

**BRIGHTER  
WORLD**



# President's Awards

**FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN  
2020**



**Nominees and Recipients**

# PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN 2020

## INDIVIDUAL NOMINEES

### **Kate Brown**

***Manager, Accessibility Program  
Equity and Inclusion Office***

Kate Brown is the manager of the Access Mac Program and has been an integral part of the Equity and Inclusion Office's accessibility portfolio for the past four years. She is responsible for the University's Accessibility Policy and for overseeing McMaster's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Compliance Action Plan.

Kate devoted her strong skills and technical knowledge to advancing Access Mac for two years before being promoted to the program's manager. Her work in both of her roles has demonstrated an impressive commitment to the process of building a more accessible and inclusive campus. Kate has launched well-received programs, services and resources including the Employee Accessibility Network, the Disabilities Discussion series, online training modules related to creating accessible documents and presentations, and the consolidation of accessibility resources which are helping instructors employ the principles of universal design. She engages students with lived experiences to test new programs and services, thus creating opportunities for these students with disabilities, generating reciprocal relationships with members of the disability community and gathering invaluable feedback that helps improve the services the University provides.

Kate, who is known for being particularly responsive to and supportive of her colleagues, publishes original work related to her portfolio, both collaboratively and on her own, and she is also responsible for sparking the revision of McMaster's Accessibility Policy.

**Michelle Buchner**  
***Curriculum Assistant***  
**School of Nursing**

Michelle Buchner started as an administrative assistant in the School of Nursing in 2006 and became the curriculum assistant in 2012, a position that has not only allowed her to thrive, but to influence the School's academic program across three partner institutions: McMaster University, Mohawk College and Conestoga College. Displaying a particular skill in navigating the complexities of aligning activities at three different organizations, Michelle also has a strong track record as a mentor to new team members. She adapted quickly and smoothly to the realities of virtual program delivery during the pandemic and assumed a lead role in creating, developing and invigilating virtual exams using her newly acquired skills in the Respondus platform.

Michelle has become the department's go-to person for faculty and student issues related to technologies, including Zoom and Avenue to Learn and has helped both administrative staff and faculty learn how to use key technological platforms. Additionally, Michelle has taken the lead in the evaluation process in the MedSIS administrative platform. She identifies important issues, as well as reporting the results clearly and concisely, so that leadership is able to utilize the information. She has also developed a relationship with the A2L team to ensure that the School has direct support when issues arise.

**Travis Casagrande\***  
**Research Associate**  
**Canadian Centre for Electron Microscopy (CCEM)**

Travis Casagrande has been working at the Canadian Centre for Electron Microscopy (CCEM) since 2013 as a research engineer who is responsible for focused ion beam (FIB) microscopy, among other techniques, and plays an essential role in training students, preparing high-end samples for the centre's national user base and developing novel methods for using ion beam microscopes. Travis produces exceptionally high-quality cuts of items from pipeline steels to nuclear reactor components to solar cells. His samples are routinely much smaller than the diameter of a human hair. He has become a nationally recognized expert in FIB in particular and has contributed to numerous scientific publications by researchers throughout Canada. He also has a strong reputation for his ability to consult with customers in collaboratively designing novel strategies for achieving outstanding results. He developed a method for preparing samples from zirconium alloys using liquid nitrogen temperature cooling in the microscope. This has enabled CCEM to accurately investigate these kinds of materials, which play a vital role in the nuclear industry. As a result, CCEM has established itself as a leader in the characterization of nuclear-materials.

In December 2019, Travis came up with the idea of building the world's smallest "gingerbread" house using the focused ion beam microscope. His effort created a microscopic work of art that sparked a news story which was quickly picked up by local, national and international media including CNN.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Sara Cormier\***  
***Instructional Assistant***  
**Physics and Astronomy**

Since 2016, Sara Cormier has been an instructional assistant in the Department of Physics & Astronomy where her main responsibility is managing PHYS 1A03, the introductory physics course that involves 2,000 students and 20 teaching assistants annually. Sara's strengths in pedagogy and technology have made her invaluable during the pandemic-triggered transition to online instruction as she has supported faculty, TAs and students in adapting to everything from Zoom to iClickers. Recently Sara led the team in developing home-lab kits for 1A03, an effort that attracted media coverage in *Physics World* and other outlets. Sara was also a core member of the team that redesigned 1A03 and provided enhanced training for TAs in areas including best-practice pedagogy, equity, diversity and inclusion. She made it a priority to mentor students in presenting their research projects at the Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference, where McMaster has won more student presentation awards than any other university. Her support of students also includes taking Professor Hippo-on-Campus and Mental First Aid training.

Sara diligently promotes McMaster through the Ontario Association of Physics Teachers by frequently giving talks on pedagogy and EDI initiatives in physics education and by co-developing a database of physicists from underrepresented backgrounds to be used by teachers to enrich their curricula. She developed the Girls in Science program for high-school students and introduced an online physics contest for high school teams.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Leanne Dyal\***  
***Statistics Operations Manager***  
**Population Health Research Institute**

Leanne Dyal has been part of the Population Health Research Institute team for more than 15 years, becoming a manager in 2014, a position that allowed her to establish greater procedural standardization for her team – an initiative that quickly expanded to become enterprise-wide systemic improvement. She played a key role in helping the unit through a sudden leadership transition in 2015, and in 2019 she was promoted to the role of statistical operations manager. During the pandemic, Leanne has ensured that staff have been able to complete remote work effectively and she has also been directly involved in the rapid initiation of two COVID-19-related randomized controlled trials.

Leanne introduced the first co-op student to the statistics team, developed a standard report library, introduced new data analysis tools and implemented continuous improvement of resourcing and study budgets, to list a few of her innovations. In a recent large and complex project, she invented a method for documenting critical information, tracking study questions and organizing datasets using new standardized nomenclatures – all of which allowed the team to complete the project a month ahead of schedule.

Beyond her core duties, Leanne serves as chef for the institute's Pancake Breakfast days, contributes to the planning of social events and regularly volunteers to teach the principles of biostatistics, research study design and clinical research methodology within the Faculty of Health Sciences.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Pam Elmhirst**  
***Manager, Faculty Affairs***  
**Faculty of Health Sciences**

Pam Elmhirst has worked at McMaster since 2009, spending much of that time as project manager, strategic initiatives in Human Resources for the Faculty of Health Sciences. In 2019, she joined Faculty Affairs as manager, where she established the unit as a central support in FHS and developed a three-year strategic plan. In just a short time, Pam has enhanced the faculty community by initiating the newsletter “This Week in Faculty Affairs”, launching a faculty affairs Twitter account, and founding communities of practice for members of the Faculty executive. Pam has also contributed to the growth of the Faculty’s equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives by establishing four working groups correlated to the Faculty’s EDI priorities, and she was responsible for starting the Faculty Wellness Working Group.

While in FHS HR, Pam re-designed the onboarding process for new hires, created an orientation guide for postdoctoral fellows and developed the FHS HR Welcome website and Ambassador Program. She also she served as an advisor to the Michael G. DeGroot Initiative for Innovation in Healthcare and was a key member of the design team for the Health Leadership Academy and the Emerging Health Leaders Program.

Pam has a significant track record of committee participation, including co-chairing the Health Sciences Joint Health and Safety Committee, and serving on committees including the McMaster Retention and Promotion Implementation Team, the Volunteer Engagement and Wellness Committee, the McMaster Age-Friendly University Committee, the Healthy Workplace Committee and the Central Joint Health and Safety Committee.

**Barb Galuppi**  
***Clinical Research Coordinator***  
**Pediatrics**

Barb Galuppi began working with the CanChild research group as a student in 1993, and in the 28 years since, she has served as project coordinator for numerous multi-site studies related to children's health, including the On Track Study, the Gross Motor Function Classification System and the Ontario Motor Growth Study, to name three high-profile examples. Currently, Barb is coordinating the CHILD-BRIGHT READYorNot trial, which has involved the development and testing of an e-health intervention for improving transition readiness among youth with brain-based disabilities. With this kind of background, Barb regularly acts as a mentor to her colleagues and other research staff. She also builds strong communities around each project by, for example, inviting clinicians to attend her projects' Patient and Family Advisory Committee meetings.

During the pandemic, Barb took the lead in applying to the CHILD-BRIGHT Network's conneKT fund to share research through a webinar hosted by Children's Healthcare Canada as part of the Spark: Live webinar series. She has also displayed her creativity in adapting the clinical recruitment for the READYorNot Brain-Based Disabilities Project to COVID-19 restrictions by working with a social media strategist to develop and share key messages from the project's patient and family partners about the importance of participating in the research. Barb also took leadership in developing a set of training modules for research assistants throughout Canada who are part of the trial.



**Mihaela Georgescu\***  
***Undergraduate Coordinator***  
**Biology**

Mihaela Georgescu joined the Department of Biology in 2003 as a research technician and is now the undergraduate coordinator. She has provided instructional support for BIO2C03/MOLBIO2C03 (Genetics), a course that traditionally employed only tutorials to reinforce lecture material. Mihaela, however, assessed the learning objectives of the course and spearheaded the development of a two-week lab research module: the personal genomic testing project. This initiative – which was well beyond the normal scope of Mihaela’s work – created a unique learning experience at McMaster, one that has generated exceptional student feedback.

Mihaela’s work has enabled the department’s transition to online teaching and learning during the pandemic as she swiftly focused on a handful of technology options to deliver both synchronous and asynchronous activities, hosted multiple training sessions and developed several how-to reference guides.

Mihaela is remarkably supportive of her students. She has completed a significant amount of student-wellness training and often maintains contact with her students long after they graduate. She also plays a strong role in the departmental culture as she participates in program and research information nights, is a member of the organizing committee for the Biology Undergraduate Research Symposium, and is co-lead of the local planning committee for the Ontario Biology Day conference hosted virtually at McMaster in March 2021.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Jimmy Gu**  
**Lab Technician**  
**Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences**

As a lab technician in the Li Lab since 2011, Jim Gu oversees research, accounts, supplies, repairs and the website for the lab. He is also the key figure in implementing safety protocols and experimental procedures. Jim participates in collaborative research with other labs and institutions and his work has seen him listed as co-author on more than 20 scholarly manuscripts that have been cited more than 400 times according to Google Scholar. His work has appeared in important research journals including *Nature Communications*, *Angewandte Chemie* and *Nucleic Acids Research*.

Jim leads projects on developing diagnostic and pathogenic testing of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Legionella and SARS-CoV-2 along with more than ten other ongoing research initiatives. His contributions to this research are critical. His speed in delivering experimental procedures is so exceptional, for example, that his participation can reduce the timeframe of a procedure to a week from three or four.

Jim is about more than procedural excellence, however. He goes out of the way to make the lab more enjoyable by helping to organize lunches, dinners and yearly lab events like the Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences Halloween costume competition and he often bakes treats for the lab. In February 2020, when China needed personal protective equipment after the outbreak of COVID-19, Jim raised money, then purchased and arranged delivery of PPE to hospitals in Wuhan.

**Christine Hollins\***  
**Research Administration Analyst**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**

Christine Hollins started as an administrative assistant for the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2004 before becoming the research administration analyst in 2017. In managing the complex research grant application process, Chris regularly delivers results in large volume and against tight and inflexible deadlines. Her innovations, such as coordinating the tracking and promotion of research activities centrally in the Faculty instead of leaving the task to individual researchers, have produced undeniable results. Chris began working more proactively with the MacExperts platform and became an expert herself in preparing compelling research CVs. The bottom line is that Chris's work has helped drive the Faculty's SSHRC application success rate from 46% in 2016-17 to 72% in 2019-20 – well above the national average.

Chris is currently part of the team creating a linked map that captures community research partnerships in order to facilitate insight into, and visualizations of McMaster's numerous community-based projects. She also founded and chaired a social committee for Faculty staff and has volunteered to oversee the City Kidz Gift of Christmas toy drive and serve on the General Faculty of Social Sciences Committee. At the University level, she has been a member of the McMaster Healthy Workplace Committee and the recording secretary on the Joint Health and Safety Committee. She was also the Kenneth Taylor Hall champion for the challenge to achieve a 2% reduction in energy consumption.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Bianca James**  
***Administrative Coordinator***  
**Classics, French, Linguistics and Languages**

Bianca James is the administrative manager for three departments that are connected, but still distinct in character and activity: Linguistics & Languages, French and Classics. In the last couple of years, each of the three departments has participated in its scheduled IQAP review and Bianca has served as the hub of each process.

When the pandemic forced most of the McMaster community into remote working, teaching and studying, Bianca became the point person in many of the transitions across her three departments at almost the same time that one department's administrative assistant transferred into a career growth position. When that team member's replacement arrived, another assistant departed and, yet again, Bianca ensured a smooth transition, uninterrupted work flow and a proper orientation for the newest member of the team.

In the new remote environment, Bianca maintained the core deliverables of her work, most notably by continuing to apply for and manage large grants and by orchestrating successful conferences, workshops and lectures that had become, of course, virtual. In pre-pandemic times, these latter events revealed the true quality of Bianca's work as she delivered everything from travel arrangements to event orchestration with her typical perfectionism.

**Gloria Kiefer Preston**

***Manager, David Braley Sport Medicine and Rehabilitation Centre  
Athletics and Recreation***

Gloria Kiefer Preston has been clinic manager of the David Braley Sport Medicine & Rehabilitation Centre since 2014, after previously serving as a physiotherapist at the McMaster Sports Injury Clinic and then clinical student volunteer supervisor. Gloria has been instrumental in the evolution of the clinic through her work to introduce, for example, diagnostic ultrasound and develop an MRI and Radiology Centre of Excellence. She also developed a system that tracks data for the fiscal and statistical analysis of the clinic's services and she has implemented sponsorship and marketing strategies to promote the clinic on campus and off.

Following the pandemic lockdown, Gloria prepared the clinic for its reopening with robust procedures that maintained excellent care and service while supporting University and provincial safety guidelines. She also worked to protect the many positions in the clinic – vulnerable positions under the circumstances – that provide training and learning opportunities for students and young professionals, including 75 clinical student volunteer positions, six undergraduate experiential learning opportunities, five graduate student physiotherapy clinical placements, ten medical resident placements and one high school co-op placement.

Gloria is also involved with many campus committees, including Inspiring From Within, International Women's Day, McMaster Central Joint Health and Safety committee, IWC/DBAC Joint Health and Safety Committee, the Okanagan Charter for Physical Activity and the A&R Social Committee.

**Lisa Kush**  
***Graduate Officer***  
**Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences**

Lisa Kush has been part of the Department of Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences for 36 years and currently oversees all aspects of the department's outstanding graduate program. With 140 students in the program, Lisa endeavours to develop personal relationships with each of them and she has been the first to support them through a wide range of challenges, particularly during the pandemic. Despite the fact that this falls outside of Lisa's responsibilities, she has made exceptional efforts throughout her career to engage in training opportunities related to student mental health and she has become extremely fluent in the resources offered by the University. Applicants regularly report that their decisions to select McMaster were influenced by their interactions with Lisa.

While academic leadership positions in the department naturally turn over, Lisa has been a force of continuity. Last year, the program underwent its cyclical IQAP review; Lisa was deeply involved in preparing the self-study document and was one of the key stakeholders who provided advice during the review. In discussing possible areas for improvement, Lisa noted that the program's course offerings, while of high quality, tended to have limited relevance to the student body at-large. This perspective was reinforced in consultation with students and led to the development of a new, standardized – and extremely well-received – four-course curriculum that focuses on more broadly relevant topics.

**Fran Lasowski**  
***Network Manager***  
**Chemical Engineering**

Frances Lasowski has been the executive director for the C20/20 Innovation Hub, an initiative supported by the Ontario Research Fund (ORF) and focused on commercializing ophthalmic materials technologies. Under Fran's leadership, the C20/20 ORF grant is on time and on budget, with full industry matching funds. During the pandemic, Fran facilitated team training in best practices for remote work to maintain productivity, teamwork and balance and to support good mental health during the lockdown. She spearheaded an initiative to bring graduate students and postdoctoral fellows together to prepare videos of short experiments which were made available to local teachers and daycare groups.

In addition to her C20/20 work, Fran is also a key member of the Sheardown Lab in the Department of Chemical Engineering. With the onset of the pandemic, it became clear that some of the technology the lab was developing for ocular applications had potential pandemic applications as well. Fran played a key role in securing the funding and partnerships required to explore this particular innovative path. She has also worked tirelessly in coordinating McMaster's Let's Talk Science program, which led directly to her development of online science lectures.

Beyond her core duties, Fran has been part of the hiring committee for the Vice-President, Research, has been teaching in Chemical Engineering and contributing to the establishment of the Michael G. DeGroot Innovation, Commercialization and Entrepreneurship initiative.

**Vivian Leong\***  
***Undergraduate Coordinator***  
**Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences**

Vivian Leong joined the Department of Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences in 2004 as a research lab technician, served as an instructional assistant beginning in 2016 and was promoted to undergraduate coordinator in 2020, just in time for her to play an irreplaceable role in the rapid transition of the curriculum to an online format. Vivian dedicated herself to direct training, creating instructional videos and providing guidance on using new technologies in support of both instructors and students. In fact, the department's students are particularly supportive of Vivian's work and of her nomination as they provided more than 90 messages of support.

That endorsement is particularly revealing because all BBS students begin their lab training with a foundation of skills acquired under Vivian's guidance. She is also working with two professors to convert a laboratory manual to an open educational resource and she is facilitating workshops and connections that help enhance the department's online teaching.

In translating the undergraduate laboratory experience into a virtual experience, Vivian mastered new software and interactive technologies while also creating dozens of original videos of lab techniques and developing an innovative virtual lab bench. She has single-handedly developed a module on CRISPR (gene editing) technologies for the third-year advanced biochemistry techniques course, giving undergraduates the exceptionally rare opportunity to gain hands-on experience in performing this technique.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*



**Darko Ljubic\*\***  
**Research Laboratory Manager**  
**Chemistry and Chemical Biology**

Darko Ljubic became the research lab manager in the Department of Chemistry & Chemical Biology after completing a postdoctoral fellowship in chemical engineering in 2018. In managing approximately 42,000 square feet of research space, he is responsible for the safety of more than 250 researchers, often coming into work on weekends and evenings to make sure the labs are operational. As essential staff, Darko continued to work on campus during the pandemic lockdown. He was in constant communication with all researchers and developed the necessary protocols to achieve biosafety certification under the unusual circumstances. He took on security access and key management duties for the department and revised the process of work request submission to Facility Services. Darko has also been instrumental in decreasing research costs to the department and reducing waste through achieving, for example, a 30% reduction in nitrogen consumption.

Darko went beyond his job description to lead a new Lab Stores operation, developing it into a sustainable profit centre. He also volunteered to prepare and deliver departmental Valentine's Day treats during the pandemic. At the outset of the pandemic, he even had the foresight to order PPE immediately, to ensure the equipment would arrive by the time researchers returned to work. This also put the department in the position to make a large donation – which Darko organized – of PPE to local frontline hospital workers.

*\*\*Denotes Early Achievement Award Recipient*

**Kylie Luska**  
***Instructional Assistant***  
**Chemistry and Chemical Biology**

Kylie Luska joined the Department of Chemistry & Chemical Biology in 2018 as the second-year organic chemistry coordinator where his work impacts more than 1,200 students and 50 teaching assistants every year. Before the COVID crisis, Kylie led the delivery of this course, including a hands-on laboratory training experience. With the onset of the pandemic, he converted this lab experience into a hybrid activity with in-person and virtual labs. He oversaw the scripting, staging and filming of the supporting material and he planned the labs to give the students training in the most critical and transferable skills.

Kylie's assistance with virtual and asynchronous learning formats has extended beyond his role with the second-year curriculum to instructors in upper-level courses. He has created several new labs; one in particular uses various colour dyes to indicate the principles of extraction, acidity and basicity of organic compounds. As a result, students get a highly visual representation that aids with their conceptualization of these challenging concepts.

Kylie is a strong proponent of green chemistry and has been involved in the inaugural Sustainable Chemistry Mentorship Circle. He designed new sustainability-themed laboratories, minimized the use of toxic solvents and introduced life-cycle-analysis as key curriculum pieces. Kylie has also been a central player in the development of the new Sustainable Chemistry program which is receiving final provincial approvals.

**Iyobosa, Faith Ogunkoya\***  
***Team Lead, Student Services***  
**Office of the Registrar**

Faith Ogunkoya joined the Science Career and Cooperative Education Office as a career development and relationship manager in 2017. A year later, she moved to the Student Success Centre to be the global experience coordinator and since 2019, has been the team lead for student services in the Office of the Registrar.

Faith has implemented several new business processes for the Student Services Team including PDF transcripts, webforms and the well-received Registrar's Office Chatbot. As part of the Development and Engagement Committee of the Registrar's Office, she created the #IamtheRO initiative to connect staff. Faith is also a champion for issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion. In one instance, Faith discovered that the International Fee Exemptions process inaccurately translated the source material and thus created a systemic barrier for international students, a barrier the Registrar's Office was then able to remove.

In 2019, Faith helped guide the founding of the McMaster Black Students Association and she is currently the vice-chair of the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community. As a member of the steering committee of the African Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster, she contributed to the organization's Black Excellence document. She also played a key role in the creation of the McMaster Employee Resource Group for Black, Indigenous and Racialized staff and served on the Black Athlete Student Review Committee.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Ana Pereira**  
***Lead Coordinator, International Students***  
**Student Success Centre**

Ana Pereira has been a member of the Student Success Centre team for more than a decade and is now lead coordinator for International Student Services. She provides direct support to students – frequently outside regular work hours – by being a resource, helping international students become accustomed to life in Hamilton and being a point of contact students can count on whenever they need support. She delivers programs like Hot Drinks and Heart to Hearts where international students are invited to meet other students and she leads the Buddy Program to help incoming students with questions about McMaster, Hamilton and Canada. During the pandemic, Ana has provided extra support to Mac’s international students and developed a virtual tour of Hamilton so applying students can experience highlights of the McMaster campus and the surrounding community without travelling.

Ana has planned the Airport Welcome program for several years, providing arriving students with a warm volunteer greeting. She also initiated the Ignite program, a three-day orientation for new arrivals. In recent years, Ana launched the Picnic Chats and One Site at a Time series so international students could chat over lunch and explore Hamilton’s hidden gems. She also facilitates the Language Café, created the Try Something New series, which introduced students to on-campus activities and inaugurated the Cooking with Friends and Cultural Day events.

**Cheyenne Reid**  
***Postgraduate Program Coordinator***  
**Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences**

Cheyenne Reid has worked with the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences for four years, the last three of which have been with the Psychiatry Postgraduate Program, where she served originally as the program assistant and now as program coordinator. Soon after Cheyenne started her current position, the department experienced a significant crisis, during which, Cheyenne provided key support to the process of returning the department to stability. Then, through much of the 2019-2020 academic year, she fulfilled the roles of two and a half full-time equivalent positions as she kept the program running by quickly adopting strategies to accommodate the impacts of the pandemic. Cheyenne transitioned the academic curriculum to a virtual platform in less than two days and moved the mock OSCE exam to a virtual format, thus helping graduating residents prepare for the new format, which the Royal College would later adopt.

In July 2020, Cheyenne managed the introduction of the Competency Based Medical Education model so well that her instructional manuals have been requested and shared widely with other residency programs. She also developed a tracking system for visualizing the progress of each resident. Cheyenne is a member of the McMaster Joint Health and Safety Committee and notably used her significant artistic talents to create two Health and Safety Awareness posters, one of which was nominated for an award at Safety and Health Week.

**Sashaina Singh\***  
**Knowledge Broker**  
**Office of Community Engagement**

In 2017, Sashaina Singh joined the Office of Community Engagement as a knowledge broker, a role that sees her manage partnerships with more than 200 Hamilton community organizations. One of those partnerships – with Empowerment Squared – involved founding a parallel MSU club, developing a Research Shop project focused on volunteer retention and linking McMaster’s Access Strategy to Empowerment Squared so local youth could more readily follow pathways to postsecondary education. Within the context of the pandemic and systemic racism, Sashaina also developed and managed a new program called The Connection, to identify challenges in the Hamilton community.

Sashaina represents McMaster as a DiverseCity Fellow through the CivicAction Leadership Foundation, is a member of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction Steering Committee, secured funds from the Hamilton Community Foundation for the McMaster Community Poverty Initiative’s catalyst grants and brought 100in1Day Hamilton to McMaster.

Sashaina co-developed a course called INSPIRE 3EL3: Being in Relationship – An Introduction to Social Justice and Community Engagement. She has been part of a MacPherson Teaching and Learning Panel and been a member of McMaster’s Discovery Program Advisory Committee. She is also a volunteer and advocate for McMaster-based partnerships with the CareMongering Hamilton initiative, a pandemic response program that helps ensure vulnerable community members have access to healthcare and other necessities.

*\*Denotes Individual Award Recipient*

**Carm Vespi<sup>^</sup>**  
***Manager, Alumni Relations and Youth Programs***  
**Faculty of Engineering**

With more than 45 years in Engineering's student engagement, alumni and youth outreach programs, Carm Vespi is a pillar of the Faculty. She launched *MacEngineer* magazine in 1985 and established what would become the Venture Academy STEM summer camps in 1991. Through 30 years, she helped build the camp from 120 attendees to over 2,000 and also guided the expansion of the program into the community, where it delivered more than 23,000 workshops in 2019. In 2020, Carm shepherded the transition of the summer camp into online delivery where it engaged more than 1,100 children.

Carm has built strong partnerships with the STEM outreach organization Actua, the Ontario Network of Women in Engineering (ONWiE), the YWCA's Beyond the Bell program and Girl Guides Canada. In November 2019, she managed the team that coordinated the third ONWiE Network Summit after advocating for McMaster to host the ONWiE Chair from 2018 to 2023. Carm was also instrumental in the development and implementation of inspirational programs like Go ENG Girl, Go CODE Girl and the Girl Guides and Pathfinders Badge Day programming at McMaster.

Carm, who served on the Bay Area Science and Engineering Fair Planning Committee and McMaster's 125th Anniversary Committee, has earned the Dean's Excellence Award and three different Actua awards: the Experience Award for Indigenous Outreach, the Excellence Award and the Mentorship Award.

*<sup>^</sup>Denotes Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient*

# PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN 2020

## TEAM NOMINEES

### Client Services Team

The 16-person Client Services team supports the IT services that McMaster's students, staff and faculty rely on every day, particularly during the pandemic, that has forced the migration of nearly every traditionally on-campus activity into activities mediated by technology. During the high-pressure transition to a largely virtual campus, the team quickly adjusted its own working approaches and service models to support staff, faculty and students as they relocated to remote working locations. In many instances, the team had to develop new and flexible ways to maintain outstanding service to the entire University while not having the full range of tools normally available to them. The team's flexibility has extended to its hours as well, as team members have had to be available outside normal business hours to support a McMaster community that is now dispersed across many time zones.

The Client Services team traditionally measures customer satisfaction after each engagement and has maintained a 4.7 out of 5 stars average over the more than 31,000 service tickets resolved in the last year, while the volume and complexity of work have increased significantly. Hundreds of clients have also taken the time to record testimonials through the satisfaction surveys to thank the Client Services team for their support throughout the unusual circumstances of the pandemic.

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### Team Members

Brandon Cleland  
Bryan Czerneda  
Carla Divinski  
Andrew Dolibog  
Dhru Dungarani  
Chanthorn Hack

Farhat Jiwa  
Sue McKinlay  
Christa Morrison  
Adam Murray  
Davin Orgar  
Gord Stephan

Steve Tadros  
Christina Tedesco  
Mike Thompson  
Michelle Turnbull



## Faculty of Science Remote Experience Home Lab Team

Approximately 3,000 students take the BIO1A03 and PHYSICS 1A03 courses every year and in the process they benefit from the personalized project-based labs that have long been the hallmarks of the courses. These two introductory level courses have also been the platform for a variety of teaching and learning strategies including blended learning. The Biology 1A03 team secured a MacPherson Institute Leadership in Teaching and Learning Fellowship to evaluate the impact of the blended approach, presented “Online and Blended Learning” symposia and partnered with a blended learning team at the University of Wollongong in Australia.

Then, the pandemic triggered an extraordinary effort from the Remote Experience Home Lab team in overhauling the lab manuals and lab exercises for the courses in order to maintain the invaluable hands-on experience of the in-person lab environment. While many courses transitioned to online simulations, the BIO 1A03 and PHYSICS 1A03 teams developed and piloted at-home lab kits. The pilot involved shipping kits to 200 students in the Summer, while the Winter term will see 3,000 students receive kits. Kits provide experiments involving, for example, a FoldScope microscope, light refraction equipment and materials for testing friction coefficients – among other experiments – all in a \$20 package. The innovative kits have been a hit on social media, have inspired media coverage and even sparked a potential partnership with St. George’s University in Grenada.

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### Team Members

Sara Cormier  
Adam Fortais

Sajeni Mahalingham  
Tracy Rerecich

Alastair Tracey  
Rebecca Woodworth

## Faculty of Science Remote Experience Tech Transition Team

The Faculty of Science Remote Experience Tech Transition Team spearheaded the move of McMaster's largest Faculty into remote teaching and learning while ensuring that the new pedagogical context did not produce new disabling environments. Members of the team worked with MacMillan publishing to set accessibility requirements for the next iteration of a textbook used by Biology 1A03; they delivered remote teaching hardware to 135 instructors and 242 TAs and, to evaluate digital content, they enlisted the first user testing group in Canada for students who employ assistive technology.

The team developed and deployed low-cost, pop-up recording spaces, helped scale usage of Crowdmark and ensured that course outline management exceeded AODA requirements. After the team co-created an accessible documents webinar series that filled a gap in Microsoft's product training, Microsoft managers adopted aspects of the training materials. The team also fostered the growth of the Blended and Online Community of Practice to more than 300 instructors and staff from across campus. Additionally, the team assumed a prominent role in supporting the University-wide "One Desk" initiative by launching a support ticketing system and becoming the first unit on campus to connect the major on-campus service units under a single project. Thanks to the team's work, any McMaster Faculty can now directly engage support staff from the MacPherson Institute, Student Success Services, UTS, Campus Classroom Technology, Equity & Inclusion and Faculty-based technical support.

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### Team Members

Greg Atkinson  
Jessica Blackwood  
Miroslav Cika

Jamie Kaushal  
Peter McComie  
Dam Nguyen

Heidi O'Brien  
Alex Poulin  
Paulina Rzeczkowska

## Faculty of Social Sciences Educational Technology Training Team

The Faculty of Social Sciences Educational Technology Training Team was formed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by helping instructors make rapid transitions to online teaching and learning. The team developed an unprecedented suite of tools, supports and resources for both instructors and students and the results have been so impressive, the plan is to sustain the team beyond the end of the pandemic. The six members of the team provide one-on-one support and drop-in sessions for instructors and TAs and developed over 120 instructional videos covering a wide range of topics. In addition, the team produced web-based resources to help both instructors and students adjust to unfamiliar learning technologies. The team worked with Indigenous Studies instructors and students to deploy portable wireless internet hubs to help overcome challenges in internet access at Six Nations and ensure that all students and instructors had access to the Faculty's virtual programming.

In numerous letters of support, both instructors and students commented on the individual attention, patience and compassion the team has displayed as it provides real-time support that frequently extends into evenings and weekends. One of the team's core contributions was its commitment to ensuring that students, not just teachers, had appropriate support in making the transition to virtual learning environments, with the "Guiding Your Students Online" website serving as a strong resource for the Faculty's learners.

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### Team Members

Gerald Bierling  
Mark Busser

Christine Cluney  
Aleksandra Gajic

Nick Marquis  
Stephanie Verkoeyen

## Medical Isotope Supply Chain Team^^

The McMaster Nuclear Reactor is one of the world's most important providers of the life-saving medical isotopes used in cancer treatments. Over the past year, output reductions by other producers made McMaster-produced isotopes even more important. The Medical Isotope Supply Chain Team established McMaster as the world's leading supplier of I-125 and Ho-166 isotopes. At the end of 2019, the team significantly and safely increased its production of Ho-166. Then, when the pandemic hit in March 2020, the team adapted over a weekend to maintaining production with minimal on-site staff.

Disruptions to international travel created obstacles to shipping the highly perishable isotopes. As a result, the team began strategizing shipping chains weeks in advance and timing production to match the remaining flights. The team's efforts were reported by Reuters and the *Toronto Star* while Bruce Power identified McMaster as an innovation leader, initiating a broad-ranging MOU with the University.

Additionally, McMaster-made I-125 proved to be the purest in the world, thus minimizing both disposal charges and environmental footprint. At the same time, the team developed innovative ways to increase its production capacity for QuiremSpheres, tiny beads that encapsulate Ho-166. Finally, the team made it possible for McMaster to be the only academic institution to participate in a Strategic Innovation Fund application to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada that will create a national Medical Isotope Ecosystem.

*^^Denotes Team Award Recipient*

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### Team Members

Cooper Biggar  
Dorde Bijelic  
Megan Blacker  
Shannon Czorny  
Leslie Davis  
Jonathan Gear

Jay Grigg-Tait  
Ralph Maano  
Shane McClure  
Rob Pasuta  
Danny Purnomo  
Jason Roome

Devin Smith  
Stan Spina  
Josh Steinberg  
Ethan Werger  
Kelly Wright

## McMaster Biosafety Officers

Jennifer Robertson and Kristen Carrigan – the biosafety manager and associate biosafety officer respectively – oversee the University’s biosafety measures and serve on the Presidential Biosafety Advisory Committee. Their work has been a key part of McMaster’s ability to maintain its research enterprise during the pandemic and to make meaningful research contributions to the COVID crisis itself. Under tremendous pressure and working within the challenges of campus shutdowns and skeleton staffs, the Biosafety Team created a safe environment that allowed McMaster to be among the first and most successful universities in the country to work with SARS-CoV-2 and secure COVID-related research funding. That advantage played an important role in establishing the new Global Nexus for Pandemics and Biological Threats at McMaster.

Preparing the required Containment Level 3 laboratory and user group required an impressive amount of support and regulatory oversight. Jennifer and Kristen needed to be on call 24/7 for issues related to the CL3 lab and were also responsible for generating the safety framework needed to facilitate manipulation of COVID-related patient samples.

With most University activity moving online, the Biosafety Team designed the online Biohazard Utilization Protocol – a significant leap forward from the previous inefficient system – and prepared online training modules for CL3 users. The team’s expertise has also played a role in campus-wide decision making related to safe return-to-work policies during the pandemic.

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### Team Members

Kristen Carrigan  
Jennifer Robertson

## Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences Finance Team

The four-person Finance Team in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences has, in the last two years, played an irreplaceable role in turning around a financial crisis that had the potential create chaos in the department. Leading into those two years, the department's deficits, debt and financial commitments had forced a complete reworking of the tools and processes the department was using for financial management. The Finance Team provided that reworked toolkit.

The team made major improvements in the efficiency of budgetary processes and created a sustainable budget model that provided the chair and other department leaders with the tools necessary to make key decisions. Additionally, the team tackled legacy issues that had been in place for years. In the words of the department chair, "They helped turn a confused and disorganized situation into one that is clear, easy for anybody coming in to follow, and which has resulted in significant savings for us in many of our activities."

The team's specific initiatives included a review of all outstanding financial commitments, the development of a multi-year financial plan, an audit identifying areas for potential savings and revenue generation and line-by-line budgets for each program where those did not previously exist. The ultimate product of the Finance Team's efforts is a stable departmental budget and strong long-term financial prospects.

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### Team Members

Kelly Goodale  
George Hamilton

Jennifer Kraul  
Beverley Pindar-Donick

## Research Software Development Team

The Research Software Development Team was formed in late 2018 with pilot funding from the Canadian Network for the Advancement of Research Industry and Education (CANARIE). Ultimately, this pilot – and this team – would prove so successful, CANARIE offered new grants for other universities to establish their own similar teams with members of McMaster’s team serving as mentors. As the first-of-its-kind in Canada, the McMaster team was also invited to present at the 2019 Canadian Research Software Conference.

Since its founding, the RSD team has completed 18 research-related projects and contributed to MacLIMS, a comprehensive laboratory information management system, as well as the digitization of research application forms. Most notably, the team helped enable the transition to remote research activities during the pandemic and worked quickly to complete the software modifications required to facilitate the safe and effective return of research to campus. The team also implemented a web portal to coordinate access to the Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund that the Government of Canada established for researchers impacted by the pandemic.

The team is contributing to the redesign the International Infectious Disease Archive, a powerful tool that helps researchers analyze historical events that influenced the spread of infectious diseases. Finally, the team’s work on the Workflow Automation for Research IO (WARIO) project transformed a single-purpose initiative into a data pipeline system that supports multiple disciplines with diverse needs.

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### Team members

Oliver Cook  
Ron Harwood

Thomas Mudway  
Yarden Segal

## School of Social Work Administration Team

The School of Social Work features two accredited professional programs, which means that the Social Work Administrative Team manages specialized admissions processes and an extensive program of field education that depends on professional social workers who offer mentorship to students on placements in their agencies. Each year, 150 social workers in community agencies provide field instruction on a voluntary basis to McMaster students. The Social Work Administrative Team is the key point of contact for field instructors. Despite increasing competition for social work placements in southern Ontario, many field instructors continue to prioritize McMaster students, in no small part because of the strength and commitment of the School's administrative team.

The team has also been at the forefront of efforts to increase the accessibility of University processes for students with disabilities. Team members implemented accessible syllabuses before they were required and before there was a body of relevant experience at McMaster. Part of that effort included overhauling the entire delivery of the Social Work Admissions Test to remove barriers and create a level playing field for applicants to the School. This involved two years' worth of effort in creating an online version of SWAT that allows for more diverse and accessible accommodations that, in turn, ensure the School of Social Work is testing for the qualities and abilities it actually desires in its students.

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### Team Members

Tammy Maikawa  
Lorna O'Connell

Darlene Savoy  
Danielle Schumacher



## Student and Community Support Team~

The Student and Community Support Team rapidly developed and deployed many of the complex tools and strategies McMaster used to meet the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing exceptional support to students, their families and the greater McMaster community. This 45-member team orchestrated the pivot from traditional student housing to offering services including international student quarantine accommodation, transitional housing for international students, postgraduate medical education learner accommodation and even housing for frontline healthcare workers. This complex transition involved everything from COVID testing to wellness checks to food delivery. The team's reach also extended to pandemic-related initiatives off-campus including Clear Start Stays for off-campus students and the Student First Rental initiative for landlords and student tenants.

Probably the team's highest-profile project was Archway which the team developed to provide 8,000 first-year students with personalized support through connections to dedicated coaches, mentors, resources and an online community of peers. Built from scratch and launched just six weeks after most staff began working from home, Archway involves 200 part-time student staff and 20 professional staff delivering a program that received media coverage from CBC Hamilton, the *Hamilton Spectator* and *University Times* while also inspiring more than a dozen other universities to seek McMaster's advice on similar efforts. Archway's planning team presented at OACUHO's Fall Business Meeting and the Archway program is now the subject of a CIHR-funded study.

*~Denotes Special Achievement Award Recipient*

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### Team Members

Katrina Marie Agostino  
Melissa Altena  
Steven Barei  
Kevin R. Beatty  
Sean Beaudette  
Karen Bigeye  
Janna Bordonaro  
Glenn De Caire  
Agnese De Fazio  
Charles de Guzman  
Jaimie Dickson  
Elsa Dupont  
Chris Eley  
Katie Fitzgerald  
Raquel Gavey

Laurie Ham  
Emma He  
Karrie Heikoop  
Nour Issa  
Cathy Jager  
Sophia Janssen Boljanic  
Megan Johnson  
Safa Kaffashian  
Hufriya Kateli  
Roseanne Kent  
Stuart McAslan  
Sheila Meyrink  
Kendall Mirrlees  
Adam Moniz  
Bernadette Mukendi

Denise Nacev  
Raymond Osbourne  
Randal Patriquin  
Ana Pereira  
Brittany Reifenstein  
Ann Richards  
Chris Roberts  
Tara Roberts  
Jillienne Simone  
Cathy Tatsis  
Carly Welch  
Kim Zarzuela  
Yufei Zheng

## Student Email Refunds and Process Improvement Team^^

During the pandemic, McMaster has needed to issue an unprecedented number of refunds to students at a time when many established practices have been disrupted. The 17-member Student Email Refunds and Process Improvement Team addressed the need for quick remote transaction processing through the Email Student Refunds project and the team has ensured that aid and credits are refunded as soon as disbursements are updated on student accounts.

In parallel, this team addressed multiple pandemic-related tax reporting and University fee changes and managed ad hoc fee adjustment requests. Overall, the team enhanced service through automation that improved processing times, eliminated manual errors and streamlined business processes. Team members also served as trainers and mentors for Student Service Centre staff.

Partnering with a group from CIBC and innovatively leveraging PeopleSoft to deliver this work, McMaster was the first of ten pilot project participants to go live with email refunds utilizing new Interac functionality. As a result of this leadership and the quality of their work, the team presented McMaster's solution at the International Higher Education User Group (HEUG) conference, as well as to CIBC and Interac so other institutions could learn from Mac's example. In 2018, the team's work was a key part of the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education Prix d' Excellence-winning submission, "Bringing students' charitable tax receipts into the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

*^^Denotes Team Award Recipient*

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### Team Members

Celeste Atkinson  
Natalie Beacham  
Dianna Creamer  
Wendy Finemore  
Jet'aime Fray-Samuel  
Deborah Knott

Derek Konieczny  
Kelly Lewington  
Liz McDonough  
Doris McGuire  
Tshenolo Mosimaneotsile  
Michael Ngo

Sharon Patry  
Mark C. Russom  
Carly Silenzi  
Yelena Vostrikova  
Aba Wadden

## Turning a Crisis into an Opportunity to Innovate for Our Students

Within weeks of transitioning to virtual work, the MBA Academic Team recommended the expansion of MBA course offerings for students who were suddenly unable to secure summer employment due to the pandemic. This gave students new options to graduate early or re-sequence their co-op programs. The eight-person MBA Academic Team then provided virtual appointments (including early morning and late evening times for students living outside of Canada), created informative webinars and developed new academic schedules that also accommodated students who were scattered across time zones.

The team modified DeGroot's admission requirements as GMAT testing centres closed and dedicated more time – often at odd hours – to virtual recruitment activities. As part of its student-centred approach, the team hosted “Meet up Mondays” where students could connect with program managers and the team partnered with the MBA Student Association to hire a new student wellness ambassador. The team also debuted the new MBA Onboarding website and “Quant Boot Camp” that inspired 60% of incoming students to participate.

The MBA Academic Team also reimagined the annual Pitching in for Charity event that connects MBA students with local charities to solve issues and contribute financially to worthy causes. Using a new virtual version of the event, the team engaged 11 student teams and was able to maintain a meaningful level of support to local community organizations through extremely challenging times.

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### Team Members

Maddy Burley  
Rita Chen  
Sandra Clark

Carolyn Colwell  
Kerry Donovan  
Chandani Sheth

Ryan Shoot  
Matt Vonk

## Virtual Pink Folders Team

The Virtual Pink Folders Team connected staff from the Registrar's Office, UTS and the Faculties to design and deploy a new, pandemic-friendly approach to managing the 19,000 applications McMaster receives annually from applicants not attending Ontario high schools. These applications – known as 105 applications – involve supplementary materials such as transcripts and portfolios at an average of about three additional documents per application. Before the pandemic, McMaster printed and stored these documents in pink file folders. With the campus locked down, however, that option was no longer feasible.

The team quickly assessed the available tools and technology for an automated and digital solution and determined that Microsoft SharePoint connected to Mosaic through an API (application program interface) would likely work. This was a novel, made-at-McMaster approach that the team delivered in just ten weeks. To date, this virtual pink folder system has processed 40,000 105-application-related documents and done so with a system that has required little training and avoids relying on complex technology. It also performs exceptionally well in preserving data quality, maintaining security and maintaining the integrity of the application process. Notably, the solution links products from two major vendors, Oracle and Microsoft, through the integration platform of a third, IBM. All three of these vendors have expressed interest in McMaster's approach and have asked the team to showcase its solution through various conferences and publications.

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### Team Members

Aqeel Anas  
David Arnold  
Celeste Atkinson  
Nevine Chawra  
Roberta Downard

Lynn Giordano  
Sophia Holness  
Marzena Kielar  
Doris McGuire  
Jackie Morrison

Tshenolo Mosimaneotsile  
Michael Ngo  
Carson Phelan  
Trish Sullivan