Welcome

Developing the next generation of Canadian Leaders is essential to the health and prosperity of this country. I trust that you share a sense of commitment and optimism for doing so.

The Wilson Leadership Scholar Award, hosted by McMaster University, was born out of a desire to give students with demonstrated leadership potential the opportunity to hone their leadership skills, and to tackle challenging issues at an early stage of their careers.

As a student, I benefited from the wisdom and kindness of countless mentors. I am pleased and grateful that so many of you have taken time from your busy professional lives to contribute to the development of the Wilson Leaders.

Sincerely,

L.R. Wilson

Wilson Leadership Scholar Award Founder,
Chancellor Emeritus, McMaster University

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Wilson Leadership Scholar Award (WLSA) combines a generous financial award with an intensive leadership development and career launching program. The Wilson Leaders pursue problem-based learning on significant Canadian issues; learn from expert guest speakers, mentors and coaches; analyze shared readings; and design and lead a community project. They also bring their own interests to the program, sometimes hosting events, seeking out further professional development opportunities and working with community partners.

WHAT A WILSON LEADER DOES

- Community project
- Peer coaching
- Coaching/mentorship
- Learning from guest experts
- Problem-based learning and shared readings
What sets the WLSA apart from other awards?

The WLSA has already changed since its launch three years ago. It incorporates more experiences that will help launch each Wilson Leader’s career, provides students with greater accountability for community projects, focuses in more detail on Canadian issues, and recognizes participation through a 4th year course credit.

While the program will continue to evolve, it will always have as its foundation:

**OWNERSHIP** – Wilson Leaders have complete accountability for creating, testing, evaluating and refining a community project that addresses a current issue.

**UNIQUE EXPERIENCES** – Wilson Leaders identify experiences that can help them progress towards their personal and career development goals. These experiences have ranged from conference participation, to informational interviews, connections to communities of practice, and more.

**EXPOSURE TO CANADIAN LEADERS** – Wilson Leaders learn from Canadians with expertise in creating the right conditions for vibrant, peaceful communities, exploring topics such as healthcare policy, the role of news media in Canadian democracy, and potential uses of the blockchain. Along the way, Wilson Leaders learn about new ways to serve as the next generation of Canadian leaders.

**MENTORSHIP** – Wilson Leaders work with coaches and mentors as they progress towards personal and professional goals.

**COMMUNITY** – Despite their varied interests, academic programs, and personal approaches to leadership, the Wilson Leaders form a tight-knit community, sharing ideas, resources, and a house they can use for study, events, and conversation.

**CUSTOMIZATION AND INTEGRATION** – Graduate Wilson Leaders develop projects and events that build on their studies. Undergraduate Wilson Leaders can earn course credit for their work in the WLSA program.
Community projects

The Wilson Leadership Scholar Award assumes that Wilson Leaders have an eye for spotting problems of significance — and the determination and ability to find and implement solutions. The community projects offer a way for students to start effecting meaningful change, even before they graduate. Because these projects must also be meaningful to the individual Wilson Leader, they range significantly. This year, the Wilson Leaders’ community projects included:

**Monish Ahluwalia**
Launching a half-day training session on essential leadership skills for those in student government and leadership roles.

**Sarah Brooks**
Supporting cultural integration for Caribbean students through focus groups and a social networking group.

**Alyssia Jovellanos**
Collecting computers at the end of their refresh cycle, to be cleaned and donated to low-income households.

**Erik Joy**
Creating a network for local sustainability non-profit organizations to avoid duplication of work and foster collaboration and efficiency.

**Carol Markos**
Laying the foundations for a database of carefully researched resources for Indigenous language preservation.

**Josh Young**
Exploring options for incentivizing corporate social responsibility, and presenting on green tech buying consortia to local small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The Wilson Leaders have had major successes — and setbacks — while leading their community projects. As one Wilson Leader shared, “This has been my first opportunity to fail. There was no manual, and no one to tell me what to do. When things went wrong, I had to bail myself out. That has been incredibly valuable.”
Outcomes

As Wilson Foundation President Peter Sharpe notes, we may not know the true outcomes of the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award for another 15 years. But we can see signs right now that the program makes a significant difference to the students engaged in it, and to the people the students work with through their community projects.

In the Wilson Leaders’ personal development, we’ve seen students move from “analysis paralysis” to a willingness to move projects forward. We’ve seen career plans change from ones that pursue opportunity, to ones that create opportunities for others.

We’ve also seen students take on and achieve success in some of the toughest areas of personal development. Each Wilson Leader sets their own personal development goals, based on 360 feedback and conversations with their coach. All of the Wilson Leaders have seen “some improvement” to “significant improvement” in the skills they prioritized for growth, including demonstrating reliability, handing conflict, conveying empathy, and solving problems.
Reaching a broader community

The impact of the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award will continue to grow. As the Wilson Leaders launch their careers, they’ll apply the tools and skills they developed through the WLSA program – a keen awareness of a broad range of problems, a sense of ownership for creating solutions, interdisciplinary thinking, and focused personal growth.

We want more students to have a taste of the Wilson Leadership experience. To that end, the Wilson Leaders collaborated with the Socrates Project to host two critical thought discussions: one on free speech, and another on the Trans-Canada Pipeline. The ability to discuss controversial topics is an essential skill, and of fundamental importance when addressing complex challenges.

Each of these two events brought together about 20 students from different Faculties and programs. Participants had the following to say:

“Even those who had completely different opinions were able to find common ground, and maintain respectful, constructive conversations. Everyone brings a unique perspective to the table, not only in terms of information, but in terms of creative solutions.”

“I was not prepared for the level of detail that was brought to the conversation. It was quite beautiful to listen to a discussion between well-informed, educated parties.”

“I wish there were more of these talks. This is what the university life of a student should be about. Thank you for putting this discussion together, and I cannot wait for the next one.”

Participants in Wilson Leadership events are invited to stay in touch through the Wilson Leadership Network group on Facebook. This group allows students not only to find out what’s next, but also to continue the discussions that most engaged them.
What’s next

In September 2019, the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award will welcome its first cohort of graduate Wilson Leaders. Current and incoming McMaster graduate students in most programs and levels are eligible to participate in experiential learning, mentorship, and exposure to the broad range of Canadian issues that define the undergraduate program.

The WLSA will also transition from a two-year to a one-year program, allowing six new students to join the Wilson Leadership family each year: three graduate students and three final-year undergraduates.

In January 2020, we will launch “Designing Canada” in collaboration with the Socrates Project. This full-day event will bring together undergraduate students from all Faculties to experience a “light” case study approach to issues of democracy, the economy, education, health care, the impacts of technology, and public policy. Students will come away with insight into how experts have solved real problems, a broader understanding of the kinds of issues to which they could devote their careers, and a connection to the Wilson Leadership network.

Thank you

McMaster University is proud to host the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award. The program started with Lynton “Red” Wilson’s remarkable vision — and his own sense of accountability — for how our nation’s future leaders could best be prepared for the tasks ahead.

In addition to our gratitude to Dr. Wilson and the Wilson Foundation, we are grateful to you, too. Thank you for fostering the development of our future leaders, and for helping to shape the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award. The Wilson Leaders are spectacular people, but they couldn’t have the experiences they’ve had or the accomplishments they’ve reached without the encouragement, questions, opportunities, mentorship, information, and insight that you’ve provided.

Sincerely,

Sean Van Koughnett
Associate Vice-President, Students and Learning
Dean of Students
Director of the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award