



# Queen's 2012 Vanier Scholars

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Queen's Vanier recipients 2012  
L to R: Jay Jantz, Kerri Froc, Dr Kellie Leitch, Emma Dagie & Yingli Rao

On August 30<sup>th</sup> the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship program chose to make its official announcement of this year's recipients at Queen's campus. Among the five students honoured, two received their awards through the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), two received their awards through the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and one received their award through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

In a small ceremony held in the Cancer Research Institute, the five Queen's recipients were addressed by Kellie Leitch, who is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour. Leitch herself is also an accomplished scholar, holding a Bachelor of Arts, a Doctor of Medicine, a Master of Business Administration, and accreditation by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada as an orthopaedic

surgeon.

The Vanier graduate scholarships are valued at \$50,000 annually for up to three years. To date, 660 have been awarded and the Government of Canada has invested a total of \$98.4 million in the scholarship program. According to the [program's website](#), the three federal granting agencies, SSHRC, CIHR, and NSERC "provide all the guidance, support

and tools needed to administer and promote the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships program.”

In her speech, Leitch spoke of the government’s commitment to fostering “a culture of innovation and achievement,” linking a strong tradition of intellectual labour to the maintenance of good economic health. In tough economic times, research budgets may come under added scrutiny, but the Parliamentary Secretary’s comments emphasize that attracting and retaining scholars engaged in innovative research – not just in science and technology but also, crucially, in the humanities and social sciences – is absolutely central to improving quality of life. Curiosity driven research, for instance, often establishes the building blocks that propel advances in knowledge and technology that could never have been foreseen.

Before ceremonially affixing an official Vanier pin to the lapel of recipient Jay Jantz (Neuroscience), the Parliamentary Secretary expressed her pride as a Queen’s alumna (BA ‘91) in being able to highlight, on behalf of the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State (Science and Technology) the remarkable work of this variety of students from her alma mater. Beaming, the other three recipients present at the ceremony, Emma Dargie (Psychology), Kerri Froc (Law), and Yingli Rao (Chemistry) joined Jantz at the front of the room to receive their stylized V pins. (The fifth recipient, Shane McIntosh from the School of Computing, was unable to attend). Following the announcement, the government officials, Queen’s administrators, media representatives, recipients and their supervisors all followed Jantz for a brief tour of the neuroscience laboratory where he is exploring new ways forward in treating Parkinson’s disease.

Amidst the congratulations and introductions, Emma Dargie, who works in the Sexual Health Research Lab, said that receiving news of her success in the Vanier competition felt like “winning the lottery.” In discussing the significance of her award, the clinical psychology student made sure to underscore the excellent work of her lab mates and her peers, as well as the unwavering support of her supervisor, Dr. Caroline Pukall. Dargie called the experience “humbling” and reflected on her intensified sense of responsibility.

Yingli Rao, a PhD candidate in Chemistry, had similar words of appreciation. Not only does the award open up “more opportunities” for Rao’s research, but it is also “a huge motivation” in her work on photochromic materials that can be used to block sunlight and other forms of UV light. Smiling, Rao said she is eager to “live up to the expectations” set up by this “overwhelming” award.



Queen's Vanier Recipients with their supervisors, Dr Doug Munoz, Dr Bev Baines and Dr Caroline Pukall.

For more information on this year’s Queen’s Vanier recipients and their research, visit [Queen's students honoured with Vanier Scholarships](#).