

WISEST Summer Research Program

Journal of Student Research 2026



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Introduction

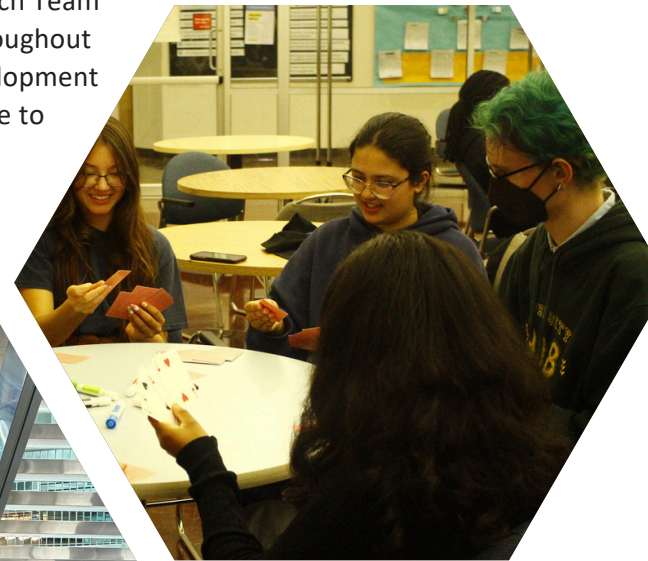
Each summer, WISEST places young women and gender diverse, grade 11 students in a six-week paid internship called the Summer Research Program (SRP). Students are paired with research laboratories and gain experience in fields where their genders are considered underrepresented such as Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM). This year, WISEST was able to place 29 students in various research placements.

Goals of the SRP for our students

- Broaden awareness about underrepresented fields of study and diverse career options.
- Engage with other participants who share similar interests.
- Learn about the techniques and types of research conducted in different STEM fields.
- Connect with and learn from successful professionals in the STEM fields.
- Develop key professional skills.
- Contribute to trailblazing research (in the lab or in the field).
- Become familiar with academic and university life at the University of Alberta.

Our Volunteers

Our program would not be possible without the Principal Investigators who invite these students into their research, the Supervisors and Research Team Members who provide mentorship and support for the students throughout the program, and the volunteers who support our Professional Development Sessions. In 2026, 101 different people gave 6,241 hours of their time to support this program.



Thank You to Our 2026 Funders:

We are a donor and volunteer-driven Community of Catalysts!

Although based on the U of A campus, WISEST relies almost completely on donations from corporations, foundations, individuals and the public sector to develop and deliver our innovative programs.

Thank you to



WISEST Industry Alliance

A huge thanks is due to our current WIA members, including:

The Environmental Service Association of Alberta, DIALOG, Telus World of Science Edmonton, Rotary Club of Edmonton Riverview, ARC Resources, AECOM, Inception, Osprey Scientific, Capital Engineering, Associated Engineering, Clark Builders, Graham Construction, Bruce MacPherson, PCL Construction Management and PCL Industrial Management, ISL Engineering, and Consulting Engineers of Alberta.



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Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
Faculty of Engineering
Faculty of Science
Faculty of ALES
Faculty of Arts

The Spirit of Dr. Armour Award

WISEST created the “**Spirit of Dr. Armour Award**” in 2019, to honour individuals whose spirit and enthusiasm for diversity in STEM is genuine, infectious and intentional. Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour dedicated her life and career to diversity and the advancement of women in the sciences. But more fundamentally, she dedicated her spirit and her passion to people. She became a beloved member of numerous groups and networks through her genuine enthusiasm for individuals and sincere belief in the power of community. She loved people and people loved her back.

“I give you my greatest wish - to go meet your dreams”

The Advocate Award

This award is presented to a principal investigator or supervisor, who through their participation in the Summer Research Program has shown advocacy in creating a more diverse STEM community.

SRP Student Award

This award is presented to a grade 11 student, who, through their participation in the Summer Research Program has shown: a genuine interest and passion in pursuing a STEM education, leadership and engaged participation in all the SRP program offers, collaborative interactions with other SRP participants, PIs, graduate students, WISEST staff, and the lab staff, an innovative and creative problem-solving approach and demonstrated resilience in overcoming barriers and obstacles.



WISEST would like to recognize:
Jun Chu (advocate)
&
Alexis Diachinsky (student)
with the Dr.
Armour Spirit
Awards.



The Summer Program

The WISEST Summer Research Program is more than just a summer job. The program calendar is full of events, sessions and opportunities that allow the students to grow professionally, meet incredible mentors and build a like-minded community of peers.

Orientation

The program began with a full day of orientation to the program and to campus. This day included introductions from staff, Campus Tours, a panel discussion with WISEST SRP Alums to receive advice and encouragement, and PI/Supervisor lab/research tours.

“During the orientation, I was very excited but nervous. Looking back, those emotions were completely valid! Over time, settling in, creating new memories and friendship has brought an overwhelming sense of gratefulness.”

“At orientation I was very overwhelmed and everything was very new and scary. But with that came so much excitement that only continued to grow. By the end of the program I had fallen in love with the city, the university and the people I was surrounded by.”



Professional Development

Each week, WISEST students meet to develop new skills and learn more about various science, engineering and technology career and/or education fields.

This year's professional development sessions included: Understanding the University, Google Suites Basics, Group Norms and Communication Styles, Library 101, Let's Talk EDI and Allyship, Designing a Research Poster, Exploring Experiential Learning Opportunities, Science Communication, Strength Based Success, The Art of Networking and LinkedIn, CNAS Recruitment, Setting Up for Success in University, Peer Poster Feedback, Networking Fair, and Career Workshop.

"A PD session that will stick with me is the Strength-Based success one. It completely reframed my thinking about strengths and weaknesses, and got me thinking about how to use my strengths instead of trying to lessen my weaknesses."

"While I learned a lot from all of the Professional Development sessions, I think the one I will take the most away from was the session on staying involved in research beyond the SRP. This session made research feel like it was something that I could actually do throughout the rest of high school and into undergrad, whereas before I thought of the WISEST Summer Research Program as one of my only chances to experience research before spending years in university. Additionally, it encouraged me to reach out to people when I am genuinely interested in someone's work, even if I do not have a lot of experience in that field."

Mentorship and Role Models

The Summer Research Program students have many opportunities to meet and network with a wide variety of STEM students and professionals at all stages of their academic and professional journeys. Students participated in a networking mixer, as well as role model sessions tailored to 2SLGBTQIA+ and racialized students in STEM. Additionally, each student was matched with an SRP alum from a previous program for additional mentorship and support.

"The first time I actually saw an example of someone mixing art and science was in the 2SLGBTQIA+ online mentorship panel. I had the chance to meet Hannah Bayne, who is researching climate change, community, and music. I was able to talk to them more during the Networking Fair, and got some valuable advice on how to be involved in both science and art."



On Campus and Industry Tours

In addition to their own research labs, students were given opportunities to meet lab teams in other faculties and departments and tour these facilities. Additionally, students were taken to InnoTech Alberta, Capital Engineering, Gilead, Teledyne MEMS, and ATCO as a way of seeing how STEM can be done in Industry settings.

"The Gilead industry tour was definitely one of those tours. Often in schools they prioritize STEM but to understand the real world impact of why doesn't always seem possible, this tour changed my mind and perspective of what I can do. Through chemistry they change lives for the better just like how I imagined scientists as a kid."

"My favorite lab tour was the STEM cell lab. Being immersed by wearing white coats, learning of modern issues, as well as seeing cells under a microscope was insightful and fun. This stood out to me as it was one of the few times I was every in a lab."

"I liked the Teledyne and Simulation lab tour as it showed real-life applications of their work and their work was interesting."



Social Events

In an effort to build a cohesive and supportive cohort and community, WISEST hosted several social events over the course of the summer. The program first kicked off with a Scavenger Hunt designed to acquaint students with campus. These fun-filled events dedicate time for students to unwind after work and meet each other in a more informal and casual setting. Other social events included a SRP Heritage Day, Paint Night, Ice Cream, Board Games & Socializing, Karaoke, a Bubble Tea Night night with WISEST's sister networks, WiSER and UA-WiSE, and cohort lunches. The six-week program culminated in the See Ya Later banquet, with food, photos, shared memories, and student- led entertainment.

"Paint night and heritage night. It was very connecting to see others culture and just spend time while doing fun activities and eating."

"My favourite social event was paint night because we all got to hangout and paint cool stuff while talking and laughing together."

"Heritage Night! I learned about the unique cultures that made up the Cohort through delicious food and performances. Celebrating our differences, as a like-minded community, was insightful and beautiful."



Research and Celebration of Research

Each student was placed in a STEM research lab. The student's experiences, while unique to each project, entailed things like working with lab members, learning specific skills such as coding, gel electrophoresis, data analysis, effective communication of results, among so many others. Each student created a final poster that encapsulated their project, and these were presented to friends, family, dignitaries, research teams, teachers and the general public on the final day of the program.

"When I saw my poster next to everyone else's, I couldn't help but feel proud of myself. Seeing my hard work pay off, and having so many people willingly come up to me to ask about my work was very uplifting for my self esteem. Even having less easily impressed relatives and professionals in fields I hope to see myself in one day complimenting my poster was exhilarating."

"The Celebration of Research was actually one of my favourite parts of the SRP. Getting to show off my research as well as seeing everyone else's research was super rewarding for everyone involved. I also highly enjoyed being able to represent my cohort and give a speech during the formal program that followed the poster fair."



Residence

Students from outside the Edmonton region stayed on campus in the St. Joseph's College dormitory. Students living in residence create a close-knit community through their shared experiences, and together they explore all Edmonton has to offer while participating in numerous fun social activities.

"I enjoy getting to practice independence in a safe environment. My roomies helped me when I was struggling, and we worked together to support one another in this new place. Through sleepovers, musicals, and cartons upon cartons of eggs, I got to make myself a second family."

"The best part about residence was the people. Making friends so quickly and loving just down the hallway from them was extremely valuable and I know I've made lifelong friends."





Our 2026 SRP Student Researchers

Sumaya Abdullahi

High School: Queen Elizabeth High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Simon says: Motion Capture and Muscle Tension

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Motorola Solutions Foundation



Describe a panel or networking session that had a profound impact on you and your STEM trajectory.

The networking session at Tasty House had a great impact on me because I had the opportunity to meet professionals and students with a variety of STEM experiences and career paths. I received valuable advice about which Grade 12 courses to take, university planning, and how to continue building my experience in STEM. Hearing their personal journeys and advice gave me a clearer sense of direction and made me feel more confident about the path I want to pursue.

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

Finding a like-minded community during SRP had a huge impact on me because I was surrounded by people who shared my passion for STEM, curiosity, and desire to learn. It was encouraging to be around others who understood the excitement and challenges of research, and who motivated me to step outside of my comfort zone. This community made me feel like I truly belonged in STEM and showed me how meaningful it is to have people around you who support and inspire your goals.



Laiqa Abeba

High School: Grande Prairie Composite High School

Town: Grande Prairie, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science

Project Title: How Biased is GenAI in Essay Grading?

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs, Motorola Solutions Foundation, & Global Cellulose Fibers

What was the Celebration of Research like for you?

CoR had been one of the best moments throughout the program. To be able to talk and explain my project to so many people had allowed me to truly appreciate my efforts as I saw every single person's reaction. I thoroughly enjoyed working through each of their questions and exploring the ones that I had been unsure about.

Talk about another part of the program that was meaningful to you.

The EdTekLa lab was incredibly helpful throughout my project. I really appreciated their feedback and support through every step of the program and their continuous encouragement, especially when things had felt overwhelming. From simplifying complex code to graphic design help, every single person had taught me so much just in these six weeks.

Saanvi Aggarwal

High School: Dr. Ep Scarlett High School

Town: Calgary, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Effects of Ultraviolet Radiation on the Tensile Properties of Kevlar®

Tubular Braided Composites for Space Applications

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Isomass Scientific Inc



Describe your research and project in 5 sentences or less. Be sure to say why this research is important or impactful.

My research investigated the effects of simulated Air Mass Zero ultraviolet radiation on the tensile properties of Kevlar® 49 tubular braided composites for space applications. I manufactured specimens with different resin systems, exposed them to simulated Low Earth Orbit conditions for seven days, and performed tensile testing before and after UV exposure. This research is important because understanding how these lightweight composite materials respond to ultraviolet radiation can help inform their potential use in future space applications.

Say thank you to someone who had an impact on you this summer.

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Eric Lepp for going above and beyond as my supervisor and mentor throughout this project. He has always encouraged me to learn, never hesitating to make time for my questions or help me understand new concepts in an engaging and approachable way. I am especially grateful that he was there throughout every stage of the process, from manufacturing my specimens and conducting testing to analyzing my results and preparing my final presentation. His enthusiasm for mentorship and the welcoming environment he created made this the best research experiences I could have asked for.



Hannah Joy Cabrera

High School: Harvest Baptist Academy

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: The Effect of Wildfire Smoke on White-Throated Sparrow Songs

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Jean Cooley

Describe how you felt when you were accepted into the program. How has that changed throughout the program?

Opening the acceptance email, I could not help but reread it over a dozen times in shock. I felt overwhelming joy, yet also felt the gloom of imposter syndrome. However, my worries washed away as I entered the program, recognizing how each student was also there to learn and develop their passion for STEM.

Describe a Professional Development session that you gained new insight or learned from. What will you take away from it into the future?

The Science Communication PD Session truly changed my perspective of how science should be made accessible to the general public. I truly stand for that cause and hope that science can be a shared passion for all. In the future, I hope that I could help express science in a way that can be understood and influence those around me!

Samantha Cifra

High School: Archbishop Macdonald High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science

Project Title: The Musicians of Nature: Exploring birdsong as a multimedia tool for science communication

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance



Describe how you felt during orientation vs. how you feel now.

Sitting in a large lecture room with so many smart and like-minded students definitely made me feel out of place and super intimidated. As the program progressed, I realized that I wasn't expected to know everything from the beginning, and that I belonged in the room just as much as everyone else. Now, I feel much more confident in my abilities and I am proud of how much I have grown throughout the program.

Say thank you to someone who had an impact on you this summer.

A very special thank you to my supervisors, Moriah Deimeke and Prateek Sahu, as well as my lab partner, Shahd Nabhan. They were the people that made my journey in WISEST especially meaningful. With their help, I was able to grow as an individual and as a researcher.



Zoe Cogger

High School: Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Are Penguins Really That Good at Diving?

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

Don't put too much pressure on yourself! You got into the program as a high schooler and that is what is expected of you - make mistakes, ask for help, and most importantly, take advantage of every possible opportunity that comes your way!

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

Getting this close of an insight into what people in higher education are like was so important and unexpected. It showed me that, not only are they all just regular people, but they are relatable and friendly. And, many of them started just like me, as kids who really loved science, which really helped me feel like this is a place I can belong to.

Mia Conn

High School: Ecole Secondaire Beaumont Composite High School

Town: Beaumont, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Trapping the tiny terror: kairomone-based monitoring for flea beetles in canola

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & Janet Robertson

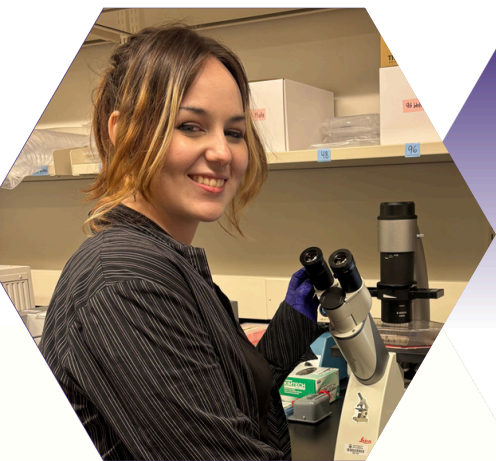


Tell us about your favourite tour (lab or industry) and why it stood out for you.

My favourite tour was the Capital Engineering industry tour. It was such a friendly, welcoming environment, and I really appreciated getting to know a little about what it's like to work as an engineer. Seeing and learning about so many successful female engineers who love what they do was truly inspiring.

Describe how you felt when you were accepted into the program. How has that changed throughout the program?

When I was accepted into the program, I felt incredibly shocked and couldn't believe I had actually qualified. Research felt like an alien concept to me, reserved for the smartest, most innovative, and dedicated people. But actually getting to meet and talk with researchers and students really opened my eyes to the diversity within academia and how it really is for anyone who has enough passion to try it.



Autumn Court

High School: J.R. Robertson High School

Town: Mannville, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biomedical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Optimization of LPS Priming in Swine Colostrum-Derived Stem Cells

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs, Faculty of Science & Global Cellulose Fibers

Describe your favourite social event. Why was this your favourite?

Heritage Night without a doubt. Seeing everyone share a part of themselves through food or performance was seeing the human behind academia. Even though we all came from different backgrounds and shared our differences, those differences told us why we were connected. Not just by STEM but our unquestionably unique experiences.

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

The what if's about the your future SRP experience will never be as important as putting yourself out there to learn and fail. Coming into this program I was apprehensive, an imposter that didn't belong to this group but in reality it was quite the opposite. Being uncomfortable is a temporary step to becoming permanently comfortable.

Alexis Diachinsky

High School: Saint Peter the Apostle Catholic High School

Town: Spruce Grove, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Agriculture, Food, and Nutritional Sciences,
Faculty of Agricultural, Life, and Environmental Sciences

Project Title: Food Applications for Combating Food Insecurity in the
Pediatric Liver Transplant Population

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & Riverview Rotary Club

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

Finding a like-minded community had a huge impact on me and made me feel like I am not the only one in this big world. Until the program, I had always felt like the science-loving nerd, which was so different from everyone else. However, after finding a like-minded community, I finally realized that there are people out there similar to me who will accept me for the science-lover I am, and I finally felt like I belonged.

Say thank you to someone who had an impact on you this summer.

I would like to thank all of the amazing WISEST staff this summer. Throughout the entire summer, they were extremely happy and welcoming and taught us so many valuable professional and personal skills. They made this summer absolutely amazing, and they made the program outstanding!



Emily Dilts

High School: Father Michael McCaffery High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: The Effect of Polysialic Acid on the Interaction Between CCL28 and CCR10

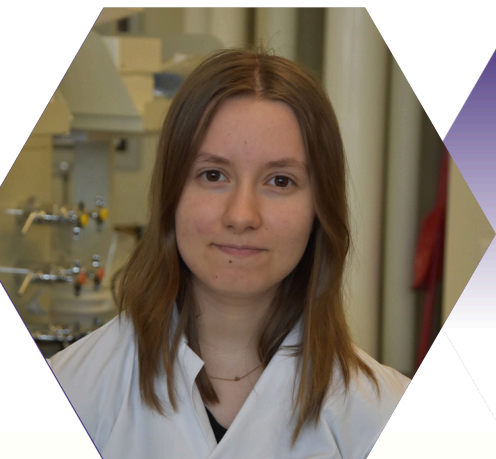
Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & ATCO

Describe a panel or networking session that had a profound impact on you and your STEM trajectory.

All of the networking events really impacted me because they helped me grow on a deeper level as a person. Before the program, I had attended one networking session beforehand, and because I have really bad social anxiety, it really took a toll on me. When we finally learned how to properly network with people, and I had all my friends and the cohort with me, it was definitely a lot easier to navigate thought it and get used to it. I'm grateful that they helped us, and I'm really grateful for my cohort that supported me through it.

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

It made the experience a lot less lonely. I remember walking into the university on my first day thinking everyone was a stranger to me. I forgot to remember that these people applied to the same program as I did, had to go through the same process to get here as I did, and had to have the same ambition for the program as I did. I forgot that these were people just like me, and when I realized that, it made me actually enjoy the program for what it was -- women and gender diverse people in STEM who were underrepresented, like I was.



Jenna Fortin

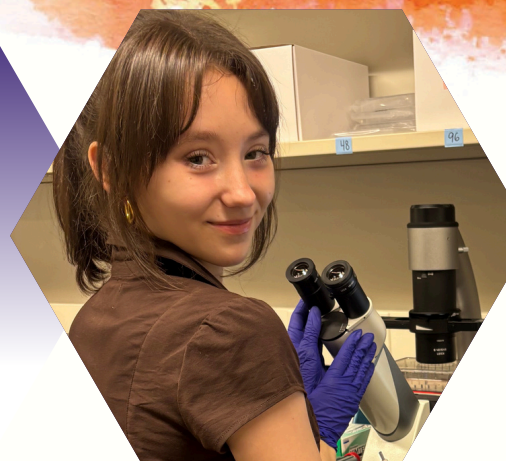
High School: Jasper Junior/Senior High School

Town: Jasper, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biomedical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Effect of Continuous LPS Exposure on Colostrum Derived Stem Cells

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & Consulting Engineers of Alberta



What is something you want future SRP students to know?

Everything will work out in the end. You will walk into your lab on the first day knowing nothing, that's why there are people who will support you and teach you everything you need to know. You will start your poster having no idea what your doing, before you know it everything will fall into place. You will probably be stressed going into the celebration of research, but when your actually in the moment all the right words will come to mind. Just Start and keep pushing and everything will fall into place.

What was the Celebration of Research like for you?

The Celebration of Research was such a beautiful bittersweet ending to an amazing six weeks. I spent that morning listing every way I would inevitably fail in my head, but when I got there and people came up to me showing genuine interest in my poster, the words flowed naturally and I found myself having so much fun being able to talk about my research.



Sydney French

High School: Salisbury Composite High School

Town: Sherwood Park, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Showing their true colours: preference flexibility in male and female zebra finches

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & Faculty of Science

What was the See Ya Later like for you?

The See Ya Later was definitely bittersweet. The speeches were so meaningful, and it was really sad to say goodbye to everyone after spending six weeks together, but it was also such a nice way to celebrate everything we had experienced and accomplished. I'm really excited to see where everyone goes from here and what they accomplish in the future.

Describe how you felt during orientation vs. how you feel now.

During orientation, I was definitely nervous because I didn't really know what to expect or what the next six weeks would look like. By the end of the program, after becoming comfortable in my lab and getting to know everyone, I felt so much more confident, connected, and comfortable, and I'm really grateful for how quickly the program began to feel like a community.

Nel Hansum

High School: Hunting Hills High School

Town: Red Deer, Alberta

Lab Placement: The Center of Applied Business Research in Energy and Environment, Alberta School of Business

Project Title: Draining The Grid: The Effect Of AI Data Centers On Fuel Stockpiles And Environment In Alberta

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance



Describe how you felt when you were accepted into the program. How has that changed throughout the program?

At first, it was admittedly nerve wracking. The first day when I walked in, I was surrounded by insanely talented people, and imposter syndrome had hit me hard. As the program progressed however, I gradually started to develop a stronger sense of belonging as I got to know the lovely people attending with me!

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

I did not go to as many social events as I would have liked due to a variety of outside factors. I implore anyone who happens to read this; go to as many events as you can! It truly is one of the best ways to get to know your cohort better. The majority of the connections I made came from these special activities, and there are only so many!



Joanna Huang

High School: Ross Sheppard High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Does Competition Drive Good Science? Investigating Transparency and Incentives in Teen Science Contests

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Glenora Rotary Club

Talk about another part of the program that was meaningful to you.

Another part of the program that was meaningful to me was the opportunity to be connected with an actual research lab at the University. For some student researchers, labs may potentially bring you back to do projects with them in the future, but just the ability to have professional connections within any field is a great perk in and of itself.

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

Six weeks feels like an extremely long period of time, but in reality, each week will go by in a blur. Make the most out of the experience and don't feel shy going up to interesting peer researchers, professionals or alumni and making connections with them as well. Before you know it, the Celebration of Research will be on its way.

Dakota Hunt

High School: David Thompson High School

Town: Leslieville, Alberta

Lab Placement: School of Public Health

Project Title: Singing For Climate: Addressing Youth Climate Emotions and Supporting Wellbeing Through Choir and Community Music Making

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance



Tell us about your favourite tour (lab or industry) and why it stood out for you.

My favorite lab tour was the Herbarium and Vascular Biotron lab. I love plants so it was fascinating to see them all preserved and so meticulously documented. I also loved the greenhouses and seeing all the cool plants on display. As well as seeing the invertebrates preserved, all the shells, and the peanut worm at the end of the tour was amazing as someone who lives biology and marine life.

What was the best part about residence?

The best part about residence was the people. Making friends so quickly and living just down the hallway from them was extremely valuable and I know I've made lifelong friends.



Tehreem Hussain

High School: Dr. Anne Anderson High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Agriculture, Food, and Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Agricultural, Life, and Environmental Sciences

Project Title: Rust in Peace: Fast-Tracking Wheat Immunity via KASP Marker-Assisted Selection

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance

Describe your research and project in 5 sentences or less.

My project is about boosting wheat immunity by stacking common disease-resistance genes into one species to protect against major North American crop diseases. By making the plant resistant to multiple threats at once, we can help farmers prevent massive yield losses. Ultimately, this research helps tackle food waste and keeps our food supply secure! It's super fun stuff :)

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

Never be afraid to ask questions, even if you think they sound silly. This summer is all about learning, and everyone (especially your supervisor) loves to help with lab work or career advice! Dive into the experience and definitely make sure to stay in touch with the people you meet afterward.

Vasundhara Joshi

High School: Sir Winston Churchill High School

Town: Calgary, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Modelling the Unpredictable: Assessing the Impact of Equipment Failures & Material Shortages on Construction Schedules

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Motorola Solutions Foundation

Tell us about your favourite tour (lab or industry) and why it stood out for you.

My favourite tour was the Capital Engineering tour because I really enjoyed being surrounded by women in engineering and hearing them talk about their work and their passion for what they do. What stood out to me was how welcoming everyone was and how they treated us like students and future professionals rather than just kids visiting for a tour. Being able to ask questions, hear about their experiences, and see what a career in engineering could look like made the experience really meaningful for me.

Describe your favourite social event. Why was this your favourite?

My favourite social event was Heritage Night because it was such a fun and relaxed way to get to know everyone better. I loved sharing our different cultures, trying different foods, and having fun together outside of the research environment. It was one of the nights where I felt the most connected to everyone in the program.



Sarah Lam

High School: Harry Ainlay Composite High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts

Project Title: Effect of Parenting Style on Behavioural and Neurological Indices of Inhibitory Control in Early Adolescents

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance

Tell us about your favourite tour (lab or industry) and why it stood out for you.

My favourite tour was the Capital Engineering industry tour. It was such a friendly, welcoming environment, and I really appreciated getting to know a little about what it's like to work as an engineer. Seeing and learning about so many successful female engineers who love what they do was truly inspiring.

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

Getting to know so many incredible, unique, and talented young students who shared the same passion and enthusiasm for STEM as me was extremely validating. I felt inspired and more comfortable exploring my interest in STEM with such a kind, supportive community right there with me.



Oriana Luc

High School: Saint John High School

Town: Saint John, New Brunswick

Lab Placement: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Return of the Bias: How Partners Change Opinions After Nest Building

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & Janet Robertson



Describe your research and project in 5 sentences or less.

My research is on Zebra Finches and their behavior, specifically regarding color preference between pink and orange. My project focused on 2 groups: pairing individuals with agreeing color preferences, and individuals with different color preferences, then urging them into a nest-building experience with both pink and orange string available. After the experience, changes in their preferences were analyzed, and results of social information exchange were gathered. This research is incredibly impactful because we are analyzing the effects of bias and its influences, and the results we gain from birds can easily be applied to other species in comparative psychology.

Describe how you felt when you were accepted into the program. How has that changed throughout the program?

When I was accepted into the program, it was a blur of excitement and overwhelming joy. The moment definitely felt surreal and that feeling actually followed me throughout the whole summer. During the program, when we got to live for 6 weeks as science researchers, we undoubtedly found a groove, but there were still random moments where I had to stop and reflect on the surrealness of being at the UofA (a top research institution in Canada) and contributing to science innovation for the future.



Ray Mapaye

High School: St. John Paul II Catholic School / Faculte St. Jean Paul II

Town: Grande Prairie, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Noob VS Pro: Differences in Essay Grading

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs, Motorola Solutions Foundation & Global Cellulose Fibers

What was the best part about residence?

For me, and many other residence students, it was our first time living away from home. I believe this really helped me get a feel for what it will feel like when I move out. Falling into and learning this new routine of having to take care of myself with not as much assistance played a great role in helping me develop as a person, and I believe it has helped me become much more responsible in that regard.

Describe a panel or networking session that had a profound impact on you and your STEM trajectory.

A PD session that will stick with me is the Strength-Based success one. It completely reframed my thinking about strengths and weaknesses, and got me thinking about how to use my strengths instead of trying to lessen my weaknesses.

Shahd Nabhan

High School: Queen Elizabeth High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Seeing Song: How Art Makes Songbird Conservation More Accessible in Science Communication

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Faculty of Science



What was the Celebration of Research and/or the See Ya Later like for you?

It was absolutely amazing. I was nervous at the COR because I did not practice my poster-speaking, but with time, I just got the hang of it, and realized that this is what I did for the last 6-weeks. I was also incredibly proud and surprised that I got two recognitions awards from MLAs and MPs, and it made me happy that I got to show my family that. The See Ya Later was really bittersweet because you realize it's coming to an end when you just to the hang of it.

Describe how you felt during orientation vs. how you feel now.

I felt quite new and nervous with how my interactions with people would go, and now I feel totally part of a team, accepted, and proud of all the amazing friends and colleagues I got to make, and my small and big accomplishments through out the way. I always know the beginning is just the awkward part, but with time I usually become even better than I was.



Morgan Nelson

High School: Paul Kane High School

Town: St. Albert, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Creating Tools to Interpret Children's Emotions and Energy

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Motorola Solutions Foundation

Describe how you felt when you were accepted into the program. How has that changed throughout the program?

I was over the moon when I first got accepted, I screamed so loud my mom said she thought there was a mouse in the house, but honestly I was worried I might not fit in with all the other students. As the program went on I came to realize that the other students were just as excited, scared, and crazy excited about STEM as I was. I fit right in.

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

A lot of the time in school not many people are really interested in STEM as I am. During our breaks not many other students really want to talk about science, but the SRP is different, everybody there is willing and interested to talk about science, research, and all of the fascinating projects that everybody else is working on. It means a lot to me to find a place where I really fit in, somewhere where everybody is excited by the future instead of dreading it.

Cierra Pavone

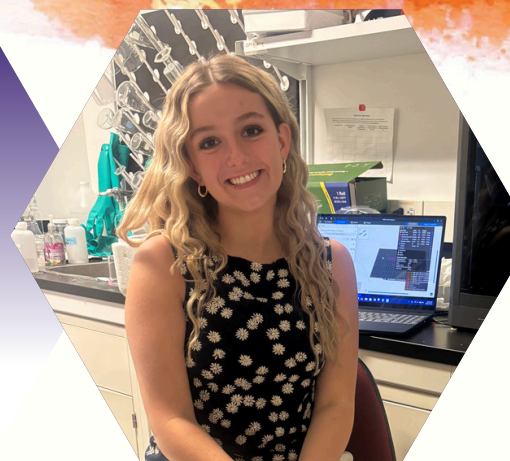
High School: École Secondaire St. Albert Catholic High School

Town: St. Albert, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Effect of Print-Path Orientation on Thermally Activated Shape Recovery in 4D-Printed Shape-Memory Polyurethane

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Motorola Solutions Foundation



What was the Celebration of Research and/or the See Ya Later like for you?

The Celebration of Research felt like a full circle moment. Every lesson I learned in the lab, and all of the hard work I had put into my project clicked together to end off my SRP experience in a way that was impactful, not just to myself, but now to other people. It let me showcase what I had worked for over the summer to other curious minds, creating an atmosphere of lively learning.

Talk about another part of the program that was meaningful to you.

The Industry Tours had a profound value to the WISEST SRP that is crucial for understanding future STEM pathways. Being able to see what different fields and careers actually can look like is an experience that not many grade 11 students have the privilege of getting to do. It was very helpful for future post-secondary and career decision-making.



Lola Salami

High School: M.E. Lazerte High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: The Center of Applied Business Research in Energy and Environment, Alberta School of Business

Project Title: Effects of U.S. Tariffs and Alberta's Oil and Gas

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Glenora Rotary Club

Talk about another part of the program that was meaningful to you.

Lunch times by the CCIS Starbucks is one of the things I miss the most. On the days we didn't have any PD session planned, a couple of us would just meet by the Starbucks and talk about and do anything. One lunch that I truly reminisce about was the time we just started playing Roblox and cringing at our username. This was when I really felt like wow, I'm going to miss these girls.

Say thank you to someone who had an impact on you this summer.

I would just like to thank everyone who worked to make this summer a great experience, whether it was behind the scenes or not. As well, the entire SRP cohort for putting in so much effort to come together so passionately about STEM, and working hard to make each other's summer experience one to remember. There are no words to describe how life-changing this experience is because it's truly just in the people.

Bethany Sey

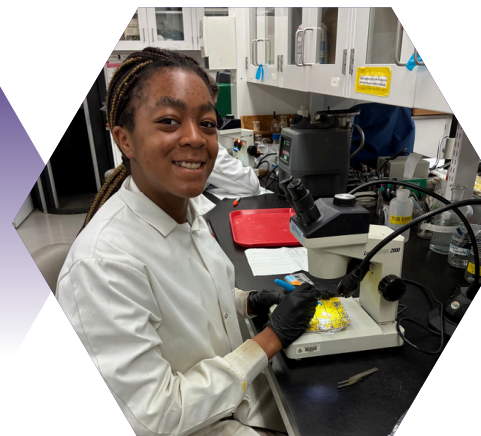
High School: Holy Trinity Catholic High School

Town: Fort McMurray, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Root of the Issue: Correlations as a Tool of Proactive Pest Control

Supporter: Canada Summer Jobs & WISEST Industry Alliance



Describe a Professional Development session that you gained new insight or learned from. What will you take away from it into the future?

The PD session on what to expect in one's first year of university really had an impact on me because I'd been taking post-secondary far too lightly. I suppose I had always thought university would just be "High School 2", and that I'd get through it the same way I always had. Here, I learned how important it is not to get complacent, and to always stay on top of my time.

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

My WISEST experience was everything to me because I felt an inherent sense of belonging. For one, I was surrounded by other high achievers, which encouraged me to work to the best of my ability. I also appreciated how our shared values created a culture of inclusion, because I never once felt like I would be rejected or cast aside for who I am.



Kaylee Skolarchuk

High School: F.G. Miller Jr/Sr High School

Town: County of St. Paul, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: 4D-Printed Shape-Memory Polyurethane: Infill Density Effects on Shape Recovery Toward Passive Thermal Ventilation

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Faculty of Engineering

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

Don't be scared to take chances here, there are no failures in research; only learning opportunities. Everyone you meet here only wants for you to grow, and asking for help or admitting you are stuck is a huge part of this growth.

Say thank you to someone who had an impact on you this summer.

I want to thank my Resident Advisor, both for putting up with all of us, and for being so eager to take us on these awesome adventures. She was stuck dealing with a bunch of teens for six whole weeks but I don't think anyone could have done it better, be it cracking a joke or lending an ear when needed, I know she deserves a sincere thank you.

Sophia Wirtz

High School: McNally Composite High School

Town: Edmonton, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science

Project Title: Vascular Pits and Grooves in Bird Beaks

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Faculty of Science



Tell us about your favourite tour (lab or industry) and why it stood out for you.

My favourite tour was getting to see Jaime Wong's fluid dynamics lab. I thought that it would mostly be math-focused since it was engineering, but it gave me a much deeper insight into how something that seemed exclusive to engineering like fluid dynamics could be applicable to all aspects of science, even palaeontology. This tour made me realize that no matter what field you go into in STEM, there are so many options and overlaps between different areas.

Describe your favourite social event. Why was this your favourite?

My favourite social event was definitely paint night. As an introvert, it was a nice way to relax and chat with other people in the program without having everyone's attention on you, and it ended off the social events nicely before the See Ya Later since we all made something to take home as a memento of the fun times. It was also fun to see everyone in the program's unique art styles.



Aella Ziai

High School: Sundre High School

Town: Sundre, Alberta

Lab Placement: School of Public Health

Project Title: The Role of Music and Community in Inspiring Youth Action Against Climate Change

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & Andrea Macyk-Davey

What was the Celebration of Research and/or the See Ya Later like for you?

The Celebration of Research and the See Ya Later were both exciting, yet bittersweet. The See Ya Later was a super fun event to commemorate all of the friendships we made during the SRP, and it was a reminder that we weren't ever going to forget the connections we made. At the COR, getting to finally present my hard worked research to people was definitely a moment of pride for me, yet the idea that it was coming to an end was really sad. Both events reminded me that the SRP was an unforgettable experience.

What is something you want future SRP students to know?

Whatever you do here, whether you don't think it will have an impact, or you don't enjoy it, just know that it's important. The work my cohort did this summer was filled with a vast array of impact projects, and what I learned is that our research will help someone, even if we didn't think it will at first.

Vinny Zimmermann

High School: Bowden Grandview School

Town: Bowden, Alberta

Lab Placement: Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering,
Faculty of Engineering

Project Title: Time Is Money: Development Delays And Systemic Barriers Of
Affordable Housing In Edmonton

Supporters: Canada Summer Jobs & ATCO



Describe how you felt during orientation vs. how you feel now.

Walking into the first day, it was like I had someone else's shoes on. I didn't feel like I belonged there, I wasn't some kid genius or prodigy, I was just me. I had learned over the six weeks that I didn't have to be someone special to be in WISEST, I didn't have to be perfect, I didn't need to be bright. I could just be me, whoever that was, and experience the opportunity I was given. By the end, it was hard to leave the place where I got to be my true and authentic self, the place where I can be smart and dumb at the same time, and the place where I can show my excitement to learn. I will keep being smart, keep being dumb, and keep loving to learn, even though WISEST is over.

Describe the impact finding a like-minded community had for you.

It was like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. In high school, there is something of a hive mind, and those who don't fit in it are ostracised. With WISEST, I got to spend time with people who both thought similarly to me, and were entirely different. This was by far the best aspect of the six weeks, getting a taste of what wait for us at the end of high school.