

MISSISSAUGA / ST. GEORGE / SCARBOROUGH

University of Toronto

GAZINE



Mathew Okwoli,
co-founder,
Betalife Health, and
Mahlodi Letsie,
founder, **Bare Mind**

IMAGINING A BETTER FUTURE

African entrepreneurs
are working with U of T
to solve some of the continent's
biggest health challenges

SCIENCE OF INJURY

DATE: AUGUST 22

TIME: 9:12 A.M.

CAMPUS: ST. GEORGE

Why are some athletes more prone to injuries than others?

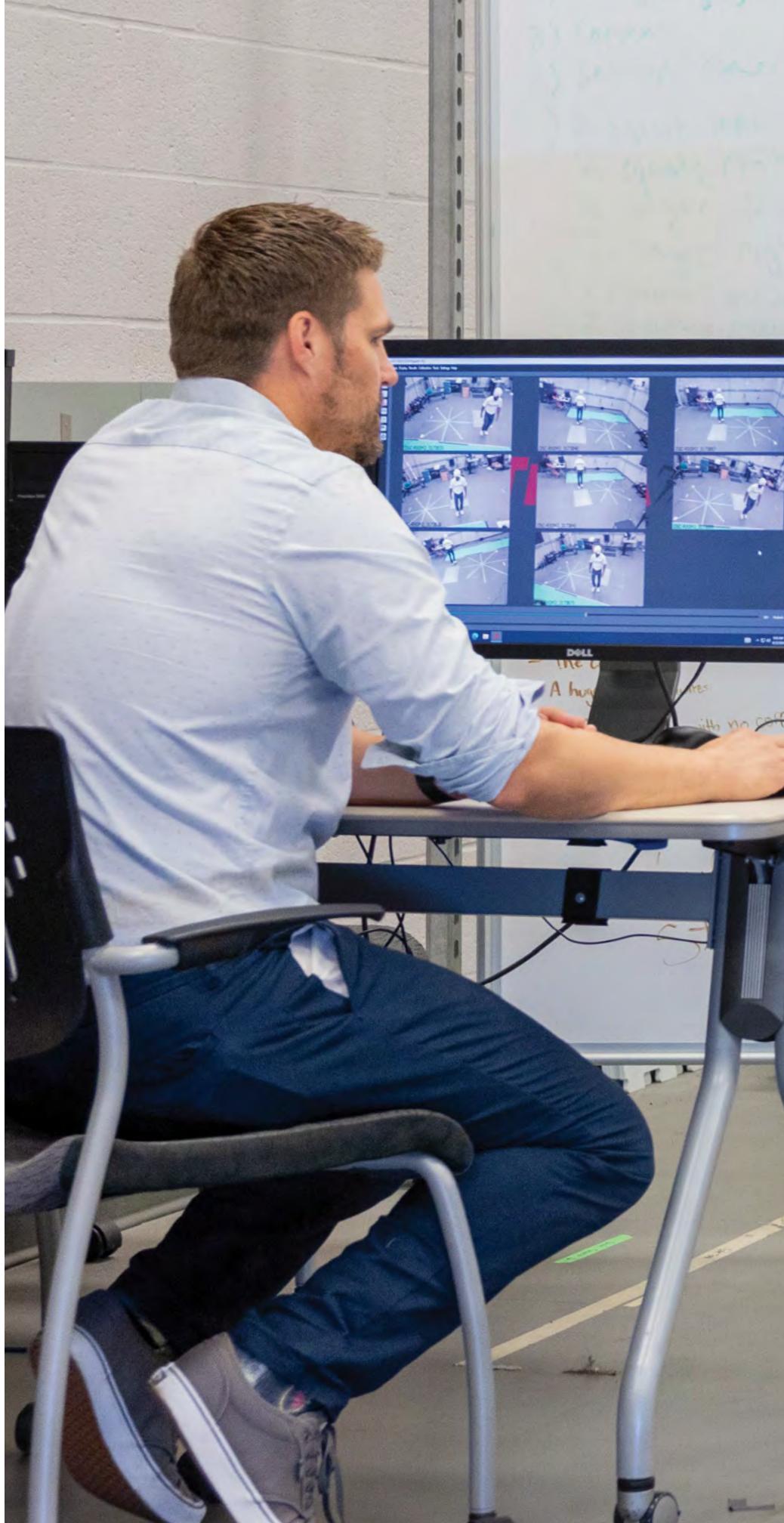
It's a question that Timothy Burkhart used to ponder as a young NBA fan. Now, as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, he's seeking answers through research.

"Is it some way they're moving? Is there a vulnerability there?"

In his Biomechanics of Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Lab, Burkhart and his team of graduate students are trying to discover which parts of the body are most likely to fail on whom, and why.

They've been focusing on hips and knees – where athletic injuries most commonly occur – and, more recently, wrists. As part of their study, the researchers attach markers to the athletes (including young gymnasts, shown at right), ask them to simulate moves they use frequently in their sport that put the most stress on these joints, and then use motion-capture technology to generate computer models that accurately estimate the forces acting on the joints.

Burkhart hopes his findings will help athletes avoid injury, and, for those who do get injured, lead to better surgical and non-surgical treatments, as well as improved rehab so they can return to playing as soon as possible. "We want to keep athletes safe and healthy," he says. "And, when they're done playing, to be active and pain-free." —Staff





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No im not
Hudson = =

Grew the
skin/Then
skeleton



ds

They'll change
your life :)



PLANT PATROL

DATE: AUGUST 15

TIME: 11:48 A.M.

CAMPUS: SCARBOROUGH

Urban green spaces offer a much-needed oasis, especially in warm city air.

But are some types of vegetation better at keeping these spaces cool? Which ones best attract pollinators such as bees and flies, and encourage native plants to grow?

These are among the questions a team of U of T Scarborough biologists wants to answer through a large, multifaceted research project in the nearby Rouge National Urban Park.

“A lot of climate change models rely on data from weather stations, but this completely ignores microclimates,” says John English (left), a PhD student in Prof. Scott MacIvor’s lab who is leading part of the project. “The temperature in urban green spaces such as parks can differ quite a bit from surrounding areas covered in parking lots or buildings.”

The team, which includes 12 undergraduate students, monitored 15 locations during the summer using ground temperature sensors, camouflaged cameras that can take photos of pollinators as they land on flowers, and aerial drones equipped with thermal cameras.

For another part of the project, researchers are giving drone photos to a computer algorithm to track the presence of dog-strangling vine, an invasive plant. They hope to develop a system that can track invasive plant species more effectively, so conservation authorities can remove them quickly.

—Don Campbell



PHOTOGRAPH BY COLE BURSTON

NEXT LEVEL

DATE: AUGUST 14

TIME: 3:15 P.M.

CAMPUS: MISSISSAUGA

Occupational therapist Hadijat Muftau-Lediju tries out “The Cutie,” a game that teaches ICU visitors how not to spread germs. The augmented reality program, designed at Yale School of Medicine, was one of the many teaching innovations on display at Serious Play, a games-and-learning conference held this past summer at U of T Mississauga.

More than 300 scholars attended the event to hear about pedagogical applications for gaming, including how to use the classic role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons to encourage problem solving, and Minecraft, an online game, to connect students with Indigenous traditions.

“Play is one way that nature incentivizes our species to learn,” says Paul Darvasi, who lectures at OISE on games and learning and is the conference’s executive director. “Children learn through play. It’s a hyper-motivated way for them to engage in practices that are going to prepare them for participation in society.”

Attendees also learned ways to combine gaming and learning in medical care: to treat anxiety, simulate pediatric treatment and even how to use a board game called “Exit Matters” to help start end-of-life conversations.

UTM offers a program in game studies and is home to the Syd Bolton Collection, Canada’s largest video game collection.

—Kate Martin

Back where it all began.

Our U of T days were full of new experiences, and Alumni Reunion 2025 is a chance to create more. Join us next spring to catch up with friends, meet new people and learn something cool together. It's five days of tri-campus fun, including events at your college or faculty. We can't wait to see you at the biggest alumni gathering of the year.

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ON THE COVER



Entrepreneurs Mathew Okwoli and Mahlodi Letsie participated in U of T's African Impact Challenge this past summer (p. 18). Photographer Duane Cole caught up with them at the Jackman Law Building after they attended an event hosted by the university's health innovation hub, H2i.



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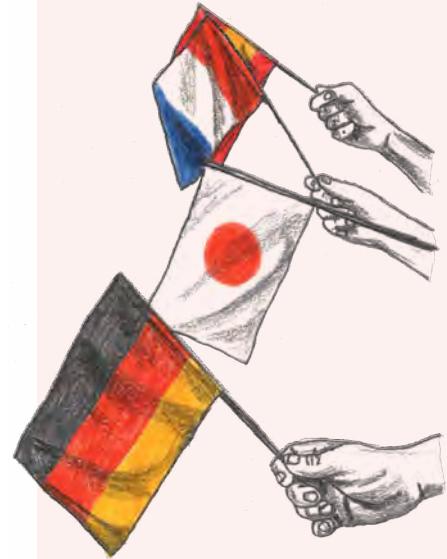
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“Surely a chatbot’s intelligent response to a prompt to argue that the Parkland, Florida, shooting was faked would be to reply that ‘the suggestion is disingenuous and hurtful’ and refuse to make the argument.”

—ROSS EDDIE, TORONTO

Have you had — or would you like to have — a study abroad experience?



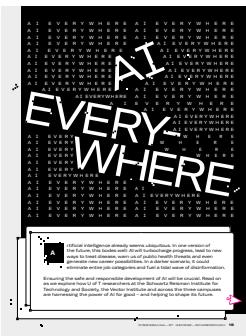
79%
Yes

21%
No

U of T students expressed strong interest in having an international study experience, though only a small number – six of the 100 we polled – had actually completed one. This could be a case of demand exceeding supply, or students simply not being aware of the opportunities available to them. Still, U of T’s Centre for International Experience reports that some 4,100 students travelled abroad in 2023 as part of an academic program, exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Asked in our poll for their preferred destination, one-quarter of students who said they would like to study abroad chose the U.K. and the U.S. The most popular non-English-speaking countries were Japan, Germany, Italy and France.

This highly unscientific poll of 100 U of T students was conducted across the three campuses in June and July.

ILLUSTRATION BY (LEFT) SEBA CESTARO, (RIGHT) DAVID SPARSHOTT



AI everywhere

Our Spring 2024 issue featured several articles about how AI is transforming everything from health care to music – and how to ensure it serves humanity’s best interests.

I am a practicing physician in a small Ontario town. The cost of maintaining an efficient and modern office is rising yearly,

and yet we are not free to raise the rates we charge. Hence, there is no way to generate income to offset these rising costs, and new technologies such as AI (with all the potential noted in the article “Healing Power”) are not available. So, how can these brilliant and useful innovations be incorporated into the general practice of medicine?

DR. GARY MAGEE

BA 1961 VICTORIA, MD 1965
DWIGHT, ONTARIO

Your story, “A Global Hub for Safe AI,” about efforts by U of T researchers to make sure that AI does as it is intended, and works for the good of humanity, was deeply reassuring. I am so proud to be a U of T graduate.

ODETTE ISKANDER, BAsc 1971
CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO



Pregnant, and disabled

Our Spring 2024 issue included a story about U of T Scarborough professor Hilary Brown's research showing that pregnant women with disabilities experience significant challenges with our health-care system.

Thank you for this article. I was a pediatric physiotherapist, now retired. I wasn't aware of these statistics and hadn't thought about this issue. I agree more is needed to be done to support all who wish to have children.

KATHY PAJUNEN,

BScPT 1984
COURTICE, ONTARIO

Canada's first computer

We looked back to the dawn of the information era for a story about the construction – at U of T – of Canada's very first computer.

This is good and important work! U of T's achievements such as this and many others (including the story of insulin's discovery) should be made visible to students and applicants

Write to us

University of Toronto Magazine welcomes comments at uoft.magazine@utoronto.ca. All comments may be edited for clarity, civility and length.



@uoftmagazine

in promotional material to encourage pride in the university.

MAREK KLEMES, BSc 1981, MSc 1983
KANATA, ONTARIO

More than a course

Our January 2024 digital edition included a profile of Doug Richards, a professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, who teaches a course on healthy living.

I love the sound of this course, but the university level seems too late to introduce it to students. How can rudiments of this course be integrated in all schooling – from kindergarten up? It seems more like a whole philosophy than a one-time course.

SUSAN MADDEAUX
NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

Electric vehicles are only a partial solution

Our Autumn 2023 cover story about electric vehicles continued to elicit comments.

Eliminating gas-powered vehicles is crucial for reducing emissions, but comprehensive climate action must also include transitioning to renewable energy, improving public transportation and adopting sustainable practices across all sectors. Addressing these areas holistically will maximize our efforts to combat climate change.

MICHAEL SWANN,

BSc 1983
NEPEAN, ONTARIO

Interesting topic. Everything has its pros and cons. Saltwater batteries leave no toxic waste when they need to be recycled, and I wonder if it would be possible to use these batteries, or similar ones, in vehicles. It would be great to read an article on this topic, perhaps comparing them to hydrogen-fuelled automobiles.

LAVONNE GARNETT

BMus 1971
NANAIMO, B.C.

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**U OF T
ROSE PATTEN'S
GIFT FOR
LEADERSHIP**

After more than 25 years of service to the U of T community, Rose Patten has completed her second term as chancellor, leaving a legacy of visionary guidance.

"Leadership has been the central theme of her time as chancellor," said President Meric Gertler at a reception honouring Patten.

A major figure in Canada's financial sector, Patten's history with U of T has been defined by her prolific

engagement in, and enhancement of, almost every aspect of university life, Gertler said.

First elected as chancellor in 2018, Patten has presided over 133 convocation ceremonies. In her remarks at the reception, she highlighted the celebration of this life milestone with graduating students and their families as a special privilege of her office. As chancellor, Patten also attended scores of university events.

She is succeeded by Wesley Hall, a business leader and champion of equity, diversity and inclusion.

**UTM
ONE-STOP SHOP
FOR STUDENTS**

Students seeking support can now save time, stress and shoe leather thanks to a new 'one-stop shop' for services catering to them.

Located on the main floor of the Davis Building, the Student Services Hub brings together student-focused services such as the Career Centre, the International Education Centre, and Accessibility Services. Previously, they were spread throughout the building.

"It reinforces UTM's commitment to offer an 'any door

is the right door' approach for accessing student support programs," says Mark Overton, UTM's dean of student affairs and assistant principal, student services.

The hub offers students many ways to access support, including self-help resources and kiosks, one-on-one and group peer help, as well as professionally guided individual and group support. The space features a large, central welcome desk surrounded by a mix of shared, open and private workstations.

**UTSC
LINDA JOHNSTON
NAMED PRINCIPAL**

Professor Linda Johnston has been appointed principal of U of T Scarborough and vice-president of U of T for a five-year term.

A renowned nursing researcher, Johnston takes over from Professor Wisdom Tetley, who was named president and vice-chancellor of Carleton University earlier this year.

Johnston, who was dean of U of T's Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing from 2014 to 2023, has close ties to U of T Scarborough

through the creation of the Scarborough Academy of Medicine and Integrated Health. She has also served as acting principal of U of T Scarborough since January.

Johnston says she is looking forward to continuing to work with the U of T Scarborough community. "I have been tremendously impressed by the scale and rigour of U of T Scarborough's academic mission and commitment to student success," she says.



TOWARD A MORE CIVIL DISCOURSE

Geopolitical events over the past 12 months have deepened divisions and heightened tensions in society. As is often the case in such times, universities are among the institutions in which this has been especially visible – and the University of Toronto has been no exception.

In fact, the problem of polarization in society has been building for some time, due to increasing levels of distrust and intolerance – along with the isolating effects of social media and a once-in-a-century pandemic. In the midst of it, our capacity to engage in dialogue across differences, and our interpersonal and social skills in general, have been impaired. For democracies the challenge is nothing less than existential.

We will continue responding to immediate concerns, but we also have work to do in the longer term. Ultimately, we need to rebuild a culture of civil

discourse, in which mutual understanding is possible and even the most contentious of issues can be discussed rationally and peacefully.

This goes right to the heart of our academic mission – the advancement of knowledge and truth, and the education of responsible citizens. We must welcome free and open debate, and encourage people both to challenge the status quo and be open to being challenged on their own views. In all of this we must remain staunchly committed to freedom of speech as well as fostering mutual respect. We simply can't have one without the other.

This balance is reflected in U of T's Statement on Freedom of Speech, a policy that has served us well since it was approved by the Governing Council more than three decades ago. "[A]ll members of the university must have as a prerequisite freedom of speech and expression, which means the right to examine, question, investigate, speculate, and comment on any issue without reference to prescribed doctrine, as well as the right to criticize the university and society at large. The purpose of the university also depends upon an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. Every member should be able to work, live, teach and learn in a university free from discrimination and harassment."

To that end, last January, U of T appointed Randy Boyagoda, professor of English, vice-dean undergraduate of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and a novelist and former president of PEN Canada, as provostial advisor on civil discourse – the first such position at a Canadian university (see p. 33). During the current academic year, he is leading a working group that will consult with members of the university community, collaborate with tri-campus leaders in developing programming, and create a plan to promote the capacities and sensibilities needed for civil discourse.

Restoring these practices is a shared responsibility, requiring a personal commitment from each of us – faculty, staff, librarians, students and alumni. I encourage everyone to take part in this crucial, collective effort.

MERIC GERTLER



Breathing life into critical research.

A bequest from **Dr. Peter K. Strangway** (BASc '63, MASc '64, PhD '66) will accelerate research into the rare lung condition that took his life in 2023. The Dr. Peter K. Strangway Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Research Fund aims to ease the suffering of others facing diagnosis. Dr. Strangway didn't live to see a cure. But hope survives him through a transformational gift to U of T in his will.

To set up a bequest, contact Michelle Osborne at michelle.osborne@utoronto.ca or 416-978-3811 or visit uoft.me/giftplanning



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U of T's global community is one of the university's greatest strengths.

Read how U of T students and faculty are working with peers and community partners around the world to address some of the world's most pressing issues.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DUANE COLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KYLE ELLINGSON

Startups with heart

African health entrepreneurs are working with U of T to build their businesses and — they hope — save lives

PROGRAM African Impact Challenge | **LAUNCHED** 2016 | **MISSION** To enable African innovators to use technology to build businesses that will tackle the continent's biggest challenges



MATHEW OKWOLI, A SOFTWARE engineer, has more than a passing familiarity with the shortcomings of Nigeria's sprawling blood supply system. A few years ago, an aunt of his died during surgery because the hospital where she was being treated didn't have enough blood. In the aftermath of this family tragedy, Okwoli began to investigate why it occurred. "We discovered that in various hospitals, they don't have the right facilities for blood storage, or can't connect to blood banks around them," he says.



Mathew Okwoli
co-founded Betalife
Health to give
hospitals in Nigeria
timely information
about blood supplies



These revelations seeded an idea: could he build a software platform that would give users – hospitals and physicians – access to the locations of the closest blood banks with matching supplies?

The result is Betalife Health, which Okwoli, who is chief technology officer, co-founded with a colleague. Its aim is to create a subscription-based software platform, also accessible via an app, that not only gives health-care providers timely information about blood supplies but will eventually predict demand using AI that draws on health data, such as disease prevalence.

The company also plans to offer services that would enable users to save for future health expenses and book appointments to donate blood. In a nation of 230 million people with very low levels of donation – the annual need is two million pints and only 500,000 are donated – Betalife’s solution aspires to be a lifesaver. “Access to blood is very, very low, and demand is very high,” Okwoli says.

Betalife was one of nine African startups invited to a pitch session at the Jackman Law Building on the St. George campus this past June. The participants belonged to the third cohort of entrepreneurs enrolled in the university’s African Impact Challenge, a business incubator at U of T Scarborough. Each startup was given three minutes to make their business case to an audience of potential investors and strategic partners.

The incubator is, in turn, part of U of T’s Africa Health Collaborative – a project funded by the

Mastercard Foundation that includes a three-month residency at U of T. During this period, Okwoli and his peers worked with U of T professors who specialize in entrepreneurship. They

attended local tech conferences and made connections within the Toronto area's dynamic startup scene. "These visits have provided me with insights into industry best practices and innovations," says Okwoli.

Osas Obano, the program manager for African Entrepreneurship and Partnerships at U of T Scarborough, says the African Impact Challenge aims to empower people in low-income countries to develop their own solutions to the challenges they face. This is more effective and sustainable, he notes, than providing foreign aid. "Instead of donating medical supplies, we support health-care startups. Each year, we go to African communities and look for innovators who are building good solutions," he says. "We want to know how their innovation is helping health care become more accessible and more affordable. We also want them to think about how to expand their work beyond the African continent to other parts of the world."

"Our contributions to this collaborative are in the service of African development, for Africans by Africans," says Joseph Wong, a professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and U of T's vice-president, international. The benefits, he adds, flow in both directions, with U of T

attracting students, graduates and African research collaborations via the connections forged through this program. "This really exposes us to these new opportunities."

LAST WINTER, BETALIFE'S PLATFORM, WHICH THE company is developing through partnership with African health ministries and other agencies, won an AI-based startup award in Algeria. The firm has raised \$180,000 in investments and grants and has been looking at expanding across Africa as well as India, which faces similar issues.

Another presenter from the June pitch session, Mahlodi Letsie, laid out the ideas behind a mental health and wellness platform called Bare Mind. The technology embedded in Bare Mind's system asks users to provide personal information online or through an app, and then offers programs in areas such as stress management, anxiety, mindfulness and emotional resilience.

"What we're focusing on," she explains, "is how to create a holistic platform that houses both mental health practitioners such as psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers, but also helps people with nutrition, fitness and sleep. We're creating a wellness tracker powered by AI to essentially gamify the experience by giving people access to rewards as they set and surpass their goals."

As with Okwoli, a personal experience inspired Letsie to establish her company. During her undergraduate degree at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, she battled with anxiety and imposter syndrome, and then saw a family member stricken with more debilitating mental health problems that cost this relative her job. She also lost her own job in 2020 due to the pandemic, adding to her own stress.

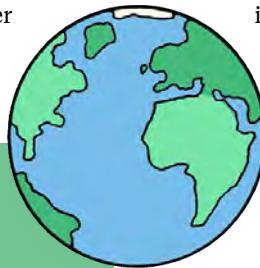
Stigma around mental illness is a big problem in South Africa (as it is in many countries). And Letsie says there are few culturally appropriate online resources for South Africans dealing with mental health struggles. "In many African languages, we don't have sufficient vocabulary to articulate mental distress," she says.

IN 2021, LETSIE PUT A MARKETING career on hold to pursue her startup idea. She attended an executive program run by the Harvard Business School and decided to reach out to one of the professors for advice. He encouraged her to pitch people online. "During COVID, you couldn't go meet people in person," she says. "So, it was just me using the internet in my childhood bedroom, saying I'm an entrepreneur, but kind of faking it because I had no idea what I was doing."

One of those cold calls was to a global AI company that builds natural language processing software. She eventually connected with a software engineer who specializes in translation for African languages and subsequently signed on to help develop Bare Mind's platform.

Through her relentless networking and participation in other incubator programs, Letsie was able to raise some money, cobble together a small team of part-time coders who shared her vision, and earlier this year land a contract to create wellness and mental health content for the employees of Adcorp, a large, publicly listed South African company. "If it sticks, it sticks," she thought at the time. It stuck.

The nine firms that presented at the June session were all looking for different kinds of assistance, beyond what goes with being selected to participate in the African Impact Challenge (the



"IN MANY AFRICAN LANGUAGES WE DON'T HAVE SUFFICIENT VOCABULARY TO ARTICULATE MENTAL DISTRESS"



Earlier this year, Mahlodi Letsie, founder of Bare Mind, landed a contract to create wellness and mental health content for the employees of Adcorp, a large, publicly listed South African company

ventures receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000). Some were seeking conventional financing, while others were pursuing grants or, in the case of Letsie, strategic partnerships.

One investor in the audience, James Fraser, was looking for potential candidates with a powerful idea, a sustainable business model and an effective team. Fraser is the president and CEO of Madiro.org, a health-oriented investing fund established in 2021 with \$10 million in seed funding. (Madiro is an “impact investor,” meaning the fund works with

companies that produce social or environmental benefits). Madiro has invested in nine startups and seven social enterprises – all in Africa’s rapidly expanding health-technology space. Fraser says U of T’s Africa Health Collaborative and the African Impact Challenge “will be a significant and important pipeline of innovation for us.”

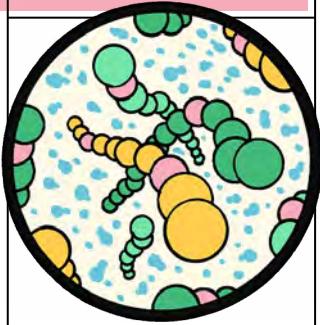
Joseph Wong says the Challenge program is rapidly gaining traction among African startups, and now attracts hundreds of applicants every year – many more, in fact, than the university can currently accommodate. He points out that the graduates of the first two cohorts have built up their own network, whose tendrils extend to the investors drawn to pitch sessions like the one held in June, to U of T’s academics, and to entrepreneurship hubs in startup-friendly jurisdictions such as Rwanda, Ghana and South Africa. The goal, however, is to centre these entrepreneurship networks in Africa, in partnership with African institutions, not at U of T.

As Fraser points out, the startups going through the program will be well positioned to capitalize on Africa’s young population. “It’s the future in many ways,” he says. Yet entrepreneurs such as Okwoli and Letsie aren’t only focused on Africa and its burgeoning markets. Indeed, as both are eager to point out, the problems their respective startups are tackling are hardly unique to Africa.

“I want to find ways to position Bare Mind as a global business, given that mental health is a global phenomenon,” says Letsie. Adds Okwoli: “Our mission is to create a global solution that ensures hospitals and patients have timely access to blood.”

On a personal level, Letsie says she found that plugging into a community of fellow entrepreneurs at U of T was transformative. “Being able to tap into a vibrant community of brilliant founders who are dedicated to building solutions for the benefit of Africa and the world at large has been nothing short of inspirational.” —**John Lorinc**

ASIA



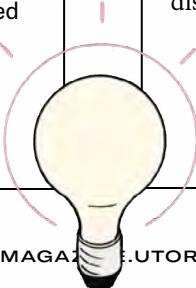
FINDING THE RIGHT ANTIBIOTIC

Health-care researchers at a hospital in the Philippines are working with the lab of Cynthia Goh, a U of T chemistry professor, to test a prototype of a diagnostic device the lab invented that monitors the growth of bacteria – and measures its resistance to antibiotics. It’s designed to help physicians choose the best medication for managing infection.

The new instrument, called BactiTrack, significantly lowers the time required to make this determination, allowing patients to receive the appropriate medication quickly.

BactiTrack is also inexpensive, making it suitable for low-resource settings. Researchers hope the tool will help reduce overuse of antibiotics – a problem that leads to the increased prevalence of drug-resistant microbes.

—Alyx Dellamonica



A blueprint for prosperity

Researchers across U of T are banding together to help the United Nations meet its 17 sustainable development goals

PROGRAM SDGs@UofT | **LAUNCHED** 2023 | **MISSION** To bring together the entire university and external partners to create a global powerhouse of knowledge and action on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals



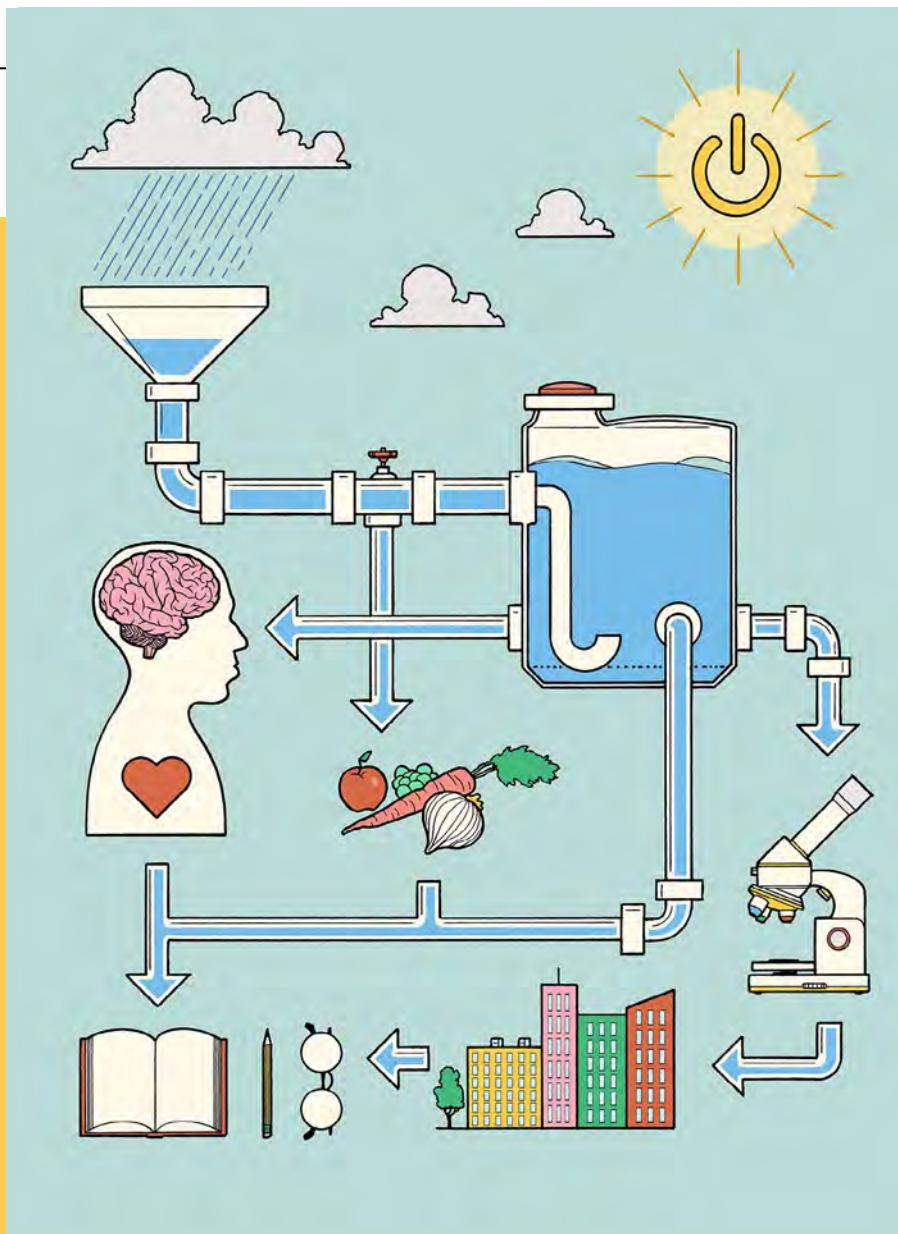
EARLY IN HER ACADEMIC CAREER, Amy Bilton, a mechanical engineering professor at U of T, worked on an innovative way to remove salt from well water in the Yucatan region of Mexico. The technology made the water fresh enough to drink. But in many projects, she observed, the equipment eventually fell into disrepair because the local community was unable to maintain it after the engineers left. For Bilton, whose parents worried about the water levels in the well on their own farm, it was a lesson in the limitations of one discipline solving complex problems.

Today, Bilton includes a sociologist and urban planner on her team to help understand how people use the salt-removal systems that engineers install. The social scientists survey local residents to learn

about barriers to using the equipment – a lack of technical know-how, for example, or safety fears that could be addressed with information and trust-building.

“You can develop the best technology in the world, but who cares if people don’t want to use it?” notes Bilton, who directs U of T’s Water and Energy Research Lab. “Engineers are great at developing technology, but social scientists make sure we’re building something that works for the local community. It’s a totally different skill set.”

Recently, the team installed rainwater-collection systems in Guadalajara, Mexico, and learned



the Global South. Almost half the world’s population lives without safely managed sanitation. Bilton’s team estimates that in Guadalajara, poor people typically spend as much as 10 per cent of their income on water.

This is why Bilton has teamed up with a surprisingly diverse group of researchers at U of T who are all working to advance or study the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals – including number six: access to clean water and sanitation for all. The goals are a kind of blueprint for peace and prosperity around the world, and the newly formed “SDGs@UofT” serves as a nexus for the entire university community to access each other’s expertise and ideas. The group is based at U of T Scarborough but engages faculty from all three campuses. Researchers include a Shakespeare scholar and a media studies professor, along with engineers, physicians and social scientists.

“All of the sustainable development goals are equally important, and they are designed to be tackled together because we need to stop pitting food against water, or the environment against development,” says Nicoda Foster, the initiative’s associate director. “Instead, we need to develop solutions that work on many levels. I believe every single faculty and staff member, student and alum at U of T has a role to play if we are to have any hope of meeting our targets.”

Foster has a personal connection to the development goals she helps to advance. As a child visiting her grandmother in rural Jamaica, she took her turn waiting in line with a bucket at the community’s only water pipe. That experience propelled her into a career as a public health researcher with a strong interest in equity, and then to the sustainable development goals.

But Foster has no illusions

through follow-up surveys that local uptake was good. This summer, sociologist Yu Chen, a research associate at U of T’s Centre for Global Engineering, and Nidhi Subramanyam, an assistant professor of geography and planning, returned with a follow-up survey to learn why the technology is working for this community when similar projects around the world fall flat. In

particular, they are interested in knowing how people have adapted the designs to their own particular needs.

Bilton and her colleagues belong to a growing group of researchers who see water – too little and too much – as deeply tied to other global challenges, such as food insecurity or climate change. They also recognize that these problems tend to have the greatest impact on the world’s lowest-income regions. According to the United Nations, 2.2 billion people around the world lacked access to safe drinking water in 2022 – most of these in

about the challenges involved, particularly after the COVID pandemic. All UN member states have agreed to meet the 17 goals by 2030 – but few experts believe it will happen. To achieve the water goal, for example, the UN estimates that the pace of annual progress would have to accelerate by 600 per cent. Foster believes that tapping into the expertise of university researchers around the world will help.

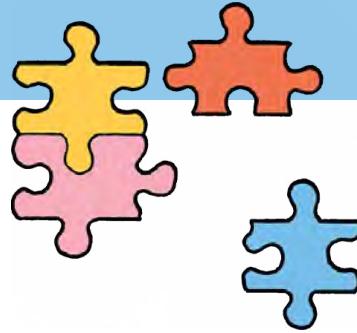
Erica Di Ruggiero, an associate professor at U of T's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, serves as the initiative's inaugural research director. She is passionate about connecting researchers from the humanities with the earth, health and social sciences to tackle not just one or two, but four or five of the UN goals at once. This work is guided by a growing realization that the world's wickedest problems, such as climate change, hunger and poverty, didn't arise in a vacuum and won't be solved in isolation. They understand that solving these problems means tackling the deep inequities that seed them.

"The problems we're addressing aren't necessarily new, but they need new solutions in the current global political and economic architecture," says Di Ruggiero, an expert in global health and health policy. "We can't go back to the same well for the same kinds of solutions for complex problems that are not just technical, but social and economic."

ANOTHER AFFILIATE, CARMEN

Logie, a professor at U of T's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, has observed the ripple effect of water insecurity. She has seen the way it can exacerbate community and household violence, gender inequity, infectious diseases – and sometimes end the dream of education. Logie, whose research focuses on HIV, is currently

“ENGINEERS ARE GREAT AT DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGY, BUT SOCIAL SCIENTISTS MAKE SURE WE’RE BUILDING SOMETHING THAT WORKS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. IT’S A DIFFERENT SKILL SET”



studying ways to prevent sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy among teens in Uganda's Bidi Bidi refugee settlement, and in another Kenyan refugee settlement stricken by drought.

In the camps, there's never enough water. Efforts to find it put people in danger. In one of the bleaker scenarios, a menstruating girl who wishes to attend school the next day might leave her zone of the camp after dark to look for water to wash herself or her uniform. She is then at increased risk for sexual assault, with its ensuing mental health effects and infection risks. If she becomes pregnant, her chance of schooling is likely over, says Logie.

This example alone shows the connection between water insecurity and at least half a dozen other UN goals. And it's the reason a social work researcher like Logie is so focused on water.

"Young people talk about the concept of suffering and how water is life," she says. "Sanitation is part of this. When we ask young people in refugee camps what they want, sometimes it's as simple as a \$5 lock on a latrine to give them privacy. But then, how do you stop snakes from dropping into those latrines so people aren't afraid to use them? That requires a totally different expertise."

Last year, Logie attended the UN's World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden. The conference was full of engineers working on technical solutions to water shortages, and they were surprised to see a social work researcher.

"It left me wondering how we get these different disciplines to talk to each other," she recalls. "How can we get even just the people researching water

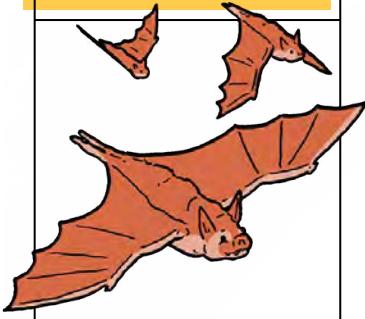
and health goals to work together? If we know there is going to be a drought or flooding, how can we ensure that people living with HIV can maintain access to their medications and avoid missing life-saving doses?"

Recently, Logie took a welcome step in that direction by joining U of T's Sustainable Development Goals initiative. She hopes to meet climate change experts or people working on ways to manage menstruation that don't require water.

For Foster, Di Ruggiero and the other researchers, the UN's goals are not sacrosanct – certainly not immune from criticism of priorities. But they are a way to organize the world around the biggest challenges to peace and prosperity, equity and justice. And they help show that these challenges are connected to each other and to everyone. The clock is ticking, and the stakes are high.

"When I think about these goals, I see my past," says Foster. "I also see the present because there are so many other children lining up at water pipes right now with their little buckets. And I see the vision for the future, because this should not be." —Heidi Singer

**NORTH AMERICA
AND CARIBBEAN**



BAT SIGNALS

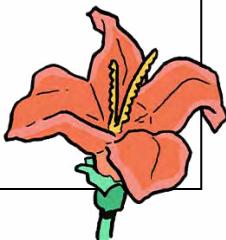
Experts believed the Jamaican flower bat was so critically endangered that a mere 500 remained in existence worldwide, in a single cave.

But an international research team, led by Phillip Oelbaum, a PhD student in biology at U of T Scarborough, has discovered the elusive animal in two more locations.

The species was so rarely seen that it was declared extinct until 2010, when a small colony was found in Jamaica's Stony Hill Cave. The identification of two new breeding grounds raises hopes for the creature's longer-term survival, Oelbaum says.

He and a colleague at the University of the West Indies now plan to search for the bat at 30 more sites, and to study its habitat, behaviour and diet.

—Don Campbell



PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXIS MACDONALD

Open Minds

U of T deepens its commitment to offering a truly global education



“International students bring different perspectives and lived experiences, and this adds to the kind of learning that all our students can engage in,” says Joseph Wong, U of T’s vice-president, international



BY MANY MEASURES, U OF T IS one of Canada’s most global universities – three in 10 students come from outside the country.

At the same time, the world geopolitical situation is becoming increasingly fraught, and the Canadian government recently took steps to reduce the number of international students arriving in Canada.

To sort through what this means for the university, and how U of T can continue to provide students with an outstanding global education, *University of Toronto Magazine* editor Scott Anderson spoke with Professor Joseph Wong, U of T’s vice-president, international.

In recent years, the number of international students at U of T has grown significantly. What do you see as the benefits of having a more global campus community?

As a professor, I can say with certainty that international students enliven classroom conversations. They bring different perspectives and lived experiences, and this adds to the kind of learning *all* our students can engage in. As well, many of our domestic students are first-generation Canadian. Some don't speak English as a first language at home. So, we *already* have an extraordinarily diverse student body, and we are adding to this by enrolling excellent international students. More broadly, international students contribute to the local economy while they're here, and as alumni they become extraordinary ambassadors for the university – and by extension for the city of Toronto and all of Canada.

What do you say to those who worry that increasing the number of international students reduces spots at U of T for domestic students?

This doesn't happen! As part of our agreement with the provincial government, we have enrollment "corridors" (or ranges) for domestic

"WE CAN ONLY RECRUIT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IF WE CAN SUPPORT THEM. WE HAVE A COMMITMENT TO ALL OUR STUDENTS TO ENSURE THEY ARE IN A POSITION TO SUCCEED"

students. These spots for domestic students are essentially guaranteed and are not affected at all by the number of international students we recruit to U of T. International students are recruited *on top of* those enrollment corridors for domestic students.

Is there a "right mix" of domestic and international students?

The bottom line is we can only recruit international students if we can support them. We have a commitment to all of our students – both domestic and international – to ensure they are in a

Needed: Three Alumni



The College of Electors is seeking candidates who reflect the diversity of the university's alumni, will enrich the U of T community with their perspectives, experiences and connections, and actively participate in the governance of the university.

The *Call for Applications* for three alumni governor seats on the Governing Council – the senior body that oversees the university's academic, business and student affairs – will open at noon on Thursday, November 14, 2024.

Each seat is for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2025 (the three incumbents are eligible to stand for re-election).

The deadline is December 12, 2024. The 2025 Alumni Governor Application Form and Instruction Guide will be available as of November 14, 2024 at uoft.me/alumni-governors-application

position to succeed. We can only enroll as many as we can properly support, in terms of access to housing, health services, finances. We have plans to build new housing for both domestic and international students, but this takes time and we do not want to bring in more international students than we can support. Right now, I think we have a good balance. But this could change as our resources change.

Earlier this year, the Canadian government announced measures that would significantly reduce the number of new international students coming to Canada.

How does this affect U of T?

We hope to enroll roughly the same number of international students this year as last year, which is remarkable – and a testament to U of T’s global profile and ranking as one of the world’s top 25 universities. So, I think we’re going to weather this reasonably well compared to other universities. I don’t think this kind of measure is good for how international students perceive Canada, though. We’ve had to assure international students that they remain welcome in Canada and specifically at U of T.

What global trends over the next few years do you think will most affect U of T’s ability to recruit top international students?

The Canadian brand has always been one of our competitive advantages. Canada is seen as safe, diverse and multicultural. These characteristics resonate with an international audience. We saw, for instance, the so-called “Trump bump” in applications in 2016-17 when the U.S. looked like it was becoming more insular. I worry that the government’s measure signals that international students are not welcome in Canada.

American, British and Australian schools have traditionally been our main competitors. But China, one of the largest sources of international students, has a growing number of universities ranked globally in the top 25, 50 or 100 and a declining birth rate. And so, the number of students leaving China is beginning to decrease, and we’re now competing more against Chinese universities for these students.

Tuition is higher for international students and, of course, they and their parents are concerned about prospects for employment. They want assurances that a U of T degree can be leveraged to find a really good job. Thankfully, U of T has successfully invested a great deal in experiential learning and work-integrated learning such as internships, in Canada and abroad, ensuring we remain a top university for employability around the world.

Many students say they would like an international study experience. How is U of T is working to increase these opportunities?

There are a lot of opportunities at U of T, but it can be difficult to find them. So, a few years ago, and for the first time, the university put every international learning experience into a searchable website, making it easier for students to find opportunities that suit them and their learning objectives.

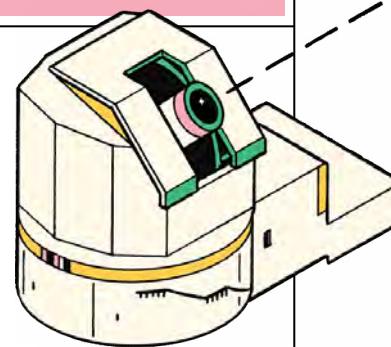
Second, we know that one of the major constraints is financial. And we don’t want international learning to be available only to those who can afford it. So, a few years ago, the university increased needs-based awards from \$1 million to \$3 million annually. We continue to look for ways to reduce financial barriers.

It’s also important to continue to communicate to students why this type of experience is valuable, and to demonstrate to them that this type of global learning is something that will have a positive impact in terms of their well-being, their development – and their job prospects.

And for those students who can’t travel abroad, for whatever reason?

We’ve been thinking about how to facilitate more “global learning” at home. In the past year, more than a thousand U of T students participated in over 100 “global classrooms,” in which they never had to leave Canada to engage with their peers and learn from professors in another part of the world. We want to expand this as a way of generating more interest in studying abroad, and to provide all students with an opportunity for global learning. ●

SOUTH AMERICA



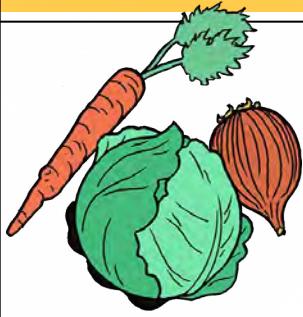
WHAT IS THE COSMOS MADE OF?

The Vera C. Rubin Observatory, nearing completion on a mountaintop in northern Chile, will use the world’s largest digital camera to photograph “transient” objects in the night sky – objects that pop into view, disappear from view, or change position during the telescope’s planned 10-year run.

Renee Hlozek, a professor of astronomy and astrophysics at U of T’s Dunlap Institute – and the Canadian lead on the observatory’s investigation into dark energy – says astronomers will use data from Rubin to study star formation, stellar explosions, the structure of the Milky Way galaxy and the nature of dark matter and dark energy.

“We’ll answer fundamental questions about what our cosmos is made of and how it will change with time,” says Hlozek. —Dan Falk

AFRICA



GARDENS FOR CHANGE

Fikile Nxumalo, an associate professor at OISE, is embarking on community-based research in South Africa to develop climate-smart, Indigenous food gardens in primary schools.

The project builds on previous work in neighbouring Eswatini, in which Nxumalo assembled a group of parents and their children, elders, teachers, and community-based agronomists to discuss the effects of climate change. Out of these discussions came the idea to build school gardens to cultivate Indigenous foods.

By drawing on Western scientific knowledge and the community’s ecological know-how (while also listening to children’s ideas), Nxumalo says this project demonstrated the potential for collaboration to address global warming. “There is knowledge in communities that should be central when designing responses to climate change,” she says. —Staff

Can we build transit better? U of T students in a new course team up with community partners in Pune, India, to solve real-world urban problems

PROGRAM International Multidisciplinary Urban Capstone Project | LAUNCHED 2023 | MISSION To team up students with international community partners to help research and propose solutions to urban challenges



WHEN A PUBLIC TRANSIT PROJECT in Toronto takes years or even decades to materialize (hello, Eglinton Crosstown), it may provoke groans or shrugs – but not surprise. We’ve come to accept

the seemingly endless planning process and construction delays as inevitable.

So, Alec Mak found it inspiring to learn this past February that in Pune, a city of about seven million in Western India, transportation decision-making can happen quite efficiently. Mak, who was then in his final year of an undergraduate degree in civil engineering, was visiting the city for three days as part of the School of Cities’ new International Multidisciplinary Urban Capstone Project.

Mak and four other students worked with leaders of the Pune Municipal Corporation to understand how to better manage traffic congestion and poor air quality arising from rapid urbanization. He learned that action on subway and bus

infrastructure happens relatively swiftly compared to in Canada.

“They have a go-all-in approach to solving transit problems. They try solutions they think will work, versus a lot of the consultation that we do here,” says Mak, who graduated in the spring and now works at a transportation consulting firm.

Participants in the new capstone course, which launched last year with support from the University of Toronto India Foundation, are



final-year undergraduate students from any program. They work in multidisciplinary teams on an urban challenge presented by a global partner. The students research the problem, engage directly with the partner remotely and on site in their country, and develop a prototype of a solution.

Faculty advisor Aditi Mehta, an assistant professor of urban studies, describes the course as a form of experiential, community-engaged learning that prioritizes cooperative problem-solving between the community partner and students. “We’re helping students understand that none of them are experts – that we’re going to lean on what the community organizations are telling us. You might have an idea, and you might have a way of running with it. But you have to be willing to pivot quickly, be flexible, and be open to challenging your own assumptions,” says Mehta, who researches development geared to achieving social change.

Last year, Mehta guided two groups of students (the other focused on how the city manages information). Mak’s team, which consisted of students in urban studies, architecture, international relations and computer science, studied global standards for accessible building design, which helped them understand how to adapt Pune transit stations for users with mobility limitations. They also discussed Pune’s traffic and transportation issues with the city’s IT lead and visited subway and bus stops to observe obstacles to public usage. They used their findings to

develop a digital tool for decision-makers to track human and vehicle movements in the city.

While in India, Mak and his team members also participated in historic walking tours of Pune and Mumbai (where they also spent a few days), and met with local organizations focused on social development, including Swachh Coop, India’s first wholly owned co-operative of self-employed waste-pickers. The students learned that the members’ methods for organizing collection routes, sorting trash and composting organic material have helped improve recycling levels and kept waste out of landfills. Understanding how people in the Global North can draw lessons from the Global South is just one of the outcomes. “I think we can learn a lot from how powerful initiatives like this can be,” says Shreya Shourie, now a fifth-year urban studies and political science student who was part of the information management team.

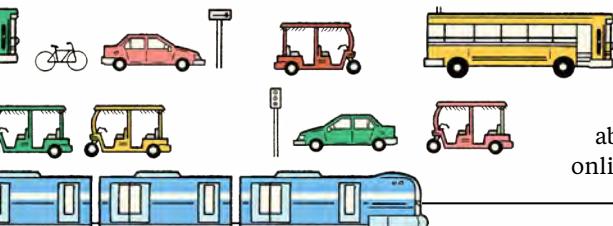
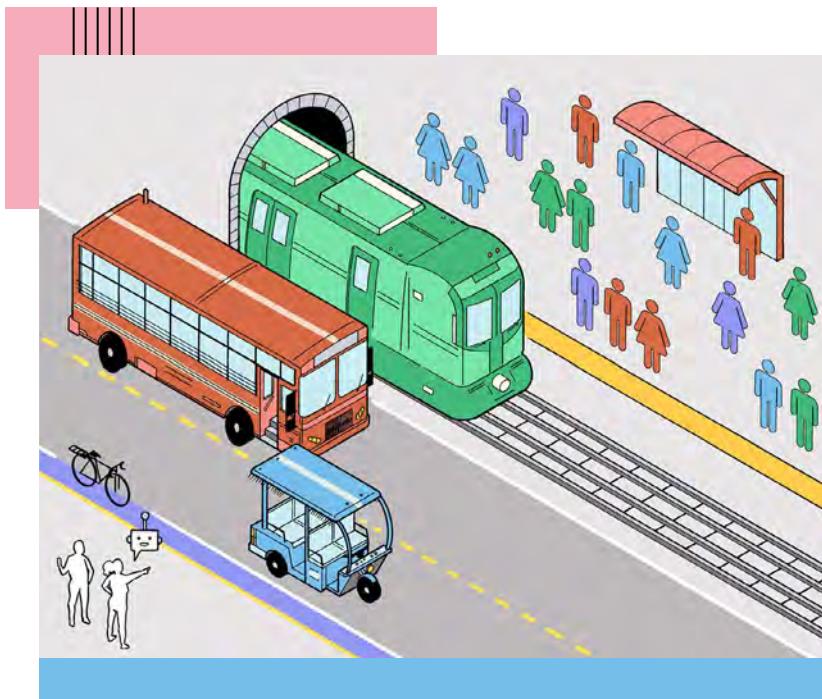
Shourie’s project, which brought together students from sociology, economics,

East Asian Studies and information technology, involved collaborating with Pune city staff to gather and store public records, news stories and social media posts about the city, and make them available online. After consulting with city staff,

policymakers and Pune citizens, and then researching various solutions, the team developed a prototype of an internet archive with a browser-based web tool that had AI capabilities and was accessible to people of all abilities. Both Shourie’s and Mak’s teams presented their findings and recommendations to Pune city officials.

This academic year, participants in the capstone course are working with new community partners in Pune and collaborating with final-year undergraduate students at Ashoka University near Delhi to solve different urban challenges.

Mehta sees the capstone course as aligning with U of T’s broader mission to provide students with meaningful opportunities for global learning and fieldwork. “It helps them broaden their worldview and see other ways of knowing and living. It builds their empathy skills, helps them connect with different types of people and gives them a new sense of confidence.” —**Sharon Aschaiek**



“I saw the sky on fire”

After Russia invaded Ukraine, U of T’s Scholars-at-Risk program helped Vadym Lytvynov follow his dream of becoming a medical illustrator

PROGRAM Scholars-at-Risk | **LAUNCHED** 2000 | **MISSION** To offer bursaries to students or scholars who have recently sought asylum or whose studies or research have been affected by crisis – and give them a safe haven at U of T

In the summer of 2022, Vadym Lytvynov left Ukraine and enrolled in the master of science in biomedical communications program at U of T’s Temerty Faculty of Medicine. He has received support from the university’s Scholars-at-Risk program, which offers bursaries of \$10,000 to undergraduate and graduate students who have recently sought asylum or are from countries experiencing conflict or political turmoil. Here, Lytvynov, who will graduate this fall, tells his story of coming to U of T.



I WOKE UP AT 4 A.M. ON FEBRUARY 24, 2022, to what I thought was a thunderstorm. But when I opened my curtains, I saw the sky on fire. I immediately checked the news on my phone, and I understood

that the thing that people had been talking about for so long had finally happened.

I was living with my parents in our apartment in Kharkiv. I didn’t wake them until 7 a.m., to let them have a last peaceful sleep. I remember going to bed the night before without any bad feelings or anticipation. For several months, there had been rumours about whether the Russians were doing military drills at the border or preparing for an invasion. It was uncertain up to the last moment.

The Russian soldiers and shelling were already close. If you compare it to being in downtown Toronto, the shelling would be at Kipling subway station.



My parents and I spent time that first day in a nearby subway station. The stations were designed during the Soviet period to be bomb shelters. Some people ended up staying in them for six months, but we decided to go home that day, partly because we were concerned about the Russians getting into the subway system. We were also worried about leaving our property vacant.

March was the worst month for Kharkiv. It was very unsafe in the part of the old city where we lived, because there are a lot of administrative buildings that were targeted.

We had electricity, which was wonderful. Sometimes we didn't have water. We gathered snow and turned our bathtub into a reservoir. I decided to eat only one meal a day because I didn't know what would happen next. Later, some post offices started distributing food from humanitarian organizations.

I couldn't just stay home, so I volunteered for the Red Cross, getting donated medical supplies organized and ready to ship across the country. I finished medical school in 2019 and wanted to use my knowledge to help out.

When the invasion began, I wasn't working in medicine. I'd become interested in medical illustration around the time of my residency. I took drawing classes and did design internships, then

got a full-time job as a graphic designer at a pharmaceutical company in Kharkiv.

In early April, my parents and I decided to move to a friend's rental apartment in a small town about 150 kilometres away. I volunteered at the local hospital and soon after accepted temporary employment as a physician. Every evening, I had to study to prepare for the next day. To learn things, I created diagrams and illustrations. It reminded me of my passion for what I now know is called biomedical communications. That's when I applied to the master's program in Toronto.

It was a big, risky move for me to leave everything – my country, my friends, my family. I'm an only child. My parents decided to stay because they have their jobs, their property and my cat, Benjamin – many important things.

I had been accepted into a special program that allows Ukrainians to work and study in Canada. As an international student, I was able to leave Ukraine legally. After crossing the border, I spent a couple of weeks in refugee camps in Europe before arriving in Toronto in August 2022.

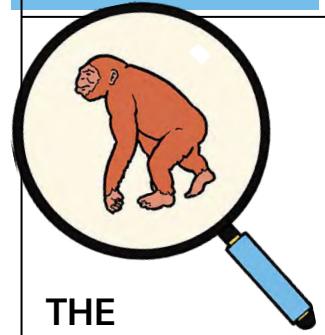
I really like the city and the university. The St. George campus, with its fantastic architecture, reminds me of my favourite place at home: the Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute where I used to play as a child. Both are green oases in the city.

The Scholars-at-Risk program has been a great help for me. It took me into the U of T family and provided me with warmth and support. I'm extremely grateful to Canada and the university for helping me move forward in a difficult time. My master's program has been very good, and I had the chance to work as a teaching assistant for several courses. I also co-designed a workshop for researchers on effective science communication and volunteered as an illustrator for a student magazine.

I've met many fantastic people at the university, but I'm still in touch with my friends from home. We're always on the phone, and I feel strongly connected to them. The pandemic taught us how to cope with being isolated from each other. I follow the news in Ukraine pretty closely. In February 2023, a missile hit my apartment building. My parents now live in our little country cottage far away from the centre of Kharkiv.

Before, I dreamed of working as a teacher and illustrator at a university in Kharkiv. Now, my ideal would be to work for U of T. If I can be productive and helpful here in Canada, I will definitely stay. Maybe one day, hopefully soon, I will bring my parents here. But nobody knows what will happen in Ukraine. It's all extremely uncertain. —As told to Megan Easton

EUROPE



THE LITTLEST APE

The discovery of a previously unknown ape species in a clay pit in southern Germany has revealed that the diversity and ecology of European apes millions of years ago was more complex than first thought.

David Begun, a U of T anthropology professor, is part of an international team that examined fossils from the pit to identify the new genus – *Buroni* *manfredschmidi*, the smallest type of great ape ever found.

Buroni lived in trees 12 million years ago alongside another great ape called *Danuvius*. Based on their fossil analysis, Begun and his fellow researchers believe *Buroni* was much smaller than its neighbour (weighing just 10 kilograms), more agile, spent more time in the treetops and ate a vegetarian diet.

—Staff



"Sometimes we didn't have water," says Vadym Lytvynov, on what life was like after Russia invaded Ukraine. "We gathered snow and turned our bathtub into a reservoir."

Present-day Service of Remembrance
(photo by Laura Pedersen)

Dedication of the Soldiers' Tower, June 5, 1924
(City of Toronto Archives, *Globe and Mail*
fonds, Fonds 1266, Item 2806)



Standing together for 100 years.

In 1924, the university community honoured our fallen at the Soldiers' Tower for the first time. So began a solemn tradition that lives on a century later.

On Monday, November 11, 2024, we will stand together in remembrance of the alumni, students, faculty and staff who died in the First and Second World Wars and other conflicts. We hope you will join us.

You can help us preserve the memory of U of T's fallen for the next 100 years by making a gift to the Soldiers' Tower fund today.

Please give online now at uoft.me/soldierstower



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

DEFY
GRAVITY

New U of T advisor aims to foster civil discussion on difficult topics

English professor Randy Boyagoda says he won't 'police politeness' but rather encourage conversations to keep going



Last January, the University of Toronto landed on an innovative way to help elevate the tenor of debates that sometimes occur across its three campuses: it created a new senior advisory role dedicated to fostering civil discourse.

Now serving in that position – the first of its kind at a Canadian university – is English professor and writer Randy Boyagoda. In an interview in July, he was quick to clarify that he had no intention of clamping down on dissent, but would strive to promote informed, constructive and respectful dialogue about hot-button topics.

“I’m not some kind of czar, policing politeness,” he says. “There has to be a space on university campuses for dissent and protest.” Civil discourse, he observes, is about seeking “understanding from a place of curiosity and empathy, and recognizing

ILLUSTRATION BY KATE DEHLER

the inherent dignity of the other person and that we are in a community of people thinking out loud together.”

The encampment that occupied King’s College Circle for two months this past summer presented an enormous challenge to Boyagoda’s idea of community. But he notes, too, that he is not the “advisor on civil discourse about Israel and Palestine.” Impolite and even hostile exchanges cover a wide range of issues and have had a long history in the academy. “It would be absurd to pretend that civil discourse at the University of Toronto was robust and healthy on October 6, and then something changed suddenly on October 8.”

In the classroom, lapses in decorum may arise in spirited debates on sensitive topics. Brian Silverman, a professor of strategic management, engages his graduate students in discussing the social, economic and environmental impacts of Walmart’s operating practices, and how Elon Musk’s often-controversial public comments affect Tesla’s business. Students share strong and sometimes opposing opinions, but Silverman says he can generally prevent conversations from overheating or becoming personal by refocusing students on curiosity and understanding, and getting them to consider *why* they feel so strongly about an issue.

“It’s all about trying to surface the underlying assumptions driving different points of view,” says Silverman. “That’s the kind of discussion we’re trying to have.”

Student interactions can get angry in virtual settings, too. During a pandemic-era online class in Introduction to Philosophy, Prof. James John discussed with his 300 students the book *The Racial Contract* by Charles Mills, which deals with themes of white supremacy and the oppression of non-whites. Because he can’t monitor the conversation as he teaches, John usually disables

the platform’s chat function. But this time he forgot, and the chat devolved into name-calling among students who disagreed about whether the author was racist. When John later saw the exchange in a transcript of the chat, he addressed the situation with the students in the following class, highlighting the learning benefits of considerate engagement.

“Staying calm, giving each other the benefit of the doubt, and being as precise as you can in the language you use can reap intellectual rewards,” John says he told the students, “but it also helps you to see where someone else is coming from and to try to make progress as partners in a joint conversation.”

One has only to listen to politicians or tune into the news to see that the erosion of respectful debate is occurring across society. But at U of T, Boyagoda also sees evidence of the pandemic’s lingering effects, especially the mandated online “atomized learning” for youth in high schools that he says left some current U of T students without the learning experiences to engage with each other productively, in person, on difficult subjects. He also says the elevation in recent years of people’s lived experiences as a valid way to engage with academic topics bolsters the idea that research findings or academic theory that don’t align with one’s own experience are not as authoritative as they were once thought to be. This

“STAYING CALM, GIVING EACH OTHER THE
BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT, AND BEING
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ILLUSTRATION (LEFT) BY KATE DEHLER; SPOT ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID SPARSHOTT

trend has called into question traditional disciplinary expertise, creating challenges for how professors share knowledge and guide discussions.

As well, the ways in which social media allows disinformation to spread and how it induces self-censorship to avoid “cancellation” can also inhibit open, honest dialogue, Boyagoda says. “How do you draw on the fullness of who you are in a way that’s publicly available for others to engage with, and have it not be a source of anxiety for either person?”

As he explores how to improve the culture of civil discourse among U of T community members, Boyagoda can draw on his diverse professional experiences in addressing challenging subjects. As a novelist and essayist, he has written about race, religion, immigration and identity, and also commented extensively on the life and work of Salman Rushdie. As a former president of PEN Canada, the non-profit that defends freedom of expression and aids imperiled writers, he often had to navigate members’ conflicting opinions.

This fall, together with professors Silverman and John and other members of the university’s working group on civil discourse that he chairs, Boyagoda will consult with university community members to hear their views, experiences and suggestions. During Boyagoda’s 18-month appointment, the working group will also develop a definition of civil discourse, propose programming to foster respectful engagement, and produce a report of their findings and recommendations.

“Civil discourse is about recognizing that disagreement and difference are actually good things if they lead to an increase in shared understanding of an issue or idea,” Boyagoda says. “All of this is in support of advancing knowledge, the pursuit of truth and the common good.” —**Sharon Aschaiek**



Nobel pursuits

A new permanent exhibit honours the achievements of John Polanyi, one of Canada’s most celebrated scientists

The groundbreaking work of University Professor Emeritus John Polanyi, a celebrated chemist and the winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1986, is the focus of a new permanent exhibit at the Lash Miller Building, home of the department of chemistry in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Through video, still images and laboratory equipment, the exhibit tells the story of Polanyi’s career, including his seminal work in the field of reaction dynamics — a branch of chemistry that investigates what happens during chemical reactions.

The display includes original instruments

used in Polanyi’s early research, a reproduction of the lab notebook used by his graduate student to document their experiments and a video chronicling the process of discovery — along with a replica of his Nobel Prize medal.

“It’s been my good fortune to be surrounded by brilliant colleagues and other supporters throughout my life and career,” Polanyi says. “I’m deeply humbled and grateful for this marvelous display and ongoing recognition of my life’s work.”

Polanyi’s research influenced the development of advanced instrumentation in domains such as

pharmaceuticals, medicine and chemical manufacturing — including the development of the first chemical lasers.

The exhibit also captures Polanyi’s advocacy for the responsible use of science and a keen social conscience that compelled him to campaign for the elimination of nuclear weapons throughout his career. “A great university that invests in science must also strain to warn of the accompanying risks to humanity,” he says.

—**Staff**

Read “Faith in science” by John Polanyi at magazine.utoronto.ca

War's hidden scars

Prof. Zoë Wool investigates the toxic, lingering and far-reaching effects of armed conflict

When Zoë Wool started interviewing injured soldiers at a military hospital in the U.S. in 2007, she thought the research would be one part of her doctoral thesis about the “war on terror” after the attacks of 9/11. Very quickly, though, she realized that the conversations offered an expanded perspective on the harms of war and their often-unseen, yet wide-ranging, effects.

“A few weeks into my time at the medical centre, I wrote in my field notebook, ‘Forget the war on terror,’” says Wool, an associate professor of anthropology at U of T Mississauga. “It was clear to me that the violence of war was right there in the hospital room, and that’s what I should research and write about. It wasn’t something that had been left overseas but was continuing to unfold in soldiers’ bodies and in their family members’ experiences. Looking at their everyday lives, as anthropology does, was a way of disrupting the usual political narratives about where, when and how the violence of war takes place.”

Today, Wool’s research continues to challenge conventional ideas about war, with a focus on the toxicity of war in the post-9/11 era. She uses the idea of toxicity broadly to understand the way war (and the industrial processes of war-making) produce harms beyond war’s immediate violence to affect the health, identity and livelihood of soldiers and non-combatants, both on and off the battlefield. “My work is about trying to understand war as a thing that has no edges,” says Wool, adding that she first came upon the idea of “edgelessness” in University of Virginia professor Tiffany Lethabo King’s scholarship on slavery and Indigenous genocide. “Even though there is specificity to a war, its impacts aren’t confined to a time and place.”

Looking back to her early years, Wool says an intolerance for injustice helped put her on a path to her current research. While she grew up on New York’s affluent Upper West Side, her parents passed along a sense that she could effect change. “I inherited an awareness of hypocrisy, and a sense that I could and should address it,”



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHLOÉ ELLINGSON



Zoë Wool is an
anthropology
professor at UTM

←

she says. In the 1960s, her father supported Latin American artists who were experiencing political repression, and her mother was involved in counterculture movements such as the hippies and anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-war Yippies. “They gave me the sense that it was possible to meaningfully intervene in the world around me in creative ways.”

But, she says, her biggest lessons came outside the classroom during her undergraduate degree at York University, where she became involved in activist movements against labour inequality, globalization and, most significantly, the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. “Until then, I’d thought of myself as a New Yorker, not an American,” says Wool, who joined U of T Mississauga in 2020 from Rice University. “But in 2001, I felt I couldn’t run away from being an American. I had to question the violence that was being done in my name.”

Recalling the massive anti-war demonstrations leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Wool says she felt certain that the voices of millions on the streets couldn’t

be ignored. “But we were heard, and it didn’t matter. It was a pivotal moment for me in terms of whether I was going to take a more activist route or become an academic,” she says. “In some ways, I entered academia as a disillusioned war activist.”

Disillusioned, but not deterred, she saw an opportunity to continue her opposition to America’s contemporary wars from a more analytical stance. The 12 months of field work Wool did with injured soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and other nearby sites formed the basis of her award-winning book *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed* (2015). In it, she contrasts the longstanding public image of the wounded soldier as an icon of masculinity, heroism and patriotism – often used for political purposes – with the soldiers’ persistent pain and arduous rehabilitation, a reality that didn’t live up to the symbolism.

Wool arrived at the medical centre thinking that her research would concentrate on how the official messaging around the war on terror compared with the firsthand experience of soldiers and other key players in the war. Through ethnography – an anthropological method where researchers immerse themselves in a setting and use interviews and observation to learn about the social and cultural life of a community – she realized the topic wasn’t something that the soldiers cared about and was far less interesting to her than probing the war’s human aftermath.

“Ethnographic practice is sometimes described as ‘deep hanging out,’” says Wool, who spent countless hours in the centre’s informal spaces and rehab clinics. The urgent conversations she heard and participated in focused on

injury, disability and if the veterans were ever going to get back to “normal.”

While she was at Walter Reed, Wool learned about the illnesses caused by soldiers’ exposure to waste-burning pits that the American military uses at operating bases in the absence of any waste management facilities. “Everything goes in, from meal trays to vehicles to human waste, then it’s doused in jet fuel and burns for years, releasing toxins into the air and water,” she says.

Her research on these burn pits, soon to be a book, is one of several projects at U of T Mississauga’s Toxicity, Waste and Infrastructure



“IN 2001, I FELT I COULDN’T RUN AWAY FROM BEING AN AMERICAN. I HAD TO QUESTION THE VIOLENCE THAT WAS BEING DONE IN MY NAME”

Group (TWIG) Research Kitchen. Launched by Wool in 2021, TWIG is a virtual research space that brings together feminist investigators from across the social sciences and humanities to study the historical and contemporary impacts of toxic chemicals. “I called it a kitchen in part because kitchen tables have often been places for organizing resistance,” she says.

Resisting the prevailing stories about burn pits coming out of the American media has meant going beyond the narrow focus on the pits’ effects on U.S. soldiers to examine the largely ignored consequences for the Iraqi and Afghan people and land nearby. Considering this local environmental destruction is part of Wool’s larger rethinking (informed by the work of colleague Kali Rubaii) of the harms of war.

Most recently, she’s opened up her exploration of burn pits to investigate a huge component of the waste that goes into them – plastic water bottles.

“All the water that U.S. service members drink is bottled,” says Wool. “So, the U.S. bottled water industry and the consumer habits that drive this industry are connected to burn pits’ harms.” Again, she’s highlighting the expansiveness of war violence, in this case analyzing factors that are far removed from the frontlines.

Widening the usual view of war’s toxicity, particularly when it comes to the legacies of American military violence, is an essential first step toward individual responsibility and hope, Wool says. For her, this means carefully considering how her voting choices and what she buys (and from what companies) could affect future or current wars.

“Two things are true,” Wool says. “We’re implicated in these structures of violence, and we can find ways from those positions to make more livable worlds.”

—Megan Easton



A gym of their own

U of T’s Feminist Sports Club invites non-athletes to try their hand at dodgeball, basketball – even line dancing

Last year, S. Trimble, an assistant professor at U of T’s Women and Gender Studies Institute, was teaching a new undergraduate course on sports when she had an idea for getting students out of the classroom: why not play a sport together? She organized a game of dodgeball (attendance voluntary), and 10 students showed up. They played twice more that term and had a hoot. Trimble branded the group the Feminist Sports Club.

“We have a lot of students who have a fraught relationship with the gym,” says Trimble, who describes herself as not an especially sporty person. “If you were bullied or socially anxious, the process of picking teams or

competing against your peers could bring out all that stress.”

So, one purpose of the club is to get students to reconsider their relationship to athletics. “It’s about recognizing that we belong in the gym, too” she says.

At another level, the club encourages students – many of whom are teaching assistants and aspiring educators – to make learning more experiential. “What does it mean to engage with students in a totally different environment?”

For the current academic year, the Feminist Sports Club has expanded and is now open to all graduate students at the Women and Gender Studies

Institute, and some undergraduates – about 300-400 students in total. Dodgeball will be offered again, along with basketball, dancing (both line and Bollywood-style) and a few surprises.

For club members, “there’s an understanding that the results matter a lot less than the process,” says Trimble. “It takes a lot of gumption to walk into a gym, and our approach is that you’ve already won just by showing up. But who knows how this will evolve over time? That’s the fun of Feminist Sports Club. We’re a creative, collaborative, rule-bending bunch.”

—Andrea Yu



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Gyan Jain (left) and Kanchan Jain, with UTM Principal Alexandra Gillespie



and to partner with Jain communities – locally and globally – to share this knowledge.”

Jainism has a deep history traced back more than 2,500 years to the teachings of Mahavira. It emphasizes non-violence, truthfulness, non-possessiveness and self-discipline; its followers are required to be vegetarian. Today, most Jains live in India, with Jain communities also found in Canada, Europe and the United States. It is one of the oldest religions still practised today but is much less well known in the West than other ancient Indian religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. “This is a real shame,” says Chojnacki, “because it has a lot to offer, including to help solve our global problems today.”

Chojnacki studies Jain literature from the eighth to 14th centuries. Among her notable achievements is an award-winning annotated

translation of a Jain novel in a Prakrit language dating from the eighth century. She is dedicated to assessing the role of Jain literature and restoring these works to a prominent place in Indian culture. “Many older works are hardly known even in

India itself, although they certainly deserve to be included in world literature,” she says.

As part of its community collaboration, U of T Mississauga will strengthen its ties to the Jain community and develop a direct line of engagement with the Jain temple in Brampton, Ontario. The partnership will attract global experts, while graduate students will be able to connect their textual research with lived practice. —Ali Raza



WHAT IS JAINISM?

A transtheistic belief system that began more than 2,500 years ago in eastern India

Its three main pillars are: non-violence, non-absolutism and asceticism

Understanding Jainism

A \$2.5-million donation to UTM will help make the campus a global leader in the study of an ancient Indian belief system

Professor Christine Chojnacki, a scholar of medieval Indian literature, has been named the inaugural holder of the Gyan and Kanchan Jain Chair in Jain Studies at U of T Mississauga. She will begin her term in January. The chair was established last year with a \$2.5-million contribution from Gyan and Kanchan Jain and their family that was matched by the university for a total of \$5 million.

The gift will give U of T students a chance to learn about the history, culture and philosophy of Jainism, an Indian religion with more than five million adherents worldwide. “It will provide students with an opportunity to cultivate a deeper

understanding of Jain principles such as *ahimsa* (non-violence) – an idea that can bring peace and happiness to every living being,” says Gyan Jain.

In addition to an endowed chair, the funds will support work in community collaboration and knowledge translation.

The investment signals UTM’s commitment to expanding its Centre for South Asian Critical Humanities. “Jainism continues to have vital influence in South Asia and Canada and around the world,” says Alexandra Gillespie, U of T Mississauga’s principal and a vice-president at U of T. “We have a great opportunity to promote new research and teaching about this ancient belief system



↑
Collections manager Naomi Recollet inspects one of more than 40 boxes of artifacts at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation

In Ontario's North, a First Nation digs into its history

U of T archaeologists are working with Sagamok Anishnawbek to learn more about thousands of ancient objects discovered along the shore of Lake Huron

The white quartzite mountains that run along the north shore of Lake Huron provide a stunning backdrop to the ancestral lands of Sagamok Anishnawbek.

Here, since time immemorial, the Anishnawbek lived by fishing, hunting and gathering. They crafted tools from stone and pots from clay, and traded with neighbouring communities and more distant groups from the south. This way of life continued until the arrival of the Europeans, with the establishment of the Fort La Cloche trading post in the late 1700s and the contemporary reserve of Sagamok Anishnawbek almost a century later.

Archaeological investigations at the site in the 1960s and 1970s unearthed centuries-old artifacts from the operation of Fort La Cloche – and some, much older, from the ancestors of the Anishnawbek. While members of Sagamok Anishnawbek assisted in the excavations conducted by provincial archaeologists, they had no control over the recovered objects.

Fast forward 50-plus years, to 2019. Alicia Hawkins, an associate professor of anthropology at U of T Mississauga, and Sarah Hazell, an archaeologist and member of the Nipissing First Nation, began collaborating with Naomi Recollet, the collections manager at the Ojibwe Cultural

Foundation on Manitoulin Island, to provide archaeological training to members of nearby Indigenous communities.

An Indigenous cultural centre that supports several First Nations along the north shore, the foundation had been caring for the objects recovered from the La Cloche site for the Ontario government since 2015. But it was difficult for community members to interact with the ancestral belongings because no catalogue existed. That sparked an idea: what if Hawkins and Hazell worked together with the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, Sagamok Anishnawbek and local Indigenous communities to identify the artifacts and ancestors' belongings, and add to the existing knowledge of the area?

The group connected with Allen Toulouse, a historical researcher for Sagamok Anishnawbek, who embraced the opportunity to uncover more about the history of the Anishnawbek people, and, potentially, to change how students across Canada learn about Indigenous culture. "I can sum up Anishnawbe history as I was taught in high school in two sentences," he says. "They were hunter-gatherers. They lived in birchbark wigwams. That was it."

Toulouse also saw a chance to help correct a historical wrong, in which Indigenous peoples had little say over archaeological investigations on their own land. "This was a long-standing question in the community: what happened to our artifacts?" he said. "We were excluded from the whole process." Hawkins, who specializes in community-based archeology, says support is growing to return ancestral belongings to Indigenous communities.

"It's about time," she says. "As a non-Indigenous archaeologist, my role, if I have one at all, should be to support communities to manage their heritage in a way that is most appropriate for them." Hawkins adds that it costs money to care for these items in

perpetuity. So, giving them back to First Nations without adequate resources is not a solution. "We need to be supporting communities to look after ancestral belongings, but at the same time not burdening them."

As Hawkins and Hazell (now a PhD student in anthropology at U of T), have worked side by side with Indigenous community members to identify objects, they've found that knowledge travels in both directions: the academics are learning more about Sagamok history and culture, and the community members are deepening their knowledge of archaeological practices.

Sheila Madahbee, from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, is one of the community members assisting with the project. Among the rocks, glass and pieces of rusted metal that have been collected, she sometimes finds clothing, arrowheads – even parts of a harmonica. "Today we were looking at leather pieces of shoes," she says, observing they were made for tiny feet, almost certainly a child's, causing her to wonder about the maker and recipient, and their lives.

It's not always easy to distinguish who left which objects behind: next to the clay pipes and musical instruments used by 18th-century fur traders might be a 2,000-year-old hide-scraper.

Madahbee likens cataloguing to fitting together the pieces of a puzzle that, when complete, will add to the story of the Sagamok people, told in their own words.

Hazell hopes the archaeological training will help Madahbee and others working on the project find a connection with their ancestors in a physical and spiritual way. Previously, to have that opportunity, she says, "they would have to go to a museum and see the artifacts behind glass, and not be allowed to touch them, or sing to them." Now, Recollet at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation enables Indigenous community members to care for the pieces according to their cultural traditions.

Toulouse says that while Sagamok have always been connected to the area and have shared their history through spoken word, the artifacts physically prove they lived on the land thousands of years ago, strengthening their claim to it.

He adds that he hopes the project will help expand Sagamok's historical record and help rebuild lost pride. "The important part of this, especially for Indigenous peoples, is taking an interest in our past." —**Katlià Lafferty**

This project is supported by Connaught Community Partnership Research Funding

Professor Alicia Hawkins (right) works with Lucia O'Conner in an archaeological session at M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island ↓



U of T Scarborough students are using modern technology to search for long-forgotten graves

The Society of Friends cemetery in Ajax, Ontario, has dozens of headstones, many of them mossy and sagging with age. But hidden from view – and lost to time – are also a number of unmarked graves that a group of U of T Scarborough students and researchers are trying to locate using modern technology and anthropological sleuthing.

It is one of three old cemeteries east of Toronto that the team of geoscience and anthropology undergraduates are searching using ground-penetrating radar and aerial lidar. They are also scouring local and online archives to help them determine how many bodies are buried.

Ground-penetrating radar is the most reliable way to determine, without digging, if something is buried, says Tom Meulendyk, a lab coordinator and geophysics lecturer in the department of physical and environmental sciences. It involves dragging around a device resembling a lawn mower whose antennae send radio waves into the ground.

“It measures the intensity at which the radio waves bounce off an object, like a rock, layer of soil or air pocket,” says Meulendyk. A coffin that is still intact and filled with air will send back a strong signal, but a collapsed coffin will give a different, weaker signal indicating changes in the soil layer.

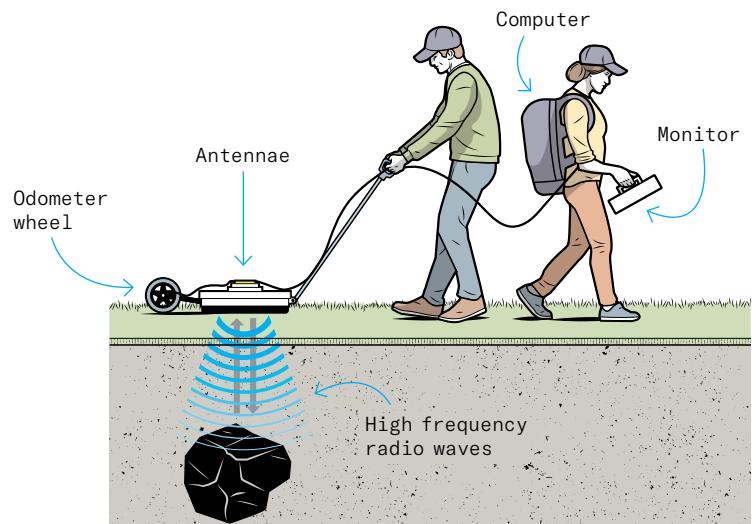
He first started the project more than three years ago to teach his third-year students how to handle the radar device, which is used mostly for locating buried utilities such as pipes, electrical cables or sewer lines. The team has uncovered dozens of unmarked graves and has been preparing reports for the municipality, which is interested in knowing exactly where people are buried, since two of the graveyards are wedged between current and future housing development sites.

The project also offers an intriguing way to train students on technology used by professional geologists and anthropologists in the field. “We feel like we have an obligation to make sure these graves aren’t forgotten,” says Erin Lam, a fourth-year anthropology and health studies student. —Don Campbell

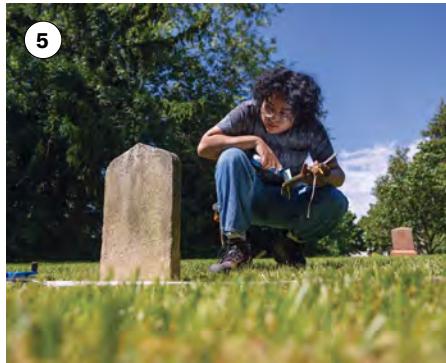


GOING DEEP

Ground-penetrating radar is the most reliable way to find something underground without digging



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON CAMPBELL; ILLUSTRATION BY REMIE GEOFFROI



GRAVE HUNTERS

Researchers have been searching three old cemeteries for unmarked burial sites

1. After marking a large square grid, the team pulls the ground-penetrating radar across the cemetery in a series of parallel lines. The radar is moved 25 cm for each grid line

2. The team can view data in real time on a monitor, but it's also stored on a portable computer and later used to create a 3D model

3. An aerial drone equipped with a laser creates a precise topography of the cemetery

4. The map is coloured by elevation

5. The names on existing tombstones are written down to cross-check with burial records

6. The team has discovered 86 unmarked graves in the Society of Friends cemetery, a Quaker burial ground established in 1825



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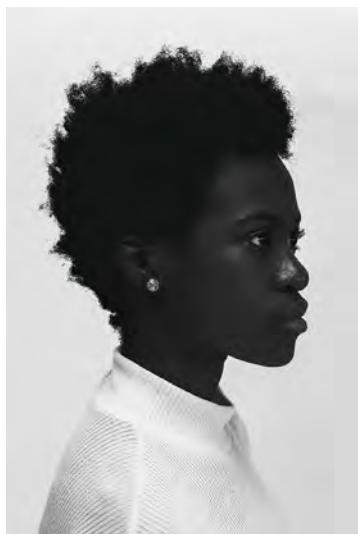
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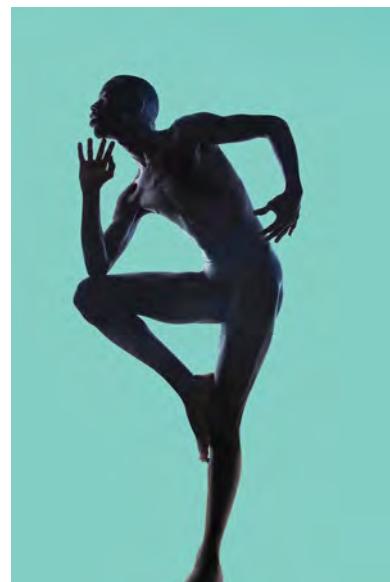
“Opposition” (2016), an early portrait



Africa in bold

Yannis Guibinga’s photos offer a striking 21st-century take on the continent’s landscapes and people

It took moving 10,000 kilometres – from Libreville, Gabon, to the Toronto area – for Yannis Guibinga (BA 2017 UTM) to realize that home would never be far from his mind. When he started at U of T Mississauga in 2013, Guibinga found out just how few people could locate Gabon on a map. A desire to share the landscapes and people of his childhood through photography gradually transformed into a drive to showcase the diversity of African identities on the continent and across the diaspora. Since then, Guibinga’s bold artwork – which plays with contrast and texture in a way that recalls both fashion editorials and theatrical design – has earned him a global following, gigs with Apple and Adobe, and a shout-out on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. Read more about Guibinga – and see more examples of his distinctive photography – at magazine.utoronto.ca. —**Stéphanie Verge**



A 2018 silhouette of model Atlas Hapy, who frequently collaborates with Yannis Guibinga

From mental health studies to Michelin Guide

U of T Scarborough alum
Ambica Jain's unexpected route
to restaurant success



In her final year at U of T Scarborough, Ambica Jain (BSc 2018) was debating whether to pursue an MBA when her mother suggested that she take a leadership role at Adrak, the Indian restaurant she owns in Richmond Hill. Jain did, and in 2022 opened a second Adrak location in Toronto's Yorkville neighbourhood, earning the eatery a spot on *Toronto Life's* list of best new restaurants, and a coveted mention in *The Michelin Guide*.

What is the philosophy behind Adrak?

We want our customers to forget the stereotypes associated with Indian cuisine and culture and learn something new. With the flavours, we want to remain as authentic as possible but be innovative with presentation. It's an elevated dining experience.

You studied mental health at U of T Scarborough. Seems like a leap to restaurateur...

I come from a medical family, so I felt I needed to do a science degree. In the early 2010s, there was a lot of stigma around mental health, especially in the South Asian community. We didn't speak about it as much as we do today. I thought mental health studies would also help me understand people.

←
Favourite Adrak dish?
Rani Kachori

Best food movie?
The Hundred-Foot Journey (2014)

Alternate career?
Forensics

Has it helped in your career with the restaurant?

Yes. Growing up, I was quite sheltered. I was used to dealing with people who had a similar mindset to mine. In my program, I learned that what's normal for me may be abnormal for someone else, and that someone else may view my "normal" as abnormal. I learned that this is all perfectly fine, and that we each have to appreciate one another's differences.

What lessons did U of T Scarborough teach you?

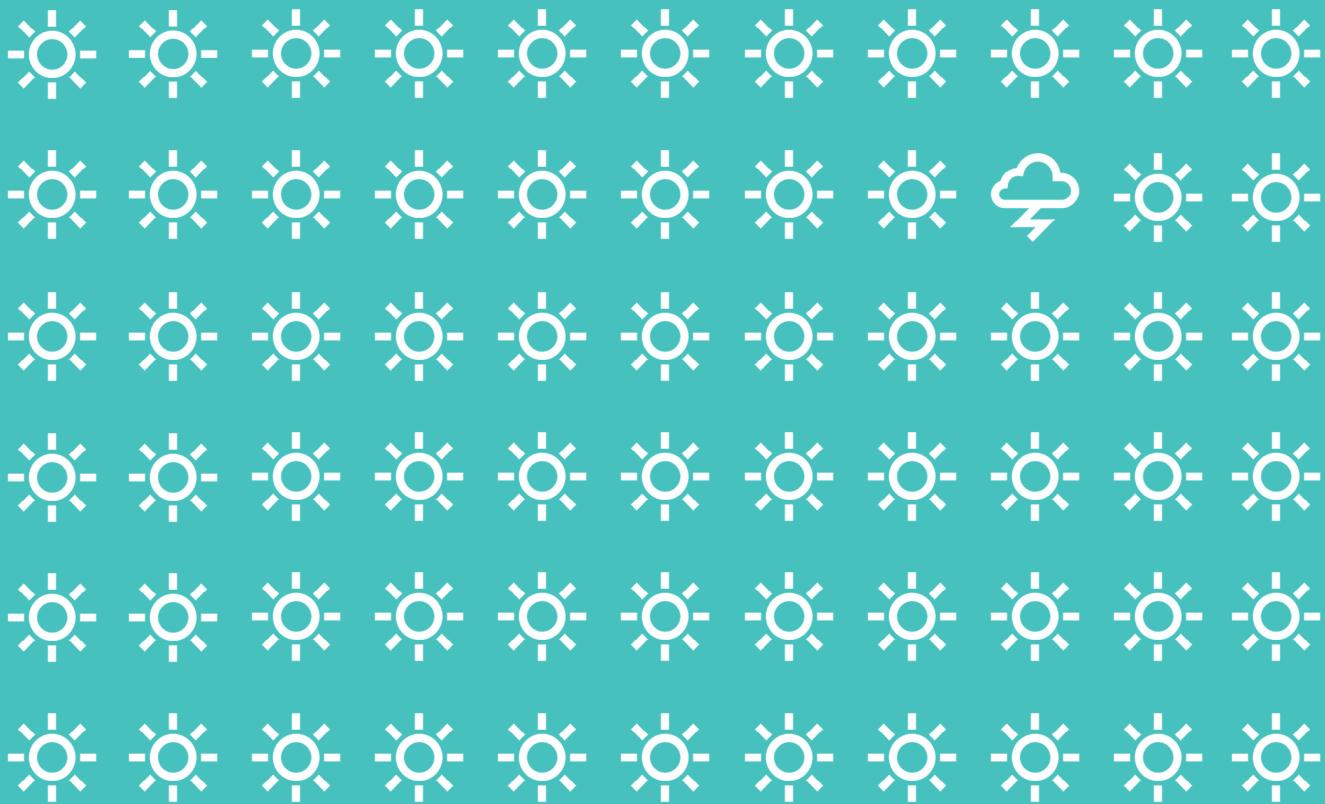
I grew up with discipline, but U of T Scarborough reinforced that. You have to remain on top of the game, be focused and not get distracted.

What are the biggest reasons for your success?

My mother has supported and guided me all the way. She also motivated and pushed me! I credit my team, our vendors and our clientele, too. I was afraid to do the Yorkville location. No one had done an Indian restaurant there, but the neighborhood has supported us.

What's next for you?

We're launching an Adrak location in Toronto's financial district next year and are exploring a wellness retreat concept that blends Ayurvedic principles with Canadian nature. —Carol Neshevich



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