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## Love of iGEM helps student receive \$80K scholarship

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By: **Jordan Small**

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Canmore's Alina Arvisais will receive an \$80,000 Schulich Leader Scholarship to study Biochemistry at University of Waterloo in Ontario.  
Jordan Small RMO photo

Alina Arvisais received an offer she simply couldn't refuse.

The graduating Grade 12 student was set to attend a nearby university this fall, but at the very last minute, things abruptly changed for the teenager.

National grant program Schulich Leader Scholarships selected Arvisais as a recipient of an \$80,000 bursary to study biochemistry at the University of Waterloo this September.

So, instead of heading down the road as previously planned, Arvisais will take 80,000 reasons to study a few thousand kilometres farther east.

"It was pretty shocking to me," said the Our Lady of the Snows (OLS) Catholic Academy student as

she only found out at the end of May.

After a bit of readjustment, Arvisais is entering the Ontario institute's Bachelor of Science Co-op Program and will receive the funds in four installments over four years.

Recipients of the scholarship are the best and brightest STEM students (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) in the Great White North.

OLS Principal Phil Puurunen nominated Arvisais, who became the first OLS nominee to be selected, for her outstanding academic and extra-curricular achievements, such as with the Canmore school's OLS iGEM team (International Genetically Engineered Machine).

"I didn't just do things for my resume, I was part of iGEM because I really loved doing genetic engineering and working in a project-based environment," said Arvisais.

"I'm really interested in biochemistry and bioengineering, so I was looking for industrial applications of the processes to help specifically with sustainability in terms of being entrepreneurially minded. It would be my vision to apply those relatively recent fields to a more industrial and broad application."

Seymour Schulich, the entrepreneur and philanthropist behind the scholarships, called the recipients the next generation of technology innovators. Each year, 50 scholarships are awarded across Canada.

"I truly believe that many of these students will make great contributions to society, both on a national and global scale," said Schulich, in a release. "With their university expenses covered, they can focus their time on their studies, research projects, extra-curriculars, and entrepreneurial ventures."

An avid rocker climber, Arvisais recently placed third at the provincial rope climbing championships.

She is grateful for her mentors at OLS, and through iGEM and climbing, who have helped her along the way.



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