

A life changed

Receiving a donor funded award had a profound effect on Michael Lee's life, a third-year student in the Bachelor of Medical Sciences program.

Lee and his family emigrated from South Korea to Canada in 2007. "My parents had to give up a lot in Korea, their home, their careers, but they did it to give us a better life," said Lee.

His first year at Western was challenging. "My family's finances were not really stable so tuition was a big problem for us," he said. To help out, Lee found a job but that added to his challenges.

"In first year, I couldn't go to all of my classes because I had to work full-time." Always a strong student, he managed to get through by spending all of his spare time studying. But he knew that model wasn't sustainable and there was a whole other side to his Western experience that was being ignored. "I needed to build networks, build social relationships, join clubs, etc.," he said.

In second year, Lee received the Bennie and Shirley Bradshaw Award in Science, granted in recognition of academic achievement and demonstrated financial need.

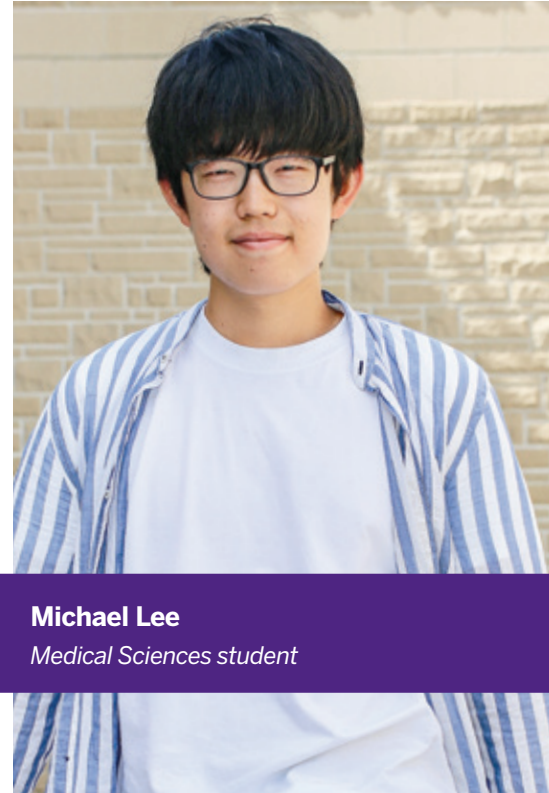
And everything changed.

"When I received this award, I felt like Western really had my back. It gave me the motivation to reach higher. It gave me the confidence and stability to pursue extracurricular activities, which are opportunities that one should have as a university student," he said.

Receiving the award lifted a huge burden from Lee's shoulders. "I was able to go to all of my classes. I joined the Science Students' Council. I found a research position. I was able to interact with professors – a prospect I hadn't even considered before," he said.

Lee feels receiving the award even altered his personality somewhat. An introvert by nature, he felt his absence from the daily rhythms of campus exacerbated those tendencies. Becoming more involved in activities forced him to reach out to people. "I became more transparent and was able to reveal my true self to others. So it really impacted my life," he said.

With the goal of becoming a physician and working in the public health sector, Lee took his medical college admission test this past summer. "I want to reach out to the community and join forces with like-minded professionals to really help people," said Lee.



Michael Lee
Medical Sciences student

One-stop student health and wellness support centre in the works

Western will soon house medical and counselling services under one roof.

The integrated health-and-wellness centre, which will be located in Thames Hall, will offer more coordinated medical and mental health supports to students.

"Over the past number of years, we've been consulting with the campus community to develop Western's Student Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan," said Rick Ezekiel, interim Senior Director (Student Experience). "One of the things we hear most from students is how challenging it can be to navigate a fragmented system for mental health and wellness services on our campus."

Donor support has been an integral part of developing a wide range of services at Western, but these services are situated in different units and locations across the campus.



A review recommended ways to improve how Western provides health and wellness services to students. Chief among them was locating a health and wellness centre at one campus location, where students can access a medical clinic, a counselling group and a wellness education centre focused on health promotion.

With a single point of entry to health and wellness services on campus, students will have one door to go through, whether they have the flu or they are struggling with a mental illness, said Ezekiel.

"You can't really divorce physical health from mental health and well-being. A student might be seeking ongoing support for a physical illness but that need could be driven by a chronic mental health challenge," he noted. "If we have these shared care teams and models, it streamlines our ability to identify and refer where necessary and

get at the root source of poor wellness, whether it is physical or mental health."

After renovations to Thames Hall are completed next year, the new centre will open its doors. It will also be the new home of Western's Sexual Violence Prevention Education Coordinator and case managers.

A first-hand perspective

Jill O'Craven loves to learn. Both in the classroom and beyond its borders.

Fresh from finishing her third year, the Toronto native was thrilled to receive the Elizabeth Tepe Eudaemon Global Opportunities Award. This donor funded award is available to undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities who participate in the Classical Studies Study Tour to Rome and Italy.

In Italy, O'Craven visited ancient archaeological sites and extraordinary museums. "I've studied the history of Rome, so getting to see some of the major sites with professors who study it for a living was amazing," she said. "Their knowledge and experience helped us maximize our time abroad."

The journey through Italy made history come alive for the young student who is pursuing a double major in Arts & Humanities and Classical Studies with a minor in Creative Writing. "Visiting the sites and museums made everything so real and I felt an incredible connection to the history,

artifacts, and culture. It was such a powerful experience," she said.

Visiting Pompeii, the once thriving Roman city buried after Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, was an eye-opening highlight. "It's such an iconic site, it seems like it couldn't possibly live up to its reputation – but it does. We spent a day touring the excavated ruins, a treasure trove of historical information, but it felt like we didn't even scratch the surface," she said.

O'Craven believes that this trip has had a profound impact on her. "No longer are the events taught in class taking place in a distant, half-imagined world, but in places I've actually stood in, with objects I've actually seen," she said.

With two years of school left, O'Craven hasn't completely settled on what's next. However, in the long term, she plans to become a writer and author. "As a writer, it's useful to be well-versed in many subjects, accept every opportunity and mine a breadth of knowledge," she said. "It gives you a broad perspective."



Jill O'Craven
Arts & Humanities student

A ringing endorsement

Hilary Stone, BESC'16, MESC'18, has always been interested in health care but she wasn't sure to what degree. "Medicine was kind of on my mind but I like math, I like physics, and I like problem-solving so I thought I'd start with engineering and see what I could do with it," said Stone.

She started at Western in Chemical Engineering. In her second year, she heard Prof. Kibret Mequanint discuss his interest in applying chemical engineering principles towards biomedical outcomes. She thought, "That's it, that's where I can see myself." So, she worked for him as a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada summer student and then decided to pursue a graduate degree.

Stone focuses on biomaterials research for tissue engineering. She creates imitation human tissues, like cardiac tissue, that can be implanted in the body for clinical applications or used to improve the efficiency of drug testing.

"I make mesh scaffolds that temporarily support cells until they recreate their own structure. At that point, the scaffolds degrade, leaving behind a new piece of tissue," she explained.

In 2017-18, Stone received the Ron Yamada

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS). OGS is a merit-based, matching gift program that supports graduate students. Every \$5,000 from donors leverages an additional \$10,000 in government funds to support one \$15,000 award. Recipients are selected by a rigorous internal competition that considers a candidate's academic performance and research proposal.

To Stone, receiving one of these prestigious awards felt like an endorsement of her potential. "Undeniably, the financial component is big. But beyond that, it's a great award to receive because it's a competitive process. Receiving an OGS gives you a degree of credibility and it demonstrates that there is value to your research," she said.

The OGS award released Stone from teaching assistant obligations so she could focus intently on her research in her final semester. It also gave her the chance to compete with the varsity cross country and track and field teams, as well as to compete in the Three Minute Thesis competition, where she advanced to the final round.

With two degrees already under her belt, Stone has headed home to Toronto to begin medical school.



Hilary Stone
BESC'16, MESC'18

Why do you support Western?

"Many years ago, as an undergraduate student studying English, I was astonished to receive a scholarship funded by a woman who I had never met but whose generosity ensured that I could pursue my studies in less straitened circumstances. I like to think that, although I now live in another London thousands of kilometers away, I might help make a similar difference to a young student."

- Anonymous, BA'90

"I am proud to support Western, my alma mater, in ways that, in this case, benefit one of the key priorities of the University - student health and wellness. By supporting a caring and compassionate environment for personal growth and development, our students have every opportunity to become "Extraordinary" leaders and contributors in our society. Purple and Proud!"

- Carol-Lynn Chambers, BSc'82, MPA'01

"I love Western! I always have. I arrived on campus in 1981 and loved every moment and experience. The memories and friendships are everlasting and my education was the foundation for a great nursing career."

- Mary Piscitelli, BScN'85

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Our three-year average cost per dollar is just 12 cents for each dollar raised, well below the Canada Revenue Agency recommended threshold of 35 per cent. No funds received from donors are used for fundraising expenses. All fundraising expenses are supported by the University.

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