

**BRIGHTER  
WORLD**



# President's Awards

**FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN  
2021**



**Nominee Biographies**

# PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN 2021

**Vass Bednar**  
***Executive Director***  
**Master of Public Policy in Digital Society Program**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

Vass Bednar became executive director of the Master of Public Policy in Digital Society program in 2020 after consulting during the development of the MPPDS. She has built aspects of the program in real time, including recruiting an exceptional advisory board with representation from the government, not-for-profit and private sectors. She has also excelled at curriculum design and delivery, recruiting, admissions outreach and placement.

Vass developed a strong digital advertising strategy to recruit the first cohort of applicants by maximizing a limited budget across spaces such as podcasts, specialty media and LinkedIn. She authored dozens of op-eds in publications including *The Globe and Mail* and made regular media appearances with outlets such as CBC News Radio and Newstalk 1010. Vass has built partnerships across campus with an affiliate faculty program and connections with areas including The Forge. Off campus, she has facilitated partnerships that generate student employment with organizations ranging from the Public Policy Forum to the Centre for Digital Rights. She is also developing an innovative “embedded fellows” program with Mitacs.

Vass continues to build her exceptional reputation in policy circles, having served on a strategic advisory committee for the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario; testifying at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science, and Technology and being named to the Province of Ontario’s Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee.

**Michael Clarke**  
***Instrumentation Technician***  
**Chemical Engineering**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Michael Clarke started at McMaster in 1991 as a lab technologist for the Department of Engineering Physics. After working in industry, he returned to Mac in 2016 as Chemical Engineering's computer and instrumentation technologist for undergraduate teaching and graduate research labs. He is responsible for instrumentation, electronics, data computing and process control. He develops experiments for teaching labs and works with researchers to support their lab requirements as well. Mike developed the experiments now used in the Instrumentation Lab course and also built data acquisition systems, computer interfaces and process control hardware from scratch. Most recently, in response to pandemic restrictions, he equipped each experiment in the teaching labs with cameras, microphones and screens to allow for remote student experiences. He also established a new laboratory component for the Process Control course in a remarkably short period of time, surpassing the expectations of the course instructor.

Mike supports research groups' instrumentation and computers and works with researchers to develop and build instruments that are not commercially available. Beyond his core responsibilities, Mike is a technical advisor to the Chem-E-Car team, prepares activities for the LEAP (Learning Enrichment Advancement Program) for high school students and for Venture Academy. He has also developed and built interactive displays for the annual recruiting open house May@Mac and been involved with Equity and Inclusion Committees for student teams and clubs.

**John Colenbrander**  
***Facilities Manager***  
**Mechanical Engineering**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

Since 2018, John Colenbrander has been the facilities manager for the Department of Mechanical Engineering. A two-time McMaster graduate, John has revitalized the labs he oversees – funded largely through his own efforts. He has also made significant contributions to the capstone course that involves students designing and building novel mechanical and mechatronic devices. By engaging the technical staff earlier in the projects, John and his team are able to support student progress as the students are realizing their designs.

John's work has been exceptional during the pandemic. He quickly developed virtual labs that provided a complete lab experience for students. He also volunteered his experience to design, develop and build mask- and material-testing devices to help with the University's research related to COVID-19 spread and prevention. This work included a particle filtration testing apparatus, biological filtration efficiency apparatus and mask pressure drop and mechanical testing equipment.

John is a key member of department's Space and Health & Safety committees, where he provides technical assessments of risks and potential mitigating measures. He has volunteered with the McMaster Formula Electric Car team, where he provided advice and manufactured mechanical parts for the team car. He has also volunteered as a judge in university-wide robotics competitions.

**Omar Danta**  
***Facilities Manager***  
**Faculty of Engineering**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

As facilities manager for the School of Engineering Practice and Technology (SEPT), Omar Danta leads a team of four that is meticulous in its preparation and maintenance of the school's lab spaces. Omar's work in transforming several labs in the Engineering Technology Building was exceptional as the project involved moving floating floor panels, rerouting power and rearranging workstations. He also provided guidance to other departments on software licensing that enhances the student experience. As a volunteer, Omar has assessed mock lectures for recruitment, participated on many committees and assumed the lead health and safety role for the school.

During the pandemic, Omar facilitated curbside and remote pickup of equipment related to online teaching and also obtained additional IT equipment for loan so that sessional instructors could deliver courses remotely. Prior to the implementation of the MacCheck app, Omar repurposed an existing Outlook resource calendar as an on-site request tool for the SEPT technical staff, thus providing documented approvals and allowing for onsite COVID-19 tracing. He provided the innovative solution that allowed instructors to remain on Microsoft Teams while being able to walk around in the lab where students were working remotely via computers and webcams. This required customized AV set-ups and designing one lab to accommodate students with hearing impairments.

**Nancy Devlin**  
***Manager, Education Enterprise***  
**Family Medicine**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

Nancy Devlin recently assumed a new title as manager, education enterprise for the Department of Family Medicine where she plays a leadership role in – among several priorities – supporting research, recruiting residents and connecting a geographically distributed learning network. Some of her most notable contributions include designing a new budget framework to guide equitable resource allocation, supporting eLearning pathways, forging new collaborative processes with research and patient-care domains and implementing new leadership roles for activities such as simulation learning.

Nancy spearheads the department’s collaborations with educational, family medicine and/or municipal stakeholders across multiple communities and is also a leader with the Family Medicine National Educational Administrator group where she has served five years on the executive, including two years as president. During the pandemic, Nancy led the process of converting to virtual recruitment for residents, an effort that included creating digital content, adapting processes and training staff. The results included nearly 700 well-coordinated, four-station interviews involving 48 interviewers. Nancy also facilitates volunteer initiatives in support of community needs through food and clothing drives or fundraising – efforts in which she includes staff at all of the department’s geographic locations. One specific example involved Nancy encouraging the various sites to identify opportunities for giving in each community and incorporating those causes into the department’s list for holiday giving.

**Pam Elmhirst**  
***Senior Manager, Faculty Affairs***  
**Office of the Dean & Vice-President, FHS**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

A McMaster graduate, Pamela Elmhirst has worked at the University since 2009, spending the majority of that time in human resources for the Faculty of Health Sciences. In 2019, she joined the Office of Faculty Affairs as senior manager, establishing the team as a foundational support unit for the faculty. As senior manager, she has developed the Office's strategic plan, re-designed the onboarding process for new senior leadership, and played a lead role in the development and execution of the faculty's diversity and climate survey. She has also played key roles in developing the faculty's Equity Advocacy and Allyship Program and the EDI and Indigenous Health Speaker Series.

Pam planned and executed annual senior leadership retreats and founded communities of practice for members of the Faculty Executive. She developed a COVID-19 Faculty Wellness Hub and launched the Faculty Wellness Working Group. Pam served as advisor to the executive director of 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. She is currently part of a team developed an advanced academic leadership program.

Pam co-chairs the Health Sciences Joint Health and Safety Committee and has served on working groups including the McMaster Retention and Promotion Implementation Team, the Volunteer Engagement and Wellness Committee, the McMaster Age-Friendly University Committee and the Healthy Workplace Committee. Pam is also an active Employment Equity Facilitator, supporting the advancement of inclusive excellence through faculty recruitment.

**Joanne Gadawski**  
***Administrator***  
**Civil Engineering**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Joanne Gadawski started at McMaster in 2007 as senior accountant with the Research Finance Office then became financial coordinator in the Department of Medicine. She was the administrator for the Department of Linguistics and Languages before taking on the same role with the Department of Civil Engineering in 2012. In that role, Joanne has proven to be irreplaceable in preparing for the successful Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) assessments in 2015 and 2021. At the same time, she has hired, trained and mentored many new staff and onboarded 16 new faculty members and worked with five department chairs.

Joanne developed the Student Ambassador Program to create a roster of students who can represent the department at recruiting events. The program has generated strong recruitment results and improved relationships between top students and the department. Joanne also plays a vital role in McMaster's INTERFACE Institute for Multi-Hazard Systemic Risk Studies by overseeing many of the institute's operational issues related to interdisciplinary training initiatives such as NSERC's Collaborative Research and Training Experience program on Canada's Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Resilience.

During the pandemic, Joanne spearheaded the department's response and went to great lengths to maintain the team's cohesion by meeting young faculty, organizing virtual cooking and gardening classes to bring colleagues together and working through her holidays to ensure that the CEAB accreditation would be successful.



**Jim Gu**  
**Lab Technician**  
**Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Jim Gu is an alumnus of the Department of Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences where he has been a lab technician in the Li Lab since 2011. In that capacity, he oversees standard operating procedures, research, accounts, supplies, repairs and the lab website. He also implements safety protocols and experimental procedures. Jim leads research projects on developing diagnostic and pathogenic testing related to diseases including Legionella and SARS-CoV-2. His contributions to this research are critical to producing outcomes such as the development of new methods for detecting and diagnosing disease. His speed in delivering experimental procedures is exceptional, often cutting the timeline for a procedure at least in half. In his collaborative research, Jim's work has seen him listed as co-author on more than 20 scholarly manuscripts appearing in research journals including *Nature Communications* and *Nucleic Acids Research*.

Jim has taken on a mission to foster a positive and productive working environment by helping to organize lunches, dinners and yearly lab events like the Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences Halloween costume competition. In the early stages of the pandemic, Jim raised money, then purchased and arranged delivery of PPE to hospitals in Wuhan. He also has a strong legacy of training numerous users in key Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences facilities including the X-Ray developer facility, scintillation counter and autoclave facility.

**George Hamilton**  
***Manager, Finance & Administration***  
**Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

George Hamilton has been at McMaster for nine years, working with the Faculty of Health Sciences before joining Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences three years ago as the manager of finance and administration. In that position, he has managed and – where necessary – reorganized the annual budget and financial processes. His breadth of experience infuses his work with a strong understanding of the new budget model and allowed George to turn potential vulnerabilities into clear, forward-looking strategies.

When George first arrived in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences, he established the systematic and rigorous record-keeping and management processes that helped the department overcome a recent legacy of inconsistent financial management practices. He tracked revenue, expenditures and receipts in ways that became the platform for the department's current success. He eliminated ineffective payment processes and created a degree of accountability and insight that had been absent. To achieve these kinds of results, George made key operational information more accessible and easier to follow by developing and implementing process maps for all financial and related activities. To date, this initiative includes 14 standardized maps that provide clear guidelines for any new members of the team. After seeing the impact of this effort, the department has asked George to create process maps for additional practices and issues across the operation.

**Hilary Jenkins**  
***Research Scientist***  
**Faculty of Science**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Hilary Jenkins joined McMaster in 2008 as a research scientist, initially splitting her time between the McMaster X-Ray Diffraction and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) facilities before moving full time to the NMR Facility in 2014. She has played a lead role in training new NMR users and continued during the pandemic as she participated in several virtual international NMR workshops hosted by the IVAN NMR Users Group. She also presented at a workshop focusing on remote experiment submission to highlight the many advances implemented at McMaster.

Hilary is a champion for accessibility in the NMR Facility and coordinated the necessary retraining of the approximately 200 established users in order to achieve her goal. She presented at a meeting in December 2021 to highlight the many challenges to EDI in the NMR lab as well as the many solutions. This kind of initiative took place, of course, as Hilary helped establish new procedures and protocols so that the NMR Facility could continue to operate while also ensuring the health and safety of facility users and staff during the pandemic. The result of Hilary's commitment is that the pandemic-related changes did not compromise the quality of the training new users receive.

Hilary supports her colleagues across the University as the chair of the elections committee for the UNIFOR local at McMaster.

**Tom Jessome**  
***Printing Services Manager***  
**Media Production Services**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Tom Jessome worked with University Technology Services and then the Office of the Chief Risk Officer before eventually joining Media Production Services (MPS) as the printing services manager. In that role, Tom delivers products and services in print, design, digital delivery, signage and installation as well as leading the Printing Services team that has played an important role in McMaster's pandemic response. Tom went to exceptional lengths to ensure that social distancing-related signage was prepared for the reopening of research labs and he was tireless in ensuring that his team was able to work remotely by facilitating training, redeployment planning and return-to-work plans.

Tom has been instrumental in supporting many of the University's AODA compliance efforts including deploying MacSites (making accessible websites), developing braille business cards and producing accessible wayfinding and building signage. In addition, he is committed to McMaster's sustainability efforts and took the initiative to research and procure 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper for all course materials produced by MPS. He has also become an expert in secure-paper strategies, having partnered with two other universities to support secure transcript initiatives. In the past few years, Tom's team has been recognized with national awards including the 2020 CCAE Prix d'Excellence Award, the 2019 CUPMAC Production Award for Digital Black/White products and the 2019 CUPMAC "People's Choice" Award.

**Devon Jones**  
***Instructional Assistant***  
**School of Interdisciplinary Science**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Devon Jones joined the School of Interdisciplinary Science in 2019 as an instructional assistant. She quickly earned more responsibility and now oversees instructional support for the Life Sciences and Integrated Science programs as she works with first-year, large-lab and core courses. Her redesign of lab activities in one second-year course allowed for expanded enrolment and then, during the pandemic, an easier and more effective pivot to virtual learning and subsequent return to in-person learning. Devon's contributions have also been essential to the growth of SCIENCE 1A03, a course that ran virtually for 820 students in 2021, up from an initial 175 students. As students returned to in-person labs, Devon was instrumental in developing operating procedures to ensure the learning environment was both effective and safe.

Devon was a leader in the design of a new undergraduate lab in the School of Interdisciplinary Science. The team occupied the new space just days prior to the 2021 winter break, yet still prepared the lab successfully for the new academic term. In a similarly exceptional effort, Devon coordinated two virtual "Synthesis" conferences, an annual venue for iSci students to present and explore undergraduate research and hear from prominent speakers. Beyond her core responsibilities, Devon sits on the committee reviewing supplementary applications for iSci admissions and is a member of the Joint Health & Safety Committee.

**Joanne Kehoe**

***Lead Educational Developer***

**Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching  
Individual Award Recipient**

Joanne Kehoe is the lead educational developer for digital pedagogy in the Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching. Since the start of the pandemic, she has led the institute's efforts to support instructors in the transition to remote and online teaching. She spearheaded the recruitment and integration of an expanded team of online learning specialists and educational developers and led the development of core resources in online and blended learning to allow McMaster to pivot to the remote environment. Joanne helped develop the University's digital learning strategy and McMaster's submission to the provincial Virtual Learning Strategy – a \$2.5 million application notable for its consultation, innovation and quality.

Joanne founded and co-chairs McMaster's Open Education Resources Committee, and in the past year, Joanne advocated for, developed and implemented a granting program to support instructors in developing open educational resources. As project lead and co-chair of the Instructional Design Interest Group of Ontario, Joanne is a provincially recognized leader in digital pedagogies, online learning and open education.

Joanne has been part of the Healthy Workplace committee, the Board/Senate Hearing Panel for Sexual Harassment/Anti-Discrimination and the McMaster Children's Party committee.

**Lisa Kennedy**  
***Faculty Relations / Tenure and Promotion Coordinator***  
**Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Lisa Kennedy has been a member of the team in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences for eight years and is now the faculty relations/tenure and promotion coordinator. Her responsibilities include faculty affairs, professionalism and supporting the leaders in education as well as equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenous reconciliation. Lisa is well known for the clarity, precision, quality and quantity of her work. When there was a transition in the staff team, Lisa swiftly assumed responsibility for onboarding the department's part-time and adjunct faculty, while simultaneously shifting the related activities online to accommodate the realities of the pandemic. Lisa also completely overhauled the process of recruitment and career reviews for part-time faculty by finding significant efficiencies and making the experience more meaningful for the faculty involved. She enhanced communication within the department through efforts such as leading the "Weekly Update in Psychiatry" web-based information system.

Lisa led the department's adoption of the MeDSIS platform for evaluation, quickly becoming the local expert and trainer. The new system helped her introduce a sophisticated approach for recruiting supervisors, tutors and presenters for the psychiatry clerkship program while she also developed a solution for the complex student clinical placement and academic teaching schedule. While serving as clerkship coordinator, Lisa forged relationships with her national counterparts and developed a reputation as a leader in that field.

**Chia-Yu Lin**  
***Manager, Development & Research***  
**Department of Linguistics & Languages**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Chia-Yu Lin, a two-time McMaster alumna, has been a member of the team at the Centre for Advanced Research in Experimental and Applied Linguistics (ARiEAL) since it was established in 2016. In her role as manager of development and research, she sustains the entire operation. Even during the pandemic, Chia-Yu supported the centre's five-year review and initiated many projects to enhance student success and create greater community impact.

When the Scientific Advisory Committee recommended involving students more centrally in the centre's operations, Chia-Yu developed meaningful student positions in a partnership model, recruiting students through the MacPherson Institute Student Partner Program. She also infused ARiEAL with a mentorship culture in areas including community outreach where, for example, ARiEAL now offers scientific literacy workshops to local children and youth. She also connected the ARiEAL Community Outreach Team with the Women in Science and Engineering – McMaster Chapter to support their annual outreach conference, GenSTEM.

Chia-Yu spearheaded external partnerships with the Mohawk College Brain Disorders Management program and Hamilton Health Sciences Summer Bursary program to create placement opportunities for Mac students. She also helped create the ARiEAL Research Supplement Fund for student projects. On campus, she has been a volunteer reviewer for the MacPherson Institute, a panelist at the GenSTEM conference and a resumé reviewer for the McMaster Alumni Association.



**Angelica McQuarrie**  
***Program Manager, Registered Kinesiologist***  
**Physical Activity Centre of Excellence (PACE)**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Angelica McQuarrie's first role with the Physical Activity Centre of Excellence (PACE) was as a student volunteer. Now a Mac grad, she is the program manager and a registered kinesiologist who coordinates the University's largest daily community outreach initiative. Known for team-building efforts including delivering home-baked treats to her colleagues, Angelica has been instrumental in PACE's ability to adapt to the remote realities of the pandemic. With PACE patrons – many of them at-risk individuals – no longer able to visit campus, Angelica adapted the program to a virtual platform called PACE LIVE! At Home. She managed budgets to provide this initiative as a free service that has reached more than 250 community members. To help ensure that patrons have access to PACE, Angelica also leads two annual fundraising events, The Race for PACE and the PACE Charity Gala.

In 2021, Angelica forged a partnership with Community Living Burlington to provide virtual physiotherapy and kinesiology services to people living with developmental disabilities. Within PACE, she implemented a new digital charting system that has streamlined the exercise prescription process and allowed staff access to important member information with the outcome of enhancing staff productivity. Angelica also introduced a new virtual e-library to house the exercise class recordings from PACE Live! At Home and broadened PACE's reach through the support of the Okanagan Charter.

**Laura Miller**  
***Academic Resources Coordinator***  
**School of Nursing**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Laura Miller has been the academic resources coordinator for the School of Nursing since 2008. She excels in providing high-quality, customer- and faculty-focused service and continues to have a particularly significant impact on the school's sessional and part-time faculty hiring as well as its financial management. Specifically, she displays a consistent capacity to balance big-picture management with the ability to support instructors as individuals. She orchestrates program-wide scheduling and logistics, for example, while also ensuring that each instructor has an exceptional experience. She provides quick responses, clear communication and active support to her colleagues while also taking extra time to ensure that each individual has their questions addressed.

Always willing to stay late or volunteer her time and energy to support her colleagues, Laura consistently impresses the school's more than 250 instructors with the care and effort she brings to facilitating their success. Her experience working at McMaster and in the health sciences context – she was previously part of the team in the Department of Family Medicine for more than six years – make her an irreplaceable resource to new and experienced staff, sessional instructors and faculty alike.

**Stephanie Nicoll**  
***Human Resources Business Partner***  
**Human Resources Services**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Stephanie Nicoll has been the human resources business partner at the Institute on Ethics & Policy for Innovation (IEPI) since 2020 after establishing a diverse McMaster career that includes serving two different roles in Human Resources Services, then working as project coordinator in the School of Rehabilitation Science, as clinical education coordinator in the Physiotherapy Program and as curriculum coordinator with the Occupational Therapy Program. A Mac graduate, Stephanie has also been a teaching assistant in the DeGroote MBA program.

The IEPI is accountable to its funder, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Stephanie manages, with exceptional professionalism, consultation with the foundation as well as global recruitment, strategy, evaluation and business management. The pandemic brought staffing shortages, operational challenges and increased demand for ethics consultations, but Stephanie still delivered. She orchestrated the final report on a major grant while maintaining normal operations and coordinating a search for a new assistant director. Stephanie developed strong onboarding tools for graduate research assistants and undergraduate summer students and she has shown a strong ability to facilitate international recruitment, leading to exceptional diversity in the IEPI team.

A mentor with the McMaster Alumni Association, Stephanie has been an advisor on MBA projects in the DeGroote School of Business and helped judge the school's capstone courses.

**Judi Pattison**  
***Communications Coordinator***  
**School of Graduate Studies**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Judi Pattison has been the communications coordinator in the School of Graduate Studies for more than a decade. Over that time, her portfolio has expanded to match her abilities and she has become a key point of contact for McMaster's graduate students, a role that has been particularly crucial during the pandemic. Collaborating with colleagues across campus, Judi ensured that the University's messaging to graduate students related to issues from vaccination plans to return to campus has been clear. This function was especially important to McMaster's large cohort of international graduate students for whom Judi developed an international student arrival app and positioned it to play a large role in the school's ability to navigate the pandemic and support individual students' capability to manage their plans and travel.

Judi's work with last year's GradFlix competition, a new competition in which graduate students create 60-second videos to explain their research, was exceptional. Additionally, Judi led a revision of the school's website, joined the AODA Web Compliance Group and successfully championed the impactful adoption of the LinkedIn Learning platform. Judi also developed the "Dig with the Dean" tree-planting event to welcome graduate students to campus and the community.

**Courtney Pitt**  
***Instructional Assistant***  
**Education Services**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

Courtney Pitt is an instructional assistant in the Faculty of Health Science's undergraduate anatomy and physiology (A&P) course. Courtney began her McMaster career in 2014 as a lab assistant before earning promotions in 2016 and then again in 2018 to her current position. Courtney's command of technology and data is remarkable. The author of the bespoke manual for undergraduate TAs, she spearheaded the pandemic-imposed switch to virtual learning for the program, including the coordinated use of SharePoint, OneNote and Teams. Courtney also produced 12 case studies for midwifery students to highlight specialised anatomy and physiology concepts.

Courtney leveraged her knowledge of statistics to create a sophisticated tool for analysing multiple-choice and bellringer test questions. The result is a process that uses statistical data to validate the quality of test questions and provides an opportunity for instructors to improve the questions. For bellringer questions – a staple of anatomical education – Courtney was involved with a potentially revolutionary research project using AI in grading. Courtney also advocated for an innovative and more insightful approach to student feedback. This approach became the basis for immediate course improvements and for a scientific paper regarding the impact of the pandemic on the A&P course. During the pandemic, Courtney led the creation of entirely new online laboratory exercises, quickly becoming an expert in the software needed to make the transition.

**Rakesh Sahu**  
***Research Associate***  
**Mechanical Engineering**  
**Special Achievement Award Recipient**

Rakesh Sahu was a research engineer and adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering before becoming operations director of McMaster's Centre of Excellence in Protective Equipment and Materials (CEPEM). Launching the centre was a demanding process that saw Rakesh procure equipment, establish processes and procedures and develop partnerships with the more than 40 companies linked to CEPEM. He was quickly able to earn the trust and confidence of the new team as well as the centre's external partners. Team members have praised his multidisciplinary knowledge, his ability to link academia with the private sector and the clarity and efficiency of his work.

In the midst of this effort – and in the midst of the pandemic – Rakesh was still able to meet an urgent request for help from McMaster's Global Health Program partners in Uganda where the impact of COVID-19 had reached crisis levels. In response to the request, Rakesh solicited donations of personal protective equipment from Canadian suppliers and fulfilled the administrative requirements for charitable gift receipts in the process. He then facilitated domestic shipping, temporary local storage and finally the complex shipping arrangements which involved detailed, multi-national paperwork and tracking delivery via sea container shipping and truck-based delivery in Africa. Ultimately, the \$750,000 delivery of PPE had a significant positive impact on frontline workers in Uganda.

**Lynne Serviss**  
***Head, Library Services***  
**University Libraries**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Lynne Serviss has been part of the McMaster University Libraries team for a decade and, in 2019, was promoted to head of library services for Mills, Innis and Thode libraries in addition to Library Accessibility Services. Known for her dedication to her team, she created personalized gifts for her colleagues during the holiday season. When preparing for the September 2021 return to campus, Lynne developed a gradual return strategy to make the transition more comfortable and welcoming. Throughout the pandemic, Lynne has responded to usage statistics and user feedback to adjust library services to meet evolving needs.

Lynne's innovation is reflected in her introduction of Library Carnival Day as an annual showcase of the ways libraries support student success. In 2020, she launched eReserves, a single-access reservation system. Lynne is also the driving force behind a range of wellness initiatives including the installation of bike desks, the use of meditation headbands, the availability of a therapy light and the use of games and puzzles to serve students' physical and mental health needs. Lynne implemented the Graduate Thesis Completion Study Space, the Books by Mail service and is a member of the HathiTrust User Engagement Task Force, a partnership that offers access to millions of digitized books from libraries worldwide.

**Sally Stafford**  
***Research Assistant***  
**Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

Sally Stafford is the communications and lab manager for the McMaster Institute for Music and the Mind (MIMM) LIVELab. A Mac alumna, she was previously central coordinator for the Kindergarten Vision Screening Program and a research assistant in the Department of Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour. With MIMM, Sally leads outreach, mentors research assistants and orchestrates the concert series. She created the LIVELab Ambassador program for undergraduate student volunteers and is also a key member of the research team that oversees, for example, an innovative project involving the Hamilton Philharmonic and two hearing aid companies. Sally arranges the Girls in Science Day tours and has volunteered to support events staged by student clubs including MacBeats and Artists at McMaster.

When the pandemic disrupted LIVELab's regular activities, Sally excelled in finding new ways to accomplish key goals. She engaged the Mohawk College Broadcasting Program to stream live shows and she spearheaded a grant application to the NSERC PromoScience program to fund outreach initiatives involving local children. When Mac students started volunteering in greater numbers during the pandemic, Sally adapted the LIVELab Ambassador program to a virtual environment, creating opportunities for students to contribute to research and outreach. She also extended LIVELab's community connections through Science Rendezvous, an initiative that takes science, research and innovation "onto the street" to create online activities for families across Canada.



**Cindy Walker-Dilks**  
***Health Research Methodologist***  
**Oncology**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

McMaster graduate Cindy Walker-Dilks began working at the University in 1984 with the Department of Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics, then in 2007 moved to the Program in Evidence-Based Care (PEBC), a research group that produces clinical practice guidelines for the Ontario cancer care system. As documents manager, Cindy has guided the review and maintenance of more than 100 cancer care documents and authored more than 40 guidelines and manuscripts. She has also revised the entire review process and improved communications with the program's external partners and reviewers.

The quality of Cindy's work is evident in projects such as the effort to develop province-wide guidelines for treating central nervous system cancers. Her work, in the words of one of the project participants, "has been remarkable" and will transform central nervous system cancer care in Ontario, resulting in substantial improvements to patient outcomes.

Known for going beyond the basic requirements of her job, Cindy regularly volunteers her time to help colleagues with their work, with a notable example being her contributions to a systematic review designed to improve the quality of care for people with osteoporosis. Cindy also works hard to foster a sense of community within her team, including active involvement in events such as the McMaster BRIGHT Run and the annual PEBC spring tea party.

**Rebecca Woodworth**  
***Administrator***  
**Biology**  
**Individual Award Recipient**

Rebecca Woodworth started at McMaster in 2000 and has been part of the Department of Biology since 2012. She was promoted to her current position, department administrator, in 2017. Rebecca has played a vital role in managing through changes in the department's team by training fellow staff and ensuring – during a period when the department had a number of chairs in quick succession – that each department chair has had a smooth transition. In overseeing the department's financial records, Rebecca discovered issues with the General Ledger system and her insight ultimately accelerated the implementation of the Business Intelligence tool campus wide.

When the pandemic forced a course with more than 2,000 students to become virtual, Rebecca built a team to develop mail-home lab kits and even printed all 2,000 address labels herself. When in-person instruction became possible again, Rebecca devised the laboratory schedule and orchestrated the only in-person lab course at McMaster outside of health sciences in fall 2020. She accomplished similar results as the pandemic wore on – always providing students with experiences that were on the leading edge of what was possible given pandemic restrictions of the time. Rebecca is also well known for organizing Ontario Biology Day, a province-wide student thesis showcase.

**Joe Zubek**  
***Senior Manager***  
**Security & Parking Services**  
**Individual Award Nominee**

Joe Zubek has been a member of the Security & Parking Services team since 2016. As senior manager, one of his signature contributions has been the mentorship and development of his colleagues. He has identified and championed learning opportunities related to issues ranging from mental health to trauma-informed responses to sexual violence and also extended that learning commitment to include training for the 25-member Security Services team in anti-racism, anti-Black racism, 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous relations.

Joe works diligently to mentor individual officers and has been instrumental in developing multiple special constables to the point of achieving their personal goals of moving to municipal or provincial policing. Beyond the department, Joe has established exceptional partnership throughout McMaster – leading efforts in coordinating CCTV practices and policies, for example – and beyond the University in sharing information and policy process with organizations including the University of Toronto and Toronto Police Service.

Joe has had a significant impact on the unit's approach to policy by creating a paperless process that supports collaboration, policy development and all aspects of approval, revision and sharing. The new system enhances accountability and service delivery. Joe also has a long history of volunteering to cover shifts for officers and supervisors when required and regularly leads the team in support of community activities such as events with Interval House.

# PRESIDENT'S AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN 2021

## TEAM NOMINEES

### 2021 OAIE Conference Team Team Award Nominee

The diverse McMaster team that organized the first virtual Ontario Association of International Education (OAIE) Conference in June 2021 attracted 234 education leaders, scholars, students and practitioners to the conference. Representing units including the Office of International Affairs, Student Success Centre, Registrar's Office, Faculty of Social Sciences, University Technology Services, School of Graduate Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences and Academic Sustainability Programs, the team delivered to the highest standard during a pandemic that redefined the term "conference" worldwide.

The team swiftly deployed a new conferencing and networking platform to create exceptional participant experiences and enable participation from an international audience including representatives of the Qatar Foundation and the Ban Ki-Moon Centre for Global Citizens, for example. The conference team ensured the accessibility of the conference by providing ASL interpretation and live captioning. They also worked to address the mental wellness concerns of attendees who could have been struggling during the pandemic.

The members of the team all managed their conference responsibilities on top of their regular work and the results were exceptional. Noted one conference registrant, "I participated as speaker/moderator in more than 60 virtual international conferences, but among them, I can clearly highlight the OAIE Conference as one of the best in terms of content, technical arrangements, engaging sessions format, and, more importantly, highly professional overall support from McMaster University."

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### Team Members

Nicole Agyei-Odame  
Shania Bhopa  
Christian Braun  
Nevine Chawra  
Tania Hakim

Francesca Hernandez  
Paul Leegsma  
Jenna Levi  
Nicole Longstaff  
Christa Morrison

Patricia Ogba  
Faith Ogunkoya  
Melanie Waters  
Kate Whalen  
Yufei Zheng



## **Career Team – OneDeGroote Team Award Nominee**

The Career Team in the DeGroote School of Business united during the pandemic to mitigate the seismic shift of the employment landscape. The team’s strategy was designed to work for all DeGroote students, with special consideration for the distinct challenges of international students who faced travel restrictions and limited work eligibility. Collectively, the members of the Career Team deployed a half-dozen new technologies, offered eight different experiential activities including competitions and internships, enhanced connections to DeGroote alumni and created new external partnerships. One specific example of these initiatives was helping students prepare for the unfamiliar world of virtual interviewing by launching videobioRecruiter, a digital interview preparation tool which leverages AI to provide candidates with immediate feedback on their performance. This tool has since been integrated into DeGroote’s career courses.

As a result of these efforts, DeGroote’s key employment indicators remained high relative to other institutions’ and returned swiftly to pre-pandemic levels. The measurable outcomes of the team’s work included the MBA Class of 2021 achieving a 94% secure rate within three months of graduation (compared to 78% for the Class of 2020 at the peak of pandemic restrictions) and the Bachelor of Commerce/Integrated Business & Humanities cohort securing 249 internships – a new record. These results are particularly important in a business school context where employment outcomes play such a central role in institutional rankings.

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### **Team Members**

Nia Costea  
Simran Dhillon  
Megan Donohue  
Nichola Johnson-Young  
Chantal Godin  
Jacquie Gomes

Ibrahim Ibrahim  
Lisa Keenan  
Pamela Lauren  
Arina Levko  
Margaret Leyland  
Danielle Little

Alison McGeorge  
Disha Patel  
Caroline Roberts  
Carmen Vukovic  
Melanie Wyndowe

## COVID Enhanced Ventilation Team

### Team Award Nominee

During the pandemic, building ventilation suddenly became a critical priority for everyone interested in safe workplaces. The Facility Services COVID Ventilation Team responded by doing exceptional work in staying current with evolving public and institutional guidelines and delivering results to standards that often surpassed minimum mandates. In 2021, the Utility Services team updated ventilation units in all campus buildings. The cornerstone changes of this effort were maximizing fresh air and installing MERV-13 filters in all 153 return-air systems on campus. This process involved detailed inspections of all spaces and addressing the five buildings on campus without conventional ventilation. As plans unfolded to bring students back to campus, the team improved ventilation in all 430 lecture theatres and classrooms at McMaster to enable six equivalent air changes per hour – the ideal standard. The team even did exceptional work in acquiring hundreds of filter units, despite high global demand. The team provided clear and regular communication to the campus community to enhance awareness and accountability.

At different points in the pandemic, the team responded swiftly to challenges such as total lockdowns that required 24-hour support to allow essential services such as medical isotope production and COVID-19 research to continue. This demanded shift work, strong continuity planning and the ability to adapt quickly to rapidly evolving best-practices guidelines.

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### Team Members

Alvin Baldovino  
Megan Biekša  
Derek Campbell

Jaden Dowling  
Joe Emberson  
Doug Harrison

Briana House  
Nathan Pirocchi  
Joe Porco

**DBHSC Vaccine Clinic &  
Operations Team**  
**Team award recipient**

One of the pillars of the world’s response to COVID-19 has been an historic vaccination effort. McMaster’s Department of Family Medicine has been at the heart of that strategy in Hamilton and the team of Jill Berridge, Jennifer Frid and Katherine Hale has managed the department’s vaccination program, putting in hundreds of hours of work to ensure that every Hamiltonian who wants the vaccine can get it. Katherine, Jennifer and Jill recruited the necessary professionals, coordinated with external partners like Hamilton Public Health Services and created and managed a vaccination hub at the David Braley Health Sciences Centre.

Adding the vaccine clinic duties to their regular responsibilities, Jennifer, Katherine and Jill designed the clinic to serve not just pandemic-mitigation goals, but also the University’s learning goals. They established a responsive management approach that made them available to more than 100 clinic staff at a moment’s notice. They emphasized trust in the policies, procedures and practices of the newly established clinic to ensure that staff and patients alike had a pathway to expressing and addressing concerns and suggestions. They also created processes to help ensure that vaccines reached underrepresented and marginalized members of the community. Together, the three vaccine clinic leaders displayed innovation in adapting the best-available space at DBHSC into the clinic and then supplementing that main space with pop-up clinics in other locations around the city.

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**Team Members**

Jill Berridge

Jennifer Frid  
Katherine Hale



## Accreditation Administrative Team Team Award Nominee

Engineers Canada, via the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB), accredits undergraduate programs in engineering. In November 2021, McMaster Engineering underwent a weeklong accreditation review of all Bachelor of Engineering programs. In total, 19 programs were evaluated, the largest-ever single visit in CEAB history. The accreditation review panel consisted of 16 members spread across multiple time zones. The visit, of course, was virtual, making this accreditation cycle unlike any other. McMaster's 43-member Accreditation Administrative Team worked for 18 months to prepare for the ultimately successful visit.

Working without virtual-review precedents, the team created numerous novel approaches and strategies while collecting and organizing 96,654 documents, creating 360-degree tours of 88 separate facilities and scheduling and delivering 257 meetings across four days. The review secured accreditation for the Integrated Cornerstones Design Projects course, a first-of-its-kind course for Canada that offers a new approach to program delivery and student evaluation, making the course a particularly challenging one to accredit. It was also the first review for the similarly innovative Integrated Biomedical Engineering & Health Sciences (iBioMed) program. Delivering the amount of information the team did, with exceptional clarity and organization, required a custom-built electronic system to collect, analyze and store data – which the team delivered – and an exceptionally strong vision for the project and dedication to the process.

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### Team Members

Tyler Ackland  
Jessica Anderson  
Andrew Aran  
Dalibor Bataneat  
Alexa Behar-Bannelier  
Parmveer Bola  
Lindsay Bolan  
Gabe Castagner  
John Colenbrander  
Tracey Coop  
Sinisa Crkvenjas  
Michael Curwin  
Doug Culley  
Michael Fox  
Joanne Gadawski

Monica Han  
Kerri Hastings  
Martha Kafuko  
Samantha Kandilas  
Doug Keller  
Daniel Kim  
Leslie Kocsis  
Robert Laidler  
Laurie Leblanc  
Sinah Lee  
Xiaogang Li  
Derek Lipiec  
Kelly Lyth  
Ed McCaffery  
Ciara McCann

Fazmin Nizam  
Leela Pilli  
Andrej Rusin  
Anna Sciascetti  
Diane Siv-Parr  
Heather Snow  
Steve Spencer  
Kristina Trollip  
Otse Umoru  
Kent Wheeler  
Maria White  
Dayna Wingfield  
Basem Yassa

## **GBM Tissue Bank & Body Donations Team Team Award Nominee**

Traditionally, collecting samples for human research has been the purview of hospitals, not universities. The three-person Glioblastoma Tissue Bank and Body Donation Team comprised of Andrew Palombella, Jasmine Rockarts and Maureen Letang is changing that tradition as possibly the only anatomy program in the world working closely with a research group to create a human tissue bank. Their work supports teaching as well as research designed to improve and develop treatments for glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer.

The team provides an essential service to four anatomy labs, the surgical skills facility and, most prominently, glioblastoma research based in the Singh Lab. The team recruits and educates potential donors and their families while navigating the complex legislation related to body donations. Given the sensitivities in dealing with end-of-life situations, the team – typically represented by Maureen at this point – is always kind, caring and professional. They must also be prepared to accept bodies at any hour, from a large geographic area. Once the team accepts the donation, Jasmine and Andrew have proven their ability to prepare the bodies with speed and accuracy for educational and research uses. In addition to its considerable contributions to research and learning, the team has also attracted attention for the innovative nature of the program having been the subject of stories in media outlets including the *Hamilton Spectator* and *Globe and Mail*.

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### **Team Members**

Maureen Letang  
Andrew Palombella  
Jasmine Rockarts

## MacCheck Policy Team

### Team Award Nominee

More than three dozen McMaster colleagues from units as diverse as Human Resources, Housing & Conference Services and University Technology Services worked in concert as the MacCheck Policy team to provide policies, processes and tools to help the McMaster community return to campus safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The innovation and collaboration displayed by the members of the team supported McMaster's vaccination mandate and many initiatives broke entirely new ground. While each sub-group of the overall team was working to deliver local, McMaster-based solutions, they were also keeping pace with changing provincial requirements.

The cornerstones of the team's work are numerous and varied. For example, the team created an intuitive digital app – backed by a complex network of applications and data – in just three weeks. The team opened the Asymptomatic Testing Centre on September 7, 2021, also with only three weeks lead time, to begin rapid testing in support of the University's vaccine mandate. Finally, when McMaster announced on August 16, 2021 that all proof-of-vaccination records would be validated, the team delivered yet again – and again on a compressed timeline. They developed a vaccine validation strategy with the support of a complete suite of communications and education vehicles as well as the app-based capacity to put vaccine mandate information directly into the hands of individual members of the Mac community.

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### Team Members

Abimbola Abidogun

Salah Abuzaid

Andrea Aitchison

Leah Allan

Alex Alvarez

Kevin Beatty

Monique Beech

Cheryl Beecroft

Franca Berti-Bogojevic

Samantha Boudreau

Megan Burkett

Rachael Byrne

Christine Costa

Bryan Czerneda

Brent Davis

Rochelle Daye

Kevin de Kock

Dane DeMan

Allison Drew-Hassling

Katie Ferguson

Deb Garland

Gillian Gibbons

Dave Hall

Sophia Holness

Lisa Hunt

Rosanne Kent

Marzena Kielar

Katie Millar

Lisa Morine

Amanda Morgan

Sara Morgan

Denise Nacev

Mike Ngo

Deb Oliver

Lori Patrick

Carson Phelan

Maggie Pooran

Kash Raza

Tanya Reid

Lukas Riley

Mark Rumbles

Brittany Reifenstein

Jeanne Tan

Mary Taws

Alicia Westfall

## McMaster Platelet Immunology Laboratory

### Team Award Recipient

Within two months of the arrival of COVID-19, the McMaster Platelet Immunology Laboratory shifted its work in order to measure anti-COVID antibodies. This created unprecedented amounts of work at a time when no one really understood COVID but many feared the worst. This meant evening and weekend shifts and a meticulous approach to safety as the 12-person lab team measured, for example, antibody levels in older people and in people who were immune compromised following COVID infections.

Over the last two years, the McMaster Platelet Immunology Laboratory team has been involved in developing the tests that identify individuals infected with COVID-19 and determining the long-term immunity against COVID-19 following infection and vaccination. Additionally, the team was instrumental in the study of Vaccine-induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT), writing the widely adopted guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of the condition and becoming the only testing centre for VITT in Canada. The lab ran thousands of samples to inform the Government of Canada's COVID-19 vaccination policies, including the optimal timing between doses of the vaccines and the need for vaccine booster shots in long-term care facilities. Despite this great increase in research activity, the lab continued to provide regular testing, reporting and patient care. Two of the lab's studies were identified by Ontario's Premier as two of the top five studies funded by the province in the past year.

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### Team Members

Hina Bhakta  
Monique Chiam  
Rumi Clare  
Adebimpe Fasanyas

Angela Huynh  
Nikola Ivetic  
Jennifer Merkel  
Jane Moore

Maria Roussakis  
Jim Smith  
Sarah Weir  
Raquel Whitwell

## **Sustainable Procurement Team Team Award Nominee**

Three McMaster colleagues – Tracie Felton and Roxanne Flitcroft from Financial Affairs along with Kate Whalen from the Academic Sustainability Programs Office – comprise the Sustainable Procurement Team. The team is helping the University reach its sustainability goals by ensuring that eco-friendly decision making is part of the processes for purchasing goods and services. The team’s work has set a number of new standards and pursued a number of innovative initiatives. Students have been a foundational element of this effort and of the sustainable procurement plan. In fact, students selected procurement as a focus project through their Advocacy and Implementation courses focused on social issues. Students have also been involved in recommending and shaping an advocacy and awareness campaign for the University’s sustainable procurement efforts.

The Sustainable Procurement Team created a new RFP template and established a number of external partnerships to ensure strong and effective links between Mac’s plan and private sector approaches. The team also developed communications tools including a publicly posted guide to help departments evaluate responses to the new RFP questions. The results of the team’s work have already been significant as, in addition to the environmental benefits, McMaster has realized direct and indirect cost savings. One example is that using toxin-free and less expensive cleaning supplies creates not just the direct savings on the cost of the supplies, but also the savings from no longer needing protective equipment.

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### **Team members**

Tracie Felton  
Roxanne Flitcroft  
Kate Whalen