



SJC Affiliated Scholarships 2023-2024

Award Recipients

Many St. John's University alumni and supporters of UBC have played a significant role in the establishment of St. John's College UBC and its Fellowships and Academic Endowment Fund.

We are grateful for the generous support of our Johannean benefactors who made it possible to establish the following fellowships and awards for eligible residents of St. John's College.

We are pleased to announce this year's award recipients, who will be known as Johannean Scholars.

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Ana Polgár



Reginald and Annie Van Fellowship

Award Amount: \$10,000

Program: PhD in Planning

Home Country: Croatia/Netherlands

Though Ana has only lived at SJC for two years, she has been an integral member of the college community, especially in community building through creativity and care. Ana chairs the SJC Arts Committee and is an active member of the SJC Wellness and Environmental Committees. Through hosting orientation events, art workshops, cultural excursions, activities in nature and organizing a now-annual resident art exhibition, Ana has cultivated inclusive spaces for belonging and creativity for fellow residents.

Ana’s research explores how we can use street-level observations and participatory mapping to verify what becomes visible when we enhance earth observation data with machine learning, improving our ability to plan nature-based solutions for environmental challenges in cities with limited capacity to gather and analyze geographic data. This fellowship will support Ana in her field research in Dhaka and Khulna, Bangladesh, where she will collaborate with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) to ground-truth local conditions and knowledge. This effort aims to integrate these insights into the planning of nature-based solutions, enhancing their effectiveness in addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of local communities.

Bill Zhao

Sir Quo-Wei Lee Fellowship

Award Amount: \$6,000

Program: Master of Population and Public Health

Home Country: Canada

Bill has lived at SJC for two years, during which time he has actively helped new residents get oriented to college life. Bill has also organized numerous community events and excursions, such



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as the Queen Elizabeth Park tour, which create opportunities for residents to unwind and build social connections. Bill has a strong interest in learning and engaging with different cultures from around the world, contributing to a vibrant community here at SJC.

Bill's research investigates the relationship between food environments, neighbourhood characteristics, and dietary habits in British Columbia. He is concurrently working on a manuscript focused on the community nutrition environment. This fellowship will support Bill's living and tuition costs, allowing him to focus on completing his thesis in his final year."

Christina Eunjun Kong



***Charles C.C. Wong Memorial Fellowship,
Li Pai Lin Memorial Graduate Scholarship***

Award Amount: \$4000 total
(\$800, Charles C.C. Wong; \$3200, Li Pai Lin)

Program: PhD in Oceanography

Home Country: Canada

Christina has lived at SJC for nine months, actively contributing to the community by leading SJC Cooking Club events, coordinating the SJC Running Group, and participating in various initiatives that have positively impacted the community.

Her PhD research on the ecological impact of marine heatwaves aims to enhance understanding of how climate change affects marine ecosystems and the carbon cycle. These awards will support Christina's travel to Chile, where she will collect data for her research and receive advanced training in ocean observation through the Pacific Rim Ocean Data Mobilization and Technology (PRODIGY) program, improving her skills in data collection, analysis, and communication.

Demet Kirmizibayrak

Charles C.C. Wong Memorial Fellowship

Award Amount: \$10,000

Program: PhD in Physics

Home Country: Turkey



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Demet has lived at SJC for six years and has been an active and integral member of the college community, serving on many - perhaps all! - resident committees. She has served as SJC's Residence Community Coordinator for the past three years and plays an integral role in every aspect of SJC life, such as organizing orientation activities, social events, and resident talks, and assisting with SJC's communications. Demet served on the planning committee for SJC's 25th Anniversary celebrations in 2022. She works closely with the SJC Administration team to provide a supportive and vibrant environment for residents.

Demet's research focuses on developing novel timing methods to probe astronomical objects, the results of which have shaped scientific knowledge of the physics and geometry of black holes and neutron stars. This fellowship will support Demet's tuition and living expenses, allowing her to share her results with the scientific community through submitting journal articles and presenting at conferences, and to complete her doctoral thesis as she approaches graduation in fall 2024.

Edwin Agyei

Reginald and Annie Van Fellowship,

George Shen Fellowship

Award Amount: \$2700 total (\$1000, Reginald and Annie Van; \$1700, George Shen)

Program: Master of Architecture

Home Country: Canada

Edwin is in his second year of living at SJC and has made mutually valuable connections with residents and the college community through conversations over dinner and group outings. He assists with event set up for college events and is a member of the SJC intramural soccer team.

Edwin's research project explores how architecture can contribute to neighbourhood revitalization and cultural preservation in Toronto's Black communities. These awards will support Edwin's work by covering costs for tuition, model making, laser cut and 3D printing time, procuring materials, and printing drawings.



Grace Snippe



Itoko Muraoka Scholarship

Award Amount: \$8,000

Program: Master of Orchestral Instrument (Cello Performance)

Home Country: Canada

Although Grace has only been a part of the SJC community for one year, SJC is - in her words - a “special place on earth”. Grace has shared her music and knowledge with fellow residents through playing the cello for study sessions and art nights, as well as through dialogue and sharing the joy of live music. Grace has been an active member of the SJC Pride Club and Environmental Committee, helping to organize events and raise awareness.

Grace’s academic research focuses on modern classical music, the changing roles of classical music in society, and highlighting the accomplishments of living, female, queer, trans, and Indigenous composers. This award will fund repairs for Grace’s cello to bring it up to professional concert cello standards. These adjustments to her instrument will allow her to continue in her studies and practice to reach her full musical and technical potential.

Lap Yin (Jay) Yeung



Reginald and Annie Van Fellowship,

George Shen Fellowship

Award Amount: \$3800 total (\$1300, Reginald and Annie Van; \$2500, George Shen)

Program: Master of Special Education

Home Country: Hong Kong

Jay has lived at SJC for one year, during which he has found the multicultural and interdisciplinary community broadening. As a member and organizer of the SJC Arts Committee, he has organized theme-based oil painting workshops for residents as well as English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Japanese language exchange activities. Jay is studying language and special education, with the goal of teaching English Language Learners (ELL) in elementary schools to effectively help learners with diverse needs and bridge cultural gaps through language.



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These awards will support Jay's enrollment in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Certification course through the University of Toronto, equipping him to effectively teach ELL in British Columbia.

Maissan Bazazeh



Sir Quo-Wei Lee Fellowship

Award Amount: \$8,000

Program: Master of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Home Country: United Arab Emirates

For Maissan, St. John's College has offered her a second home and a family since she arrived last year. As a member of the SJC Social Committee, Maissan has organized several activities to help bring people together - including writing personal messages to other residents to celebrate "Galentine's" Day and organizing a Christmas Potluck for residents who stayed at the college over winter break.

Maissan is a member of UBC's Digital Media Lab. Her research explores the impact of higher resolution sensors on colour, contrast, and brightness enhancement in image and video capture. This fellowship will alleviate the need to work multiple jobs and allow Maissan to focus on her research and thesis while remaining a contributing member of the SJC community.

Mikko Paajanen



Charles C.C. Wong Memorial Fellowship

Award Amount: \$10,000

Program: PhD in Botany

Home Country: Finland

During the six years that Mikko has lived at SJC, he has been our resident plant expert and has had a leading role in the SJC Garden Committee, sharing his passion for and knowledge of the natural world with other residents. Mikko has also contributed to the community in numerous other ways such as providing continuity and support for fellow residents during the pandemic, participating in the SJC Pride Club, organizing outings and helping new residents settle in.



This fellowship will allow Mikko to focus on completing his PhD project on the conservation biology of St. Helena, Finland (which is one of the most isolated islands in the world), while still living at SJC, and ultimately to relocate back home to Finland after graduation in September 2024.

Oğuzhan Kaya

Itoko Muraoka Scholarship

Award Amount: \$6,000

Program: PhD in Asian Studies

Home Country: Turkey

Oğuzhan first arrived at St. John's College in 2018. Since then, the most rewarding aspects of his life in Canada have involved his life and friends at SJC. An active member of various committees and initiatives, he has served as chair or co-chair for the SJC Life, Sports and Film Committees, leading initiatives ranging from Japanese animation movie nights to drills in the courtyard for the intramural volleyball team. More recently, he has led SJC's Safety Committee including doing nightly security rounds, and led the Event Set Up and Orientation teams.

Oğuzhan's work focuses on modern Japanese literature, specifically neo-nationalism and neo-imperialism in contemporary Japanese popular culture. As Oğuzhan's four-year fellowship from his department has run out, this award provides continued financial support for living costs as he completes his dissertation in his final year.

Poornima Francis



Sir Quo-Wei Lee Fellowship

Award Amount: \$6,000

Program: Master of Journalism

Home Country: India

Poornima has lived at SJC for two years, during which “[her] imagination found a home at SJC”. As a journalism student, the diverse college community offered a space and sounding board to discuss, learn and unlearn everyday's isms. A talented photographer, Poornima has taken photos for many college events and helped to organize and submit to SJC's first ever Spring Formal Art Exhibition. Poornima produced a short documentary film on the journey of a newcomer's identity in Canada



for WhereWeStand, a storytelling project at Toronto Metropolitan University - Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration. This film was screened at the Canadian Museum of Immigration, Nova Scotia and Woodland Cultural Centre, Ontario.

As part of her graduate studies, Poornima would like to further develop her documentary film to integrate the unique relationships shared by early immigrants and Aboriginal peoples on Canada's west coast. Having conducted interviews, the film is now in post-production. This award will help cover costs for film-related travel, industry-level equipment, and editing software to support Poornima's completion of this film while also completing her degree.

Raha H. Atashpa



Charles C.C. Wong Memorial Fellowship

Award Amount: \$8,000

Program: PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies

Home Country: Iran

Raha moved into St. John's College in 2023, excited about the diverse and vibrant community, creating the opportunity to connect with individuals from around the world. SJC has provided a supportive environment where she has made meaningful friendships, which have been a source of comfort and motivation, helping her navigate the challenges of her academic journey. Raha has contributed to the college's creative spirit and plans to coordinate art workshops with the SJC Art Committee.

Her doctoral research, "Narratives of Change: Cocooning and Anti/Metamorphosis through Interdisciplinary Exploration, Living Inquiry, and Art Practice," explores the intersection of Contemporary Art, Aesthetic Experience, Art-Making, Aesthetic Education, Creative Writing, and Cultural/Social Studies. This study examines the fluid identities of artist and scholar, fostering an educational environment inspired by the concept of "cocooning."

The research uses the lifecycle of the domesticated Bombyx Mori in sericulture to metaphorically explore vulnerability, anti/metamorphosis, and freedom in human experience. It critiques societal and educational frameworks that can inhibit growth despite their nurturing intentions. Raha uses silk and her body as primary materials in her visual art-making, integrating the tactile and personal into her work.



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Her dissertation, inspired by Currere and art-led research methodologies, transcends traditional academic boundaries. This approach fosters a 'cocooning experience' that enables metamorphosis through academic rigor, aesthetic engagement, and creative interrogation of lived experiences and memories. The personal and tactile use of silk and her body deepens the narrative and conceptual exploration of her inquiry.

The award will enable Raha to attend conferences and workshops, purchase art materials, and focus on completing her thesis, while remaining an active member of the SJC community.

Sacchidanandan (Sacchi) Pillai



Sir Quo-Wei Lee Fellowship

Award Amount: \$10,000

Program: PhD in Oceanography

Home Country: Malaysia

For Sacchi, many of his year's highlights occurred at St. John's College. Sacchi has served as SJC's Resident Community Coordinator for the past year, during which he has worked with the SJC Administration team and various resident committees to bring to life countless events, resident scholar talks, and wellness activities such as organizing Thrive Month activities. He also serves on the SJC Arts, Environmental, Resident Fellow Speaker Series, and Social Committees, organizing and supporting a wide range of initiatives.

Sacchi's thesis examines the use of hyperspectral optical data to understand the ecology of phytoplankton, microscopic algae at the base of the marine food chain. The results of his work have significant implications for understanding other parts of ocean biogeochemistry and its potential future response to climate change. This award will support Sacchi's travel to and participation in the Ocean Optics XXVI conference in Gran Canaria, Spain in October 2024. He will present the results of his thesis work to the world's leading experts in his field and receive valuable feedback.



Seyed Hossein (Soheil) Alavi



Reginald and Annie Van Fellowship

Award Amount: \$8,000

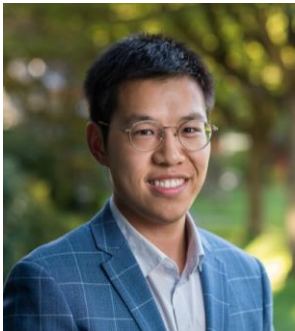
Program: PhD in Computer Science

Home Country: Iran

During the three years that Soheil has lived at SJC, his time here has shaped his academic journey, sense of belonging and personal growth. As an active member of the SJC Sports Committee, Soheil organized SJC teams to participate in UBC-wide athletic events. He also organized and instructed weekly Bachata and Salsa dance classes and has served on the Safety, Fire Brigades and Social Committees.

Soheil's work is on conversational AI and natural language processing. This award will help cover living costs, allowing Soheil to focus his time on completing his thesis (anticipated completion in 2025), cover research-related expenses such as hiring research assistants and securing processing powers, and support his attendance and membership at conferences to present his work.

Shangwen Yi



Reginald and Annie Van Fellowship

Award Amount: \$6,000

Program: PhD in Business Administration in Marketing

Home Country: China

During the five years that Shangwen has lived at SJC, he has helped build community among residents and alumni and shared about Chinese food and culture with the college community. In addition to sharing his work at various SJC and graduate student speaking events and panels, he has been a member of various SJC sports teams, including organizing a joint softball team for SJC and Sauder School of Business students.

Shangwen's dissertation focuses on price promotion framings, and judgement and decision-making. This award will support Shangwen as he completes his dissertation to compensate research participants, and to attend major conferences in consumer psychology such as the



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Association for Consumer Research Annual Conference, where he will present his research and receive valuable feedback.

Shiming (Iris) Wu

Sir Quo-Wei Lee Fellowship

Award Amount: \$4,000

Program: PhD in Economics

Home Country: China

Iris is grateful for and contributes to the camaraderie and friendships inherent to St. John's College. She has organized community brunches featuring Asian cuisines and actively participates in college life.

Through producing her thesis titled, "Natural Disasters and Optimal Capital Requirements", Iris' goal is to make meaningful contributions to the understanding of capital requirements in insurance markets and post-disaster relief efforts. This award will help alleviate tuition fees and living expenses as Iris refines the theoretical framework and gathers empirical evidence for her thesis while continuing to contribute to the SJC community.

Yi Chen



Sir Quo-Wei Lee Fellowship

Award Amount: \$4,000

Program: Master of Business Administration in Finance

Home Country: China

Yi has lived at St. John's College for one year and is very grateful for the home away from home. She enjoys engaging in stimulating conversations with residents from various disciplines. These interdisciplinary discussions have inspired her to integrate emerging research methodologies, particularly from artificial intelligence, into financial economics. This approach has culminated in her current research project, which uses machine learning for textual analysis of newspapers to assess economic uncertainty.



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To cultivate a culture of intellectual exchange at SJC, Yi has spearheaded a series of informal yet insightful presentations based on scholarly papers in the dining hall. The encouragement and insightful conversations from the SJC community have been pivotal to her intellectual growth. These rich dialogues have not only affirmed her commitment to the dissemination of knowledge but have also spurred her ambition to organize more structured talks in the future. The scholarship will help Yi acquire access to the necessary database, further contributing to the intellectual community.

Ziwen Mei



George Shen Fellowship

Award Amount: \$8,000

Program: PhD in Language and Literacy Education

Home Country: China

While Ziwen has lived and studied in several different places, her time living at St. John's College has stood out in the sense of belonging and connection she both receives and contributes to here. Ziwen is SJC's current Johannean Ambassador, a role in which she serves as the liaison between SJC and our Johannean Founders, building and maintaining connections between current SJC residents and St. John's University alumni networks. A member of the planning committee for the inaugural event of SJC's Dr. George Shen Memorial Speaker Series in April 2024, she wrote the text for the memorial plaque honouring one of SJC's Johannean Founders Dr. George Shen, which was unveiled at the event.

Drawing from her own rural-urban migration roots, Ziwen's research focuses on language policy and planning of rural migrant families in urban areas and how their decision-making in children's language learning interacts with their identity negotiation in the city. This award will cover research expenses for field work in China engaging with rural migrant families and gathering data (including video equipment and honouraria for participating families), as well as registration and travel costs to present her work at national and international conferences.