

# Vanier Doctoral Canada Graduate Scholarships

Information Session



*July 23, 2020*

A photograph of a stone archway with grapevines, leading to a paved path in a lush green campus setting. The archway is made of light-colored stone and has several grapevines climbing over it. The path leads into a green lawn area with trees and a bench in the background. A large red oval is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

**McMaster University  
recognizes and acknowledges  
that it is located on the  
traditional territories of the  
Mississauga and  
Haudenosaunee nations, and  
within the lands protected by  
the “Dish with One Spoon”  
wampum agreement.**

# Overview of Vanier Scholarship

## Background

- Tri-Agency program designed to attract and retain world-class doctoral students to a Canadian University

## Value

- \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years

## Duration and Start Date

- Up to 3 years depending on how many months of doctoral studies completed.
- Start date of May 2021, September 2021 or January 2022

## McMaster Internal Deadline

- Stage 1 – Letter of Intent Package due Tuesday, September 8, 2020

# Overview Cont'd

## McMaster's Agency Quotas for the 2021-2022 competition

- CIHR = 11 applicants
- NSERC = 7 applicants
- SSHRC = 5 applicants

## McMaster Quotas and Results for the last 5 years

Agency	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	Quota	Received								
CIHR	10	3	10	2	10	6	10	4	10	1
NSERC	7	3	7	0	7	4	7	1	7	2
SSHRC	5	0	5	2	5	0	4	1	4	2

## Overview (cont'd)

- Applicant does not have to be registered or admitted to a graduate program at the time of application
- There is a two stage internal process at McMaster
- Students **must** have received departmental endorsement to submit a stage one Vanier letter of intent package at McMaster
- If students are endorsed to stage two of the internal competition, they will have to submit a full application through **ResearchNet**

# Eligibility

- Canadian Citizens, permanent residents of Canada and international students can apply
- First class average in **EACH** of the last two years of full-time studies completed (2018-19 and 2019-20) or equivalent
  - First class average for Vanier at McMaster is **10 (A-)** **\*\*NEW\*\***
- Be seeking financial support to pursue your **FIRST** doctoral degree (or combined MA/PhD or MD/PhD)
- Cannot have previously held or currently hold a Tri-Agency doctoral award
- Be nominated by only one Canadian University, which must have received a Vanier CGS allocation

## Eligibility (cont'd)

- Intend to pursue, in the summer semester (May 2021) or the academic year following the announcement of results (September 2021 or January 2022), full-time doctoral studies and research at the nominating university
- Have completed no more than 20 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2021 (started full-time doctoral studies no earlier than September 2019)
- Have completed no more than 32 months of full-time study in their doctoral program by May 1, 2021 if accelerated directly from a Bachelor's to a PhD (no time spent in a Master's program)
- Have completed no more than 32 months of full-time study in their doctoral program by May 1, 2021 if accelerated from a Master's degree into a Doctoral program without obtaining the Master's degree

# Research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities

- Research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities is defined as research in any field or discipline that is:
  - conducted by First Nations, Inuit, Métis or other Indigenous nations, communities, societies or individuals; and/or
  - grounded in or engaged with one or more of these communities and/or their wisdom, cultures, experiences or knowledge systems, as expressed in their dynamic forms, past and present
- If your proposed research respectfully involved Indigenous communities, please include **“This research respectfully involves and engages Indigenous communities”** at the beginning of your lay abstract
- For nominations in which the proposed research respectfully involves and engages Indigenous communities, applicants and nominating institutions should be aware of and refer to relevant principles and protocols established for this type of research
- More details available on the Vanier website

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (Vanier CGS) program strives to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the application, review, and selection processes. To better equip all those participating in the Vanier CGS competition (applicants, nominating institutions, referees, reviewers), the Tri-Agencies have curated an important list of the resources to help guide each group.
- The EDI page of the Vanier CGS website provides guidelines and resources geared towards applicants, host institutions, referees, and **reviewers** and readers (e.g., CIHR Vanier committee underwent unconscious/EDI training)
- The EDI page addresses the following topics:
  - promoting equity, diversity and inclusion
  - research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities
  - limiting unconscious bias



Welcome

## Our faculty presenters

- **Nancy Carter**, Assistant Dean  
Nursing Graduate Program
- **Brenda Vrkljan**, Professor  
School of Rehabilitation Science

## Our student presenters

- **Sarah Medeiros**, CIHR Vanier Scholar, 2020
- **Moustafa Abdel-Mooty**, NSERC Vanier Scholar, 2020
- **Carlo Charles**, SSHRC Vanier Scholar, 2020

**Acknowledgement:** Thank you to Antonella (Toni) Masciantonio and Diane Potvin for drafting this presentation. As well, corresponding information on some of the slides that follow was originally developed by: Drs. Nancy Carter & Ryan Van Lieshout (with additions/edits by Dr. Brenda Vrkljan).

# Evaluation Criteria

All three criteria carry equal weighting (33.3%) for evaluation by the committee:

- ❑ Academic Excellence
- ❑ Research Potential
- ❑ Leadership

# Academic Excellence

- First Class average for the last two completed years (transcripts)
- Ensure any discrepancies in the timeline to degree completion are explained (e.g. leaves of absence, parental leave, etc.)
- Reviewers will look at all your post-secondary grades
- Awards and distinction in your CCV
- Academic Excellence should be integrated in your referees' assessments

# Research Potential

- Research proposal and its contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, the potential benefit to Canadians and society and any anticipated outcome
- Evidence of research excellence such as journal articles, conference papers, abstracts
- Research potential should be explicit in the referees' assessments
- In many fields, research excellence output is nearly exclusively reliant upon published first author papers
- Committees assess candidates contribution to research and interest in discovery

# Leadership

## Leadership (Potential & Demonstrated ability)

As demonstrated by the following indicators: **personal achievement, involvement in academic life, volunteerism/community outreach, civic engagement, goal achievement, self-management, integrity and social skills**

- Leadership can take many forms. Be sure to outline not just your accomplishments, but **how those** accomplishments involved leveraging your leadership skills to achieve your stated goals
- The selection committee does not consider simply participating in sports, arts, volunteering and employment in leadership positions as demonstrating Leadership in and of themselves

# Leadership (cont'd)

- The difference between leadership and volunteering is determined based on the role you had in the extra-curricular activity
  - **Leadership** implies developing a strategic goal by one's self to the benefit of a larger body and delegating tasks to others.
  - **Volunteering** implies following tasks that have been given by others; if you lead the task then that is leadership!
  - Going above and beyond what might be expected

Use this section to position yourself and role in extracurricular events that demonstrate leadership!

# Examples of Leadership

- Scientific Organization Student Leadership
- Scientific Meeting Organization Tasks
- University committees
- Position Papers, Clinical Practice Guidelines
- Invited talks
- KT Exercises (especially coordination roles)
  - Community outreach with students, public health, etc
- Awards, Scholarships
- Volunteerism (if you actually led something)
- Recurring newsletter contributions
- Patents

# Examples of Leadership (cont'd)

- Assessment/Review Activities
  - Journal reviews
  - Conference reviews
  - Grant reviews
  - Organizational reviews
- Teaching
  - Programs developed and taught
  - Courses developed and taught
- Supervisory Activity
  - Student Supervision
  - Staff Supervision
  - Mentoring

# *Let's share tips*

## *Putting together the application*

- Research Proposal
- Personal Leadership Statement
- CCV
- Two Referee Assessments
- Two Leadership Reference Letters

Remember reviewers of your application come from variety of disciplines and backgrounds!!  
You need to write in a way that is accessible (understandable), meaningful and impactful

# Tips for the Research proposal

- Reviewers are mostly a (non-specialist audience), and as such your proposal should be written in non-technical terms, **avoid jargon!**
- Use graphs and images only if reviewers will understand them (they take space away from presenting your proposal)
- Be clear
- Formulate around a well understood hypothesis
- Use full two pages and headings

# Personal leadership statement

- This document should present to the committee a clear statement of what challenges and opportunities have shaped your doctoral research
- Please consider the following points when crafting the statement:
  - ❑ **Read the Vanier website carefully** and follow instructions
  - ❑ Use full two pages
  - ❑ Use strong action words and use same words in your CCV
  - ❑ Be succinct, concise, and avoid a ‘autobiographical’ approach

# Tips Leadership Statement

## ‘Engaging’ & ‘Impactful’

- Two page statement highlighting activities as they relate to your future as a leader in your field of research
- Be deliberate when describing activities in which you participated that support your future leadership abilities in your area of research
  - Link your activities to your goals and research program
  - Consider how academic researchers ‘tell their story’
- Clear writing and formatting (**spacing, paragraphs, headings**)
- Describe what you are doing/have done above and beyond your research and coursework

# Tips for Leadership Statement

**Objective:** To show how you've started on your way to become a future leader and have that potential

- Try to tell a compelling story that links to your research accomplishments and future goals/trajectory
- Where to start
  - List out all of your potential leadership activities
  - Pick the top three
  - Consider how to present for maximum impact

# Tips for Leadership Statement Cont'd

- Your leadership statement should be as compelling as your research proposal!
- Modesty is not a virtue here
- When selecting activities, support them by:
  - Describe their significance in terms of your leadership and sphere of influence;
  - Discuss their impact and importance in terms of your career objectives (press interviews, blogs, other coverage can be highlighted)

# Crafting your Leadership Statement (cont'd)

- Put strongest roles and proof up front, then add more minor roles, then volunteering (if necessary)
- Provide actual proof of change
  - Explain the role you played in improving/changing things
  - Don't just list changes
  - Indicate change that has occurred since you assumed leadership (how was it before and after you led)
- Never expect the reviewer will understand the extent of the accomplishment;
  - Stress the value of the work, give them insights into how the reviewer should value the contribution
  - Highlight how you have gone above and beyond expected norms to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change

# Crafting your Leadership Statement (cont'd)

- Be up front, honest, and authentic
- Use numbers to back up your claims (increase in membership, readership, funding, etc.)
- Use strong action words that convey leadership (don't overuse led, lead, etc.)
- State what the end impact is anticipated to be
- Avoid unrelated fluff:
  - Too often, content is too focused on biographical elements on why they wanted to become a researcher
  - Insufficient evidence of leadership can put off reviewers because it doesn't come to the point quickly enough

# CCV

## An 'activity/award/accomplishment' list that links everything together

Your CCV is more than a list of academic and work experiences. It is evidence of excellence in all categories. Make sure you are taking full advantage of the CCV

### Leadership

- Use action words and clearly indicate how you conceived the event/goal and how you got others to implement it
- Give examples, do not just state “I led”. (If there is no evidence of leadership, no credit will be given)

### Research Potential

- Make sure journals and articles are up to date

### Academic Excellence

- Include all awards and distinctions

## Journals/Publications/Proceedings/Knowledge translation

- State the impact factor of the journal if you want recognition
  - The committee will not know this information unless you include it
- If papers are not the norm for the field than indicate that, but be prepared to rank the value of the contribution
- Reviewers will not work to put a value to a contribution, but will check a stated value
- Few papers with very high impact factors are often considered equivalent to several papers of lesser impact

# CCV (cont'd)

## Journals (cont'd)

- CIHR & NSERC Candidates may have an average of 2-5 journal articles with a fair number as first author and competitive presentations\*\*
- SSHRC researchers don't have as many published journal articles
  - SSHRC candidates may have 1-2 published articles/book chapters and 2-3 conference presentations\*\*

\*\*\*The above statements are dependent on the norm in your field and at what stage you are at in your graduate studies

# Referee assessments

- Two Referee assessments are required
- Applicants should contact their selected referees to seek their agreement to provide an assessment well in advance of the application deadline date
- You are responsible for supplying your referees with the documents necessary for them to write their respective letters
- SGS has provided a Referee Reference Document in the Vanier package emailed out at the end of June to departments. Students must forward this document to their referees. This document provide pertinent information required for writing a reference, as well as a link to the **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion** page, which **must** be reviewed by the referee prior to writing the reference letter

## Referee assessments (cont'd)

- Applicants are encouraged to consider the full range of potential referees, including experts who could best provide relevant evidence, perspectives, and insight to support the review of the applicant's application in light of the selection criteria (i.e., Academic Excellence, Research Potential and Leadership)
- Referees should make sure every trait of the applicant being described has meaningful evidence provided
- SGS has provided a referee reference sheet with the Vanier Competition package that was sent out to departments

# Leadership reference letters for Vanier

- Two Leadership reference letters are required
- These letters should ideally be written by references who know you in a non-academic capacity and can speak to how your personal trajectory reflects the Leadership evaluation criterion
- In order to facilitate this, you may wish to share your Personal Leadership Statement with them

Ask your leadership reference letter writers to respond to the following:

- Referencing your life and research trajectory, provide an assessment of demonstrated and potential leadership ability and check your application for spelling, grammar, and formatting

## Leadership reference letters (cont'd)

- Referee should elaborate on how you have gone above and beyond the opportunities presented in order to achieve a goal, contribute to your community, or how you have taken on responsibility for others
- Referee should provide context for the committee that illuminates how your participation in activities (volunteer, work, sport, art, or any other participation) that goes above and beyond active participation and becomes leadership
- Be aware that high achievement, while admirable, does not necessarily constitute leadership

# FINAL TIPS

- Seek past applications from other students, particularly those that have been successful in some way
- Discuss your statement with a supervisor, department chair, past winner or Banting Committee Member
- Expect to write, review, edit, re-write
- .... Preparing this application provides an opportunity to really know yourself and continue to build on your strengths!

Thank  
you  
to our  
speakers

*Let's break a McMaster record in 2021  
for most Vanier Scholarships!*

# Thank you!

Questions?

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McMaster 2020 Vanier Competition

