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2015 Schulich Leadership Scholars

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Two recent high school graduates, from Victoria and Surrey respectively, have been selected to receive this year's prestigious Schulich Leadership Scholarship for their undergraduate studies at the University of Victoria.

Created in 2011 by entrepreneur and philanthropist Seymour Schulich, the scholarships are awarded annually to 40 students in Canada pursuing undergraduate studies in STEM subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The scholarship for engineering studies is \$80,000 and \$60,000 for the other areas of study.

Austin Sawyer, engineering

A Victoria local, Sawyer enters his first year with an impressive track record for innovation, most recently garnering national awards for a biodegradable oil spill boom he co-developed for a science fair project. This attention also led to an invitation to speak at TEDxVictoria last November.

Driven towards environmental issues, Sawyer recognizes the significant role that engineering plays in mitigating our environmental footprint. "Engineering won my attention because I love to create things and learn about how things work. I realized how even the smallest idea could turn into something amazing and there is always room to improve every technology that already exists."

Along with working two-part time jobs, Sawyer excels in athletics and still makes time for mentoring and tutoring his younger peers. He knows that being a Schulich leader means much more than academic excellence. For him, it means "you have a unique view on the world. You do not shy away from problems that are challenging and do not skip the mistakes you make. You must look to the future and constantly be thinking of improving the technology around you and be thinking of ways to help others and inspire others to do the same. Ultimately you have an intense passion for the areas of STEM and believe you can make a difference."

Wylee Fitz-Gerald, earth and ocean sciences

Wylee Fitz-Gerald comes to UVic from Frank Hurt Secondary School in Surrey, where she received many awards for both academic performance and community service. She enters the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences this Fall.

"Receiving the Schulich Scholarship felt surreal, especially coming from UVic, which was my first choice of university and in a field I am passionate about," says Fitz-Gerald. "It was the greatest payoff for days I spent after school tutoring, early morning studying and passing up opportunities to spend time with my friends."

In addition to pursuing academic excellence, Fitz-Gerald has also indicated that she seeks to be a role model for Aboriginal students, by embracing her Métis identity and "raising the profile of successful Aboriginal youth."

Fitz-Gerald's many accomplishments have been realized while working part-time throughout her school years, given that her father has not been able to work for many years and her mother has been the sole provider of a family of five. Given her outstanding record—as an academic, role model, community builder, and leader—there is no question that Fitz-Gerald is destined for future success in earth and ocean sciences, and will be a change-maker and model future leader.



Sawyer at TEDx Victoria



Fitz-Gerald. Photo: Larry Toth

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