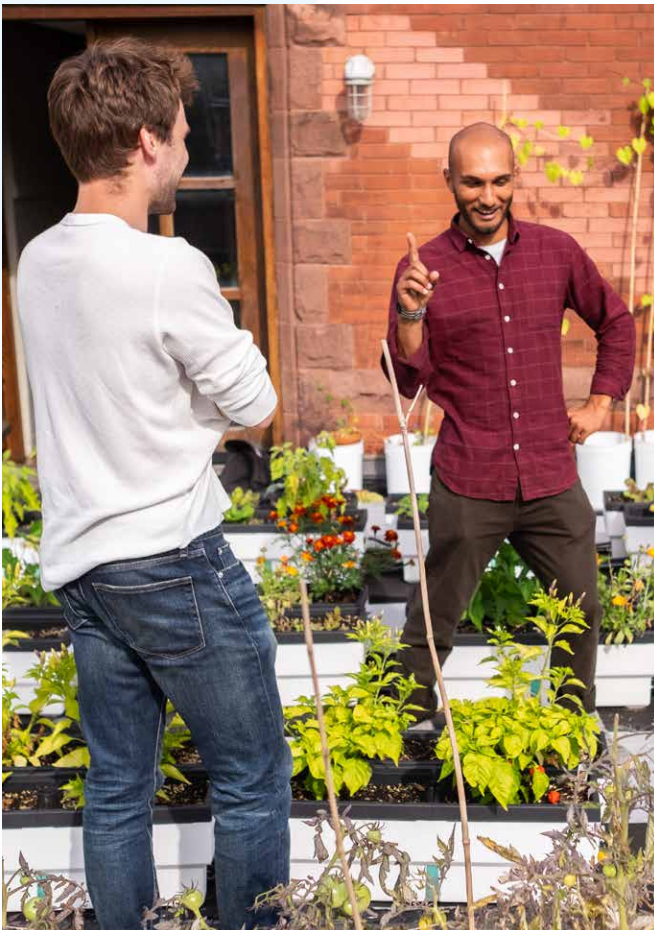


## Endowment impact 2023–2024

The University of Toronto’s standing as one of the world’s most prestigious institutions of higher education relies on generous endowed gifts that provide a permanent source of funding to attract the best students, researchers and scholars to our campuses. These gifts support groundbreaking research and deliver transformative education across almost every field of endeavour, making a lasting, positive impact on our communities and beyond. Here is a snapshot of just some of the exciting initiatives taking place on our campuses thanks to endowed gifts to the University of Toronto.



### Beatrice and Arthur Minden Symposium on the Environment

Each year, the Beatrice and Arthur Minden Symposium on the Environment, hosted by U of T’s School of the Environment, offers a series of multidisciplinary events showcasing current trends in environmental science and emerging issues that are shaping public policy, social justice and system change. It launched in 2015 through a donation from the Beatrice and Arthur Minden Foundation, which also funds a graduate research fellowship at the school.

The 2023 symposium, “Urban Ecologies: Imagining the Environmentally Just City,” took place over two days, featuring panels, talks and guided field trips into Toronto’s urban ecologies and its intertwined environmental, cultural and colonial histories.

“People came up to me for months afterwards and said how much they appreciate getting to hear from students in particular about the organizing work they’re doing on campus in the context of food systems and climate justice. It was really gratifying to be able to include students in the event.”

— **Michael Classens**, Panelist and Assistant Professor  
at the School of the Environment



## Jainism Studies at U of T Mississauga

In 2023, U of T Mississauga received an endowed gift from Gyan and Kanchan Jain and their family to support the study of Jainism, the ancient religion that has had a profound impact on the history and culture of South Asia.

Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions, emerging in India around 600 BCE. It was the vibrant South Asian community of Peel Region, on the doorstep of U of T Mississauga, that inspired the Jain family to fund a chair in Jain studies at UTM—the first endowed chair in the humanities at U of T Mississauga. The university matched the \$2.5 million gift for a total of \$5 million.

“Bringing Jain studies to U of T Mississauga cultivates a deeper understanding of Jain principles such as ahimsa, an idea that can bring peace and happiness to every living being and promote non-violence in our actions,” says Gyan Jain, whose children and several grandchildren have all studied at U of T.

The Jain studies endowment will expand UTM's Centre for South Asian Critical Humanities, which fosters multidisciplinary research. The gift will also fund events bringing together faculty, students, alumni and the broader community.

“We have a great opportunity to promote new research and teaching about this ancient belief system and to partner with Jain communities, locally and globally, to share this knowledge.”

— **Alexandra Gillespie**, UTM Vice-President and Principal

---

Photo: Gyan and Kanchan Jain with UTM Vice-President and Principal Alexandra Gillespie.



## Sharing knowledge, building bridges

It was the height of the pandemic when Ifedinma Agbatekwe, interested in pursuing a career in health care, went to her local pharmacy and asked for a job. She landed a co-op placement, and as wave after wave of COVID hit, she worked her way up to overseeing asymptomatic testing. It was chaotic, she says. And she loved every minute.

With her sights set over the counter, she enrolled in U of T Scarborough's molecular biology, immunology and disease program, with a double major in psychology. Now in her third year, she received two endowed awards, the Inclusive Excellence Award in Biological Sciences and the Cheung Family award.

“The Inclusive Excellence award was made to remove barriers Black and Indigenous students face, help them feel heard, worry less financially, and benefit from being a member of a research lab,” says Ivana Stehlik, professor in the Department of Biological Sciences and chair of the Bio Sci EDI committee.

Many biology faculty members donated their own money to fund the award, which includes a year-long meal plan, \$1,000, a paid research opportunity and one-on-one mentorship.

Agbatekwe is now working in a lab dedicated to immunology research and applying for U of T's doctor of pharmacy program. Outside the classroom, she serves on UTSC's Biology Students' Association and the Bio Sci EDI Committee.

“As Black individuals, what we lack is information about how to navigate our different options, because we don't have a lot of people in this specific field,” she says. “If we know how to better understand the spaces we're in, we can succeed faster and more.”

“If we know how to better navigate the spaces we're in, we can succeed faster and more.”

— **Ifedinma Agbatekwe**, third-year student, biological sciences, U of T Scarborough



## On the right path

The Pynn Family Paleontology Award helps outstanding undergraduate students in financial need pursue studies of fossilized animals and plants. For donor Bruce Pynn, paleontology was an early step in his career in health care.

The annual award is given to an undergraduate student of paleontology who has achieved academic excellence and also demonstrated financial need. Hugo Tsingfung Li, the 2023–2024 recipient, is pursuing an ecology and evolution specialist, paleontology major and earth science minor program at U of T Mississauga. Last summer, Hugo completed an arctic ecology field research course in Churchill, Manitoba as well as an undergraduate thesis.

Photo: Hugo Li at an arctic ecology field research course in Churchill, Manitoba.

“This award not only brings financial support but also allows me to follow my paleontology study even deeper. It also gives me time to participate as a member of the varsity figure skating team rather than having to find a part-time job.”

— **Hugo Tsingfung Li**, 2023–2024 recipient, Pynn Family Paleontology Award

When Bruce Pynn signed up for a paleontology course in 1980, he hadn't yet decided where to focus his university studies. But the U of T Mississauga

student soon found he was fascinated by the fossil record and what it revealed about the history of life on earth.

Today, Bruce has a thriving surgical practice in Thunder Bay, Ontario, repairing broken teeth and fractured facial bones. But he's never forgotten where he got his start. His belief in the value of those early studies has inspired him to help others follow the same path—through the Pynn Family Paleontology Award, funded by his generous donations to U of T Mississauga.

Information on the university's investment policies and performance can be found at: [uoft.me/endowment](https://uoft.me/endowment)



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**

DEFY  
GRAVITY