from all around the world – not just North America. Since I could speak English and Korean, I really made an effort to help everyone in my group understand each other. At the end of the trip, I was one of two students selected to give a valedictory address. They recognized me as a leader and that helped me see how I could make a difference. It gave me the motivation, determination and self-confidence to pursue my goals."

Annie Yao: "I started volunteering at a care centre because I wanted to get out into my community and meet people who weren't in my peer group. I was inspired to work with the elderly partly because of my great-grandmother. She was in care back in China and was always happy when we visited – but I knew she was lonely a lot of the time. I discovered I really enjoyed talking to the elderly and hearing their stories. Their lives were very different from mine and it helped me broaden my own perspective and fed my interest in health care."

Daniel McInnis: "I volunteered at a retirement home that had a unit for Alzheimer's and dementia patients. It could be very sad – but it helped me appreciate what I had and understand that there are solutions to all kinds of problems if you work on it. When I was a student trustee for the Ottawa Catholic School Board, we worked to get our school board to raise student scholarship amounts by 50 per cent. We also found out about resources our board had that no one knew about, and tried to find a way to increase awareness and enrich our programs. The best part of all of it was getting the adult perspective on things and then being able to contribute the student point of view."

Christopher Choquette: "I learned that I prefer to work as part of a team. In groups I'm usually the last person to talk, because I watch and listen to everyone else first. I value diverse perspectives, because then you can work to encompass everyone's needs. You can bring what you're good at to the table and the group will counterbalance everyone's strengths and weaknesses."

What do you want to do to combine your interest in science and your background in community work?

Won: "I have an interest in people and I love scientific method, so I was very happy to find a bio-psychology

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program at U of T. I'm interested in research because I enjoy the discovery part of science. I want to study something broad that I can use as a foundation to my future career."

Choquette: "I've always wanted to be an inventor. My father was a handyman and I learned about things like electrical circuits when I was pretty young. I'm studying engineering science, which has a bit of everything, and my interest is in the biomedical, robotics and aerospace fields. I'm really passionate about innovation and I want to use engineering and design to make society better in some way."

McInnis: "In high school I entered science fairs and competed nationally. I had a couple of concussions from playing hockey, so I designed a helmet and did drop tests to compare it to other helmets on the market. I currently have a Canadian patent issued and a US patent pending on an improved hockey and football helmet design. One of the things I'm excited about is that I've only scratched the surface of where I can go. It's not just about the little details; it's about knowing what you want to do and working with people to make it happen. In terms of having an impact, Engineering gives me that opportunity."

Yao: "I've always had an interest in health care and I eventually want to pursue pharmacy. I love chemistry and I want to use that to improve people's lives. I feel that, as a Schulich Leader, I have the confidence to lead meaningful actions and encourage people to create positive change."

[Learn more about the Schulich Leadership Scholarships.](#)

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