



# THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE GAIRDNER FOUNDATION

Developing, Recognizing and Retaining  
Canadian Talent

**gairdner**  
LES PRIX CANADA GAIRDNER AWARDS



# THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE GAIRDNER FOUNDATION

The Gairdner Foundation was established in 1957 and is dedicated to recognizing major research contributions to the treatment of disease and alleviation of human suffering. Through the annual prestigious Canada Gairdner Awards, the Gairdner Foundation has raised the profile of Canada as a nation that fosters innovation and scientific excellence. Since 1959, **more than 418 international scientists have received the Canada Gairdner Award and 102 have gone on to win the Nobel Prize.** The Canada Gairdner Awards are recognized internationally as being among the most prestigious in the world, based on our reputation for rigorous review and early recognition of breakthroughs in science.

While our accomplishments to date are impressive, there is no margin for stasis in our constantly changing environment. In response to this, **the Gairdner Foundation has launched a fundraising campaign to raise \$25 million to implement new programs and activities that promote a culture of, and investment in, science excellence and innovation in Canada.** It will augment our already prestigious awards, improve the wellbeing of those facing health inequalities worldwide and enhance our cutting-edge programming with our goal of increasing science literacy. It will increase Canada's ability to retain the brightest talent and inspire young minds to pursue a career in science. It will allow the Foundation to respond quickly to new and innovative opportunities and challenges.





# DEVELOPING, RECOGNIZING AND RETAINING CANADIAN TALENT

The Gairdner Foundation leverages the opportunity to bring Gairdner Awards laureates to Canada to develop programming that inspires high school students, undergraduate students, and post-graduate trainees to pursue careers in science and entrepreneurship. Increasing the investment in the next generation of Canadian researchers, and expanding our outreach and mentoring, will allow the Gairdner Foundation to help Canada retain its brightest talent, attract new talent, and support the development of Canada's scientific knowledge economy with defined touchpoints throughout the careers of the next generation of researchers. We have already received a generous donation to support the Canada Gairdner Momentum Award, which recognizes exceptional mid-career researchers working in health-related research in Canada. Now we seek to provide two additional programs to support students and early career faculty in their career progression.

## HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH THIS?







# 1 EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATOR COMPETITION & AWARDS

**\$5,000,000 Endowed**

The Gairdner Foundation understands the need to encourage the next generation of outstanding researchers to stay in Canada. The early career stage is vital since it is when promising research professionals choose where they will build their careers. To keep our research ecosystem healthy, we must ensure our emerging young investigators see Canada as a place they will be nurtured and supported.

In 2021, the Gairdner Foundation piloted the Early Career Investigator Competition, inviting young faculty from across the country to present their research as part of the Gairdner Science Week events. There has been outstanding uptake on this program and we will now look to formalize the competition by adding a formal adjudication process, providing five annual awards of \$25,000, and offering opportunities to participate in laureate lectures.

As we have heard from many of our laureates, inspiring young people to pursue science is a spark for innovation, but supporting outstanding researchers early in their career is vital to ensuring they reach their potential. This support is also necessary to ensure that Canada continues to be seen as a destination for future leaders.

The Gairdner Early Career Investigator Competition invites developing researchers to share their own work with our laureates, who chose the best candidates in their area of expertise to share that research with the world. The recipients of the Early Career Investigator Awards are welcomed into the Gairdner community with an opportunity to speak alongside international leaders in their fields, connect with students and other investigators, and celebrate alongside the other awardees. Many of them continue to take part in our programs and grow the Gairdner community in the years that follow.



# MEET OUR **GAIRDNER** EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATORS

## **Dr. Anna Blakney**

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Michael Smith Labs,  
University of British Columbia

Dr. Blakney was selected by Drs. Pieter Cullis, Katalin Karikó, & Drew Weissman in 2022. Since this time, she has been named to 2023 MIT Tech Review's 35 Innovators Under 35 and received a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Nucleic Acid Bioengineering. Blakney is a SciComms star with 250K+ followers on [TikTok](#), participating in Gairdner student programs with Exploring By The Seat of Your Pants, and leading a Gairdner Global Perspective Panel.



## **Dr. Bo Wang**

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University Health Network

Dr. Wang was selected by Drs. Stuart Orkin and John Dick in 2022. An AI trailblazer, Wang is the inaugural Temerty Professor in AI Research and Education at the University of Toronto, Chief AI scientist at the University Health Network, and holds a CIFAR AI Chair at the Vector Institute.



## **Dr. Sarah Elton**

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Dalla Lana School of Public Health,  
University of Toronto

Dr. Elton was selected by Drs. Malik Peiris and Yi Guan, Gairdner Global Health Award laureates in 2021. Since winning the Early Career Investigator Award, Dr. Elton has moved from Toronto Metropolitan University to assume the inaugural Eakin Chair in Critical Qualitative Health Research Methodology at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto. Elton is the National Bestselling author of *Locavore* and *Consumed: Food for a Finite Planet* and co-led a 2024 Gairdner Global Perspective Panel on the microbiome.







## **2 GAIRDNER SCHOLARS RESEARCH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

**\$1,000,000 Expendable**

The future of science depends on the next generation of researchers and innovators. It is essential that undergraduate students from all backgrounds are encouraged to pursue careers in science and technology. The scientific challenges of tomorrow will require diverse skills, assets and perspectives. The Gairdner Scholars Research Mentorship Program aims to ignite and inspire the passion for science in undergraduate students from underrepresented and equity-deserving groups, and to support their growth and potential as future leaders in Canadian innovation.

The Gairdner Scholars Research Mentorship program will focus on connecting students from underrepresented groups with dedicated mentors who will spend time helping them build their scientific ambitions and career paths. Each year, 20 students, whose future potential has been identified by our extensive network of Early Career Investigators, Canada Gairdner Momentum awardees and Canada Gairdner International Award laureates, will join the program and be named Gairdner Scholars.

Gairdner Scholars will participate in a structured program of career development workshops, lab visits and select summer internship opportunities across the country and potentially internationally. The program will be developed in consultation with equity, diversity and inclusion experts to address systematic challenges and barriers that prevent equity-deserving students from entering and remaining in science. The program will be unique among student programs in that students will have access to, and be mentored by, leading scientists in the world. This program has the potential to truly inspire young Canadians with an interest in science and encourage them to pursue long-term careers in science and innovation in Canada.



# YOUR OPPORTUNITY

In a world where the challenges we face are increasingly complex and interconnected, the pursuit of outstanding scientific achievement has never been more crucial. It is through innovation and the relentless pursuit of knowledge that we can address the greatest challenges of our age and shape a better future for all.

**Your support is critical to our mission.** By supporting the Campaign for the Gairdner Foundation, you are championing scientific excellence and contributing to the advancement of global health and well-being. Together, we can enhance science literacy and awareness, inspire the next generation of scientists, and support innovative initiatives that accelerate the pace of discovery.

Please join us in our quest to drive scientific excellence around the globe.

**Donate now at**  
<https://www.gairdner.org/donate>

**Or contact David White**  
at [david@gairdner.org](mailto:david@gairdner.org)  
for more information

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