

## **Award Recipient Bios**

### **GSA Champion**

Dr. Jawahar (Jay) Kalra

Dr. Jay Kalra, award-winning researcher, educator, and health care provider, is an active leader and community builder in all aspects of his life. In the community, he has been a member of several altruistic organizations including Saskatoon Folkfest, the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon United Way, Saskatchewan Intercultural Association, Saskatchewan Heart and Stroke Foundation, Rotary Clubs of Saskatoon, and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. He has worked tirelessly in building social and cultural understanding and strengthening the fabric of humanity in Saskatoon and beyond, and these examples of his compassion and selfless commitment to others is also evident in his various roles at the University.

At the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Kalra has made many significant and leading contributions to the undergraduate and postgraduate programs and he has been widely and persistently regarded for his excellence as a teacher by students. He is a well-rounded academic who, in addition to excellence in teaching, has also played a significant role in the scholarship, management and leadership of health sciences education. He was instrumental in revitalizing the graduate program in the Department of Pathology as Chair of the Graduate Studies Program from 1986 to 1992, and subsequently served as Director of the M.Sc. / Ph.D. and Clinical / Post-doctoral Fellows Training Program and as Program Director of the General Pathology and Anatomical Pathology Residency Training Program. Dr. Kalra has also served as Chair of the College of Medicine Faculty Council and Chair of the University Council's Planning and Priorities Committee. Presently, he is the Chair of the University Council, a member of the Operating Budget Adjustment Steering Committee, and one of the Faculty Ambassadors for India and Bangladesh for Graduate Studies.

Dr. Kalra is also a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, Canadian Academy of Clinical Biochemistry, Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, and Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine UK. He is a member of various national and international societies, serving as the President of the Canadian Association of Medical Biochemists, the Intersociety Council of Laboratory Medicine of Canada, the Canadian Chairs of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, the Canadian Association of Pathologists, the American College of Angiology and as the Director of Saskatchewan Stroke Research Centre.

Outside of his leadership capacity, Dr. Kalra has been involved in numerous activities at the “cutting edge” of applied biochemistry and his research eminence is universally recognized. His clinical research has been innovative and he has developed models which are clinically relevant, practical and are able to be used in health care throughout North America. He has been a pioneer in establishing guidelines for quality assurance programs and laboratory utilization in health care including being the first in Canada, at the Royal University Hospital to introduce sensitive thyrotropin (s-TSH) as a first line test for thyroid function testing. Dr Kalra has also contributed nationally and internationally in the area of total quality management and lean transformation strategies including quality care and patient safety. His myriad research contributions have not only simplified guidelines and improved health care delivery, but have also brought economic benefits to societies worldwide. Dr. Kalra has over 150 research communications to his credit and he has lectured widely and held numerous visiting Professorships both in Canada and abroad.

In recognition of some of his outstanding achievements, Dr. Jay Kalra has been the recipient of several awards and honours throughout his career, some of which include: the "1994 Golden Wheel Award for Excellence in Science and Technology", Rotary Clubs of Saskatoon; "1994 Excellence in Research Award", Canadian Society of Clinical Chemists; 2005 Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation “Achievement Award in Clinical Research”; and the 2005 Saskatchewan Centennial Leadership Award for “Contribution to Province”. He was also recognized as part of the 2006 Saskatoon Centennial Initiative 100 Years 100 Reasons

Recognition, CTV and Imagery Illustration; and was a 2007 Honorary Ambassador for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mosaic in Regina. More recently, Dr. Kalra was the recipient of the 2010 and 2011 Outstanding Speaker Award at the annual American Association for Clinical Chemistry conferences and in 2012 received the Canadian Association for Medical Education (CAME) Certificate of Merit Award for Outstanding Contributions to Medical Education and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Commemorative Medal.

### **Outstanding Partnership**

As one of our distinct partners, the GSA has chosen the Student Employment and Career Center (SECC) to receive the award of Outstanding Partnership. The award of Outstanding Partnership is presented to honour a new partner of the GSA that has engaged in positive, ongoing collaboration to improve graduate student resources to better serve the graduate student community.

The SECC, through the collaboration of Kristin Woods and Shari Thompson, have established highly beneficial services and resources for the Graduate Student Community. Specifically, the *Industry Talks* series and the *Developing Your Career Potential* workshop were highly successful and received an overwhelming positive response from the Graduate Student Community.

### **Research Excellence in Aboriginal Research – Maya Basdeo**

Originally from Toronto, Ontario, Maya Basdeo has lived, worked and attended school in areas of Southern Ontario and Greater Vancouver, BC. Prior to attending university, she worked for a number of years in the Environmental Sector in the fields of Education, Wildlife Rehabilitation and Management, and Consulting. Maya enjoys the outdoors, especially when involved in fishing and hunting activities, and is generally interested in the ways in which people and the natural environment come together. Academically, she is interested in research that can be readily applied to real-world issues.

Maya earned a Bachelor of Environmental Studies (Hons.) from the University of Waterloo where she completed a joint degree in Environment and Resource Studies and Anthropology, as well as diplomas in Ecological Restoration and Environmental Assessment. She graduated in 2011 on the Dean's Honours List. Her undergraduate thesis was reflective of her personal and academic interests and focused on how the activity of hunting influences a conservation ethic. In May 2012 Maya was the only student to deliver a platform presentation, based on her undergraduate thesis, at the first National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Congress held in Ottawa, Ontario.

Maya began graduate studies at the U of S in September 2011 in the School of Environment as Sustainability with the assistance of a NEXEN Scholarship. She is currently enrolled in a Master's program under the advisement of Dr. Lalita Bharadwaj in the coming months. Her current academic pursuits focus on the intersection of water issues and First Nations in Saskatchewan. Specifically, Maya has been working with Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation in southern Saskatchewan since February 2012 in order to identify the social and cultural impacts of water issues on the community, and characterizes the relationship as a true partnership. Representatives from Standing Buffalo are involved in every aspect of this Community-Based research project, including committee meetings, conferences, and events. Publications that arise out of this work will be co-authored with the community, and all aspects of research are carried out in a way that is respectful of the culture and traditions of the Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation. Maya received a SSHRC scholarship for the 2012/2013 academic year, and the research project was awarded a Community Network Research Grant from the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre that provides funding for a variety of activities relevant to the community and that will aid in data collection for the project. In order to honour the relationships being formed and maintained, as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the social and geographical context, Maya relocated her residence to just outside the community of Standing Buffalo in December 2012. This move has allowed for ongoing, regular engagement with the community in a variety of circumstances.

There is typically little separation between Maya's personal, professional, and academic interests, and her current work with Standing Buffalo is no exception. She is hopeful that this research partnership will demonstrate novel approaches in the social sciences, and serve as a model for how academic researchers and First Nations might engage.

### **Research Excellence in Humanities**

Adam Pottle

Born and raised in BC, Adam Pottle came to Saskatoon in 2009 to pursue his doctorate in English literature. Since that time, he's studied how persons with disabilities are portrayed in literature, hoping to reduce the stigma of disability and present it as a necessary perspective — one may even call it a philosophy—of humanity. His research record includes a number of highlights: since 2009, he has presented three papers at conferences in Fredericton, Montreal, and Ottawa; in 2011 he was awarded a two-year, \$40,000 doctoral scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; and this year, he'll publish an article in *Disability Studies Quarterly*, the top journal in the field of disability studies.

Always eager to increase his teaching profile, since he's begun his studies at the U of S he's worked as a writing tutor with the University Learning Centre. In addition, he's served as a teaching assistant in two first-year classes, and last term worked as a sessional lecturer, teaching a first-year poetry class.

Not only is Pottle a capable scholar and enthusiastic teacher, but he's also an accomplished author. In addition to publishing several short stories, his first book, a volume of poems entitled *Beautiful Mutants*, was released in 2011; it went on to be shortlisted for two Saskatchewan Book Awards and the Acorn-Plantos Award for Peoples' Poetry. His play, *Ultrasound*, was selected for the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre's 2013 spring festival, and has been tentatively scheduled for production in April 2014, and his first novel, *Mantis Dreams: The Journal of Dr. Dexter Ripley*, will be published in fall 2013.

When he is not writing, reading, or pulling out his hair, Pottle referees ice hockey and plays high-level ball hockey. Since the summer of 2012, he has ranked among the top scorers in his teams' respective leagues, and the teams he's played for have won two city championships and one provincial championship. He'll gladly discuss hockey with anyone who'll get out of bed.

### **Research Excellence in the Science**

#### **Rita Orji**

Rita Orji is a doctoral candidate in the Computer Science Department of University of Saskatchewan. She works under the co-supervision of Dr. Julita Vassileva and Dr. Regan Mandryk. She joined the department in May 2010 after completing a Master's degree from Informatics Institute of Middle East Technical University, Turkey. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

Rita has consistently demonstrated excellence in scholarly and academic achievements in the course of her academic career. She graduated as one of the top students from both Master's and Bachelor's degree with first class honors and presently maintains a Grade Point Average of 96% in the University of Saskatchewan.

Her exemplary achievements have attracted various awards at the local, state, national, and international levels including the Federal Government of Nigeria Scholarship Award, The Federal Government of Turkey Scholarship Award, and the University of Saskatchewan Deans Scholarship Award. Her most recent recognition being the award of the prestigious Vanier scholarship by the Canadian Government - in recognition of her outstanding research, leadership, and academic. Rita was ranked among the top 5 out of all 167 Vanier recipients from across Canada.

Rita has been interviewed and featured in various newspapers and magazines internationally and nationally as a role model. A few of these include: Saskatoon StarPhoenix Newspaper, GirlFriend – Chinese magazine, Industry Canada – IC Headline, Research Discovery at the University of Saskatchewan, the College of Arts and Science Magazine, U of S Green & White Alumni Magazine, U of S On Campus News among others.

Her PhD research focuses on the design and evaluation of technological interventions for promoting healthy lifestyle. She employs user-centered design approaches, whereby the system is grounded in behavior theories, observational data from laboratory and field studies, and evaluated with real users with an emphasis on statistical analysis and predictive models. In her research, she examines how technology can be used to address diet-related health problems by integrating health behavior theories into persuasive technological interventions, developing predictive models of health behavior determinants, and tailoring persuasive technological interventions to increase their relevance and effectiveness.

In less than three years in her Ph.D., Rita has published 9 first-authored papers in reputable international journals and conferences proceedings and made 4 poster presentations. She has been invited to present her work at the international conferences in this area and she recently gave an invited talk to the Canadian Parliament - House of Commons' Standing Committee on Health –specifically on how to use Persuasive Technology to combat disease and promote good health.

Rita is a member of various national and international Associations in her area of research. Among them are the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE), and Canadian Obesity Network (CON). She has also reviewed articles for key journals and conferences in her research area, including the International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, the International Conference on Persuasive Technology, the User Modeling Adaptation and Personalization Conference, the British International

Conference on Human-Computer Interaction, and the International Symposium on Innovation and Sustainability in Education among other.

### **Advising Excellence**

#### **Dr. Julita Vassileva**

Dr. Julita Vassileva is Professor of Computer Science at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. She received her PhD in 1992 from the University of Sofia, Bulgaria. She is an active researcher in a wide range of applied computing areas, including Personalization and User Modeling, Artificial Intelligence and Education, Social Computing, Trust and Reputation Mechanisms, Multi-Agent and Peer-to-Peer Systems, and Agent Negotiation and Coalition Formation. Over the last 14 years, she has supervised 33 graduate students from 15 countries. Of these students, more than half (17) were female, which is a significant, considering that the proportion of women in Computer Science in Canada and the US varies between 16% and 22%. Several of Dr. Vassileva's female students are also mothers. With her students, she has published more than 150 peer-reviewed articles, cited together over 4000 times.

Dr. Vassileva is well recognized by the international research community. In 2007 she was invited to serve on the NSERC Discovery Grant Selection Committee for Computer Science, and chaired one of the 3 sub-committees during the last year of her term. She has been Program co-Chair of 3 international conferences, has given many conference keynote talks and invited talks at seminars and summer schools. She has organized many workshops. She serves currently as associate editor of the International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education, and on the editorial boards of User Modeling and User Adaptive Interaction, Computational Intelligence and IEEE Transactions of Learning Technologies. She is a member of the Advisory board of UM Inc, and of the Executive Committee of the International Society for AI in Education. From 2005 until 2011, Dr. Vassileva held the prestigious NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering for the three Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta). As a Chair,

she created a new program for aboriginal science outreach, called “Science Ambassadors”, which attracts graduate students from the University of Saskatchewan to live for 4-6 weeks in Northern aboriginal communities and engage the kids with their love for science and discovery.

### **Excellence in Community Service**

#### Tracy MacDonald’s Biography

Tracy was born and raised in Nelson, BC, a beautiful little tourist city in the heart of the Kootenay region. She lived there with her parents, Karen and Derrick, and her younger sister, Nancy. Her grandparents also lived close by and Tracy spent a lot of time traveling with them across Canada and abroad. Tracy’s family stressed the importance of appreciating what you have and helping others who are less fortunate. For example, Tracy’s grandparents were the top fundraiser 3 times for the local snowmobiling club, which raised funds to support both the local and children’s hospitals.

Tracy’s grandpa retired just after she was born and he was her primary caregiver while her parents were at work. Her grandpa’s precision and meticulous attention to detail when working on a project were skills that he passed on to Tracy. These skills have come to serve her well not only in her research but also in numerous volunteer activities. She has helped organize the Life & Health Science Research Day, CLS Annual User’s Meeting Workshops, and professional skills development workshops for the CIHR-THRUST program.

Tracy now lives in Saskatoon with her partner, Brian, whom she met in her first year of university. Growing up in the mountains of British Columbia, Tracy spent a great deal of time outdoors, which played a role in her decision to pursue a degree in toxicology. She is currently a PhD candidate in the Toxicology Graduate Program. Tracy’s research focuses on using both synchrotron and lab techniques to understand the uptake and accumulation of inorganic mercury in the developing embryo.

In her spare time, Tracy enjoys traveling, baking, crafting and running. Her most recent interest is in scuba diving. Brian and Tracy hope to one-day travel to Australia and dive near the Great Barrier Reef.

### **Exceptional Course Councilor Award**

#### **Sarah Purdy**

Sarah Purdy grew up on the Niagara escarpment in Ontario. She spent her time looking under rocks for salamanders, identifying plants and trees and looking for fossils in the limestone gravel pit near her house. In high school she took a summer job supervising a treasure game with polished stones and describing the different types, their makeup and their history to children and adults. This foundation of curiosity and exploration is the foundation of her interest in learning about the physical world, as well as teaching what she has learned to others.

Sarah completed her B.Sc. in Physics and Astronomy at Trent University, where she honed her interest in science outreach with a weekly show on the community radio station. After graduating, she spent a year travelling in Europe and Australia. The highlight of the trip was visiting the tomb and the late-life home of Leonardo daVinci. Returning to Canada, she worked in a marketing division of a company that designs and builds custom scientific instrumentation. Through this work she was introduced to Dr. Thomas Timusk at McMaster University, where her past interest in crystals became an advantage in exploring the chemical makeup and fundamental behavior of novel materials.

Sarah is now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Saskatchewan working on materials processing, modifying crystalline materials to grow nanoparticles trapped in solids. Such materials have applications in light emission for LEDs and light absorption for improved

efficiency in solar cells. The students, staff, and faculty of the Physics and Engineering Physics (P&EP) department encouraged Sarah to form the PEGASUS Course Council in 2011. She has served as Member at Large, Treasurer and Chair. PEGASUS engages in social activities and academic activities such as the Innovations in Nuclear Medicine in Saskatchewan symposium 2013. PEGASUS engages in professional development for P&EP students including the Student Summer Seminar series. She and other members of PEGASUS have been active contributors to the GSA in terms of policy compliance and various initiatives, such as improving childcare for graduate students on campus.