

# Western's Parent Connection 2016



## Engineering bright futures

When Hilary Luo helped build her first robot as part of a high school competition, she says she “fell in love.” Now, she spends every spare moment she has mentoring young people and working with her team at Western as the mechanical design lead on “Dozer” – their Mars Rover.

Luo, who is also completing a degree in Music Performance and says at one point in her life she was singing in 12 choirs at the same time, chose Western because she was given the opportunity to complete a dual degree in Engineering and Music.

“I didn’t want to leave music behind,” said Luo, adding she only knows a few other students who have pursued this combination of degree in the past. “Engineering and Music are completely different but both so rewarding.”

As a member of Western Engineering’s FIRST robotics club (WE FIRST) – the team that helped her when she was competing in high school – Luo mentors younger teams and provides expertise and support to high school students and teachers exploring robotics.

“It’s amazing to be able to see young people get interested and engaged in STEM and business,” said Luo, who just completed her fourth year in Mechatronics Systems Engineering and plans to pursue a career in industrial automation. “It’s also really cool

**“I’m grateful to have received donor support so I can give back to the community and take full advantage of these opportunities.”**

to bring all the parts together to make something you can drive around and use to complete tasks.”

In addition to its community involvement, WE FIRST is also preparing to bring “Dozer” to compete in the University Rover Challenge in Utah in June 2017 and the European Rover

Challenge in Poland in September 2017.

“Mentoring is important and we are very committed to that, but we also want to show what we can do as a team ourselves,” explained Luo, who estimates she spends more than 1,000 hours a year working with WE FIRST and is currently spending nearly every day focused on designing the rover. Once complete, “Dozer” will be able to complete a number of tasks, including soil sampling, coring, navigation, assistance and maintenance tasks.

“I’m grateful to have received donor support so I can give back to the community and take full advantage of these opportunities. What other time could I have the opportunity to design a Mars Rover like this?”

**Name:** Hilary Luo

**Age:** 22

**Hometown:** London, Ont.

**Program:** Bachelor of Engineering Science & Major in Music

## Students express thanks

“With the stress of studying and pressure to succeed, it’s so important to have time to focus on your body and spirit, as well as your mind. Donor support helped make it possible for me to take part in physical activities to keep me healthy.”

- **Jessica Sarrasin**

**Social Science, Classical Studies, Year 3**

“It’s pretty surreal to consider that there are students whose parents are giving me the opportunity to further my education. It really reinforces my belief that everyone should pay it forward.”

- **Armin Khayatian**

**Honors Business Administration (HBA), Year 4**

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Western 

# A world of possibilities



In my role as Western's Provost & Vice-President (Academic), I am proud to be part of a team of academic and administrative leaders, faculty and staff whose common goal is to ensure our students have every opportunity to develop and succeed in their studies and lives post-graduation.

While your daughter or son is with us, we aim to provide them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be the best they can be. Indeed, our goal is to deliver the best learning experience among Canada's top research-intensive universities.

With more unique program combinations than any other Canadian university, Western is a place where students can tailor their education to suit their personal strengths and career ambitions. We respect that no two students are the same and we embrace those differences, which allows them to challenge themselves and grow into future leaders.

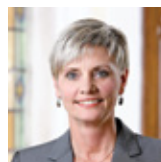
In this edition of Western's *Parent Connection*, you will read about Western students who are making their unique dreams come true with support from donor-funded awards such as Parents' Fund Awards and Global Opportunities Awards.

You will meet Engineering and Music student Hilary Luo, who is just as at home singing on stage as she is building robots. Another, Corry Faulkner, recently completed a combined degree in Fine Arts and Religion and is off to teacher's college this fall. Her dream is to help young students pursue and develop their passions, just as she has.

We have also included a story about our Wellness Education Centre, a new initiative that offers a wide range of resources to ensure students are better equipped to maintain healthy minds and bodies while navigating their way through the stress and rigours of post-secondary study.

Thanks to support from parent donors, like you, we are able to provide students more and better opportunities to pursue their passions and prepare them for life after Western. We appreciate your generosity and commitment to helping us make it possible for students like your son or daughter to have the best Western experience possible.

Sincerely,



**Janice Deakin**  
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)  
Western University



# Art, music and making the world a better place



Whether she's shaping acrylic paint on a large canvas or helping to mold young minds, Corry Faulkner believes in going where inspiration leads.

"In high school I became very interested in art and photography. Then I took a peer mentoring course where I was able to teach with the help of a teacher. That showed me I wanted to put them together and pursue a career as an art teacher," said Faulkner, who spent the past three summers tutoring students. She began her Bachelor of Education degree at Nipissing University this fall.

"I really love to see people learn and I want to help younger generations find their passion," she continued, adding she hopes to teach Grades 7-12 Art and Religion. "Art really sparked something in me; I want to show them they can pursue it as a career."

While at Western, Faulkner was an involved member of the art community, showcasing her work – mostly large abstract paintings – in gallery expositions, studio installations and creative journals. She also volunteered with Envelope for Joy, a pen pal program pairing Western students with children around the world and for a mentoring initiative with Big Sisters.

A recipient of the Parents' Fund Award, Faulkner says donor support gave her the opportunity to pursue her dream. "I had to pay for school myself and relied on loans and bursaries. It really made a difference to know that someone was there helping me along the way and allowing me to focus more on my education."

Every morning for the past two summers, Justin Forte has marched through the streets of Ottawa, trumpet to lips, playing *The 10 Provinces March* and leading the new guard to Parliament Hill.

"It's been a great experience," said Forte, who joined the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves last summer so he would be eligible to join the Band of the Ceremonial Guard. "Every day at 10 a.m. we march from Cartier Square Drill Hall and up Parliament Hill to play while they do the Changing of the Guard and then we march back down to the drill hall."

The band, which performs each year from late June to late August, is considered the top military marching band in Canada and supports official functions held in Ottawa. Performing with this group, as well as the Western University Wind Ensemble, allows him the opportunity to pursue his passion for music, while the reading, writing and critical-thinking skills he's acquiring through his degree in Music History will prepare him for his dream career in law, Forte said.

"I've loved playing the trumpet since high school and I think as long as you're doing something that makes you happy, you can make it work. I've never thought, 'What am I going to do with this music degree?' I never considered giving it up."

He's also looking forward to helping out future generations of students. "Receiving donor support is so helpful for music students because we have not only the cost of textbooks, but also the cost to buy instruments and sheet music. All those extra costs really add up."

During the summer of 2015, Lisette Farias Vera used her Global Opportunities Award to study the root causes of child migration and it changed her perspective.

"Although I grew up in Chile, it was a shock how the lack of access to adequate housing, health services and even staples, such as nutritious food and clean water, could create such significant obstacles for families attempting to live off their land that they feel forced to migrate in search of alternatives for supporting their families. They are forced to make what, for us, are extreme survival decisions," said Vera, who spent a month with a local family in a research field school in Antigua, Guatemala, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

"What drew me to this particular field school was my fellow students were from different countries and disciplines. It will take teams with different perspectives and strengths to mitigate the negative consequences and position the broad trajectory of communities and societies in more positive and healthier directions," she continued.

"Through this generous award, I was able to harness the power of 13 other individuals to explore how Guatemalans view migration and what they think should be done to address it. I have laid the foundation for a research network," she said.

"I've been given the gift of real-world experience and the chance to understand how my work as a researcher and health professional can be the catalyst for creating better societies," she said. "When donors give students these opportunities, we go out into the world with our skills and passions to make it a better place."

**Name:** Corry Faulkner, BFA'16

**Age:** 22

**Hometown:** Brantford, Ont.

**Program:** Bachelor of Fine Arts (Studio Arts) with a minor in Religious Studies

**Name:** Justin Forte

**Age:** 22

**Hometown:** Stratford, Ont.

**Program:** Bachelor of Music – specialization in Music History/minor in French Studies

**Name:** Lisette Farias Vera

**Age:** 32

**Hometown:** Santiago, Chile

**Program:** PhD, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences



# The Wellness Education Centre



*Melanie-Ann Atkins, Wellness Coordinator (far-left) and the student-staff members at the Wellness Education Centre are focused on providing health and wellness resources and tips to Western students.*

Students seeking health and wellness support and resources can now find the help they're looking for thanks to the friendly staff and 'no wrong' door policy at the new Wellness Education Centre (WEC).

The WEC, which recently opened in the bottom level of the University Community Centre, is a collaboration between Western's Student Experience and Student Health Services where students can access mental health and wellness resources and programming, nutrition information and advice, and sexual violence prevention education and survivors' support, all in a central location. Funded by Student Experience and a private donor, the WEC's mandate is to provide help for undergraduate and graduate students, but anyone seeking guidance or resources is welcome.

"What we've found is that we're really good at providing reactive services for when students are in crisis but we wanted to also work on those tips that students can take away to promote their own wellness," explained Melanie-Anne Atkins, BEd'10, MEd'12, PhD'16, Program Coordinator at WEC. "My job is to see how students can make their lives better and do what I can to make those tools available to students and to the faculty and staff who might be helping them."

Since opening in January 2016, the WEC's staff – comprised of between nine to 15 student staff members and volunteers – has provided services to nearly 500 students, said Atkins, who is responsible for creating and facilitating training and workshops related to mental health, as well as for running the WEC.

"So far, the response has been amazing. Students come in and say to us, 'You get it.' They appreciate that we're here to help," explained Atkins, whose PhD research focused on investigating cooperative ways to decrease the stigma of mental illness in schools. "I used resources like these when I was a graduate student and many of those lessons helped me throughout my studies and in my life going forward. Accessing these resources can only improve and enhance the academic experience for students."



*Since its opening in January 2016, nearly 500 students have accessed resources at the Wellness Education Centre.*

Staff at the WEC receive extensive and ongoing training on how to locate resources in the massive online database and how to connect those seeking support with the right services. "Because of the attitude our student-staff have and the fact they're not scared or intimidated – people tend to calm down just talking to them," Atkins said. "A lot of people have found us because they've been turned away from other places. We don't do that here. It's a safe space and we're willing to help no matter what it is."

For more information about the WEC, visit: [wec.uwo.ca](http://wec.uwo.ca)