

# IMPACT

2020 UPDATE



**IMPROVING**  
*education in Pakistan*

**HELPING**  
*communities in Madagascar*

**COLLABORATING**  
*with Université Laval*

# KEY numbers

→ **175**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS** provided  
*(84 current students)*

→ **57**  
**INSTITUTIONS** attended globally

→ **51**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS** at the Master's level

→ **45**  
**STUDENTS** in S.T.E.M. fields  
*(Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)*

→ **27**  
**COUNTRIES** of origin:

*Afghanistan, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, India, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen*

→ **27**  
**STUDENTS** pursuing medical studies

→ **6x**  
**MULTIPLIER EFFECT**

*for every donor dollar contributed,  
thanks to the generosity of partners*

→ **11**  
**PHD STUDENTS:**

*international public law; international monetary and financial law; mobility and transport;  
forestry sciences; social forestry; wood sciences; educational studies; and hepatology*



# from **THE CHAIR** *and* **CEO**

In March 2020, the world went into lockdown.

The first impact was having to cancel our gala dinner scheduled for April 2020. We immediately had to react to the needs of 85 students who faced huge challenges since most were studying away from home and international travel shut down very quickly. In addition, some donors called to say their business was being severely impacted and they would not be able to continue their planned support, at least for 2020.

We gulped! And then decided to focus on five priorities. First, to ensure the health, safety and mental well-being of our scholars. Second, honour the commitments we had just finished confirming for 25 new scholarships starting September 2020. Third, ramp up our fundraising such that we would meet our 2020 target. Fourth, proceed with the appointment of a new board that was in the works and continue our plan to take board governance to a new level. And finally, put in place plans for seeking sustained, 10-year funding for eight university collaborations. We're delighted to have met all these priorities!

To date, we've provided 175 scholarships to women from 27 countries, studying at 57 institutions around the world. We are also very proud of the 80 alumnae who are already beginning to make an outsized impact in their communities, including the 21 who graduated in 2020 in virtual ceremonies.

As you read in this second issue of IMPACT, many of our alumnae continue to tackle one of our biggest crises: climate change. In addition, a number of other alumnae are focused on addressing one of the key ways to combat poverty: improved education. They are using their education, leadership skills and confidence to effect change in some of the world's most vulnerable and isolated communities.

We hope you enjoy this issue of IMPACT and we look forward to the continued, generous support of our partners and donors.

Rubina Havlin, ICD.D  
Interim Chair, Board of Directors

Narmin K. Ismail, MBA, M.S.M.  
Founder and CEO

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# OUR ALUMNAE

## where are they now?



*Jodi-Ann Smith, Jamaica*  
**MBA, University of British Columbia**  
*Canada*



When I graduated from the MBA program at UBC in 2017, I fulfilled a 10-year dream. I took a leap of faith in coming to Canada from Jamaica with minimal funding, but with a spirit of determination, hope and lots of hard work, I made it! Through the efforts of the Spark of Hope Foundation, I received a bursary for international students from UBC as well as a scholarship and mentoring from the Foundation.

Since graduation, I have been building my management career at Walmart Canada, where I completed their Leadership Training Program and then received successive promotions to becoming an Associate Category Manager in the eCommerce Merchandise Department. I have had a wonderful opportunity to provide e-commerce leadership and am responsible for the P&L for one website category.

After graduation, I volunteered with LeanIn Canada, which helps women achieve their ambitions and works to create equity. I was involved with reviewing applications, providing mentorship, and planning and organizing events aimed at exposing women to resources to propel their careers.

A key gap I have discovered is the lack of financial information aimed at women in the early stages of their career. I experienced this firsthand, and I am about to launch a portal for early-stage career women in Canada, especially new immigrants, to provide advice and resources on personal finance matters such as budgeting, saving, investing, and even buying their first car. I hope to impact thousands of young women worldwide in a meaningful way in the next few years.

**I hope to impact thousands of young women worldwide in a meaningful way in the next few years.**



This scholarship has helped me achieve what seemed impossible at the time. Before receiving aid from the Spark of Hope Foundation I was planning to skip my studies and return to Skardu, Northern Pakistan, due to severe financial constraints. Instead, I was able to complete my MEd from AKU-IED with distinction and a very high GPA.

My education has assisted me greatly: the knowledge and skills I acquired are the main drivers of where I am now. It has not only helped me in my professional career but also contributed

to me personally—I have become more confident and independent. My education has opened new doors for me and provided me with immense opportunities and experiences.

I wanted to pursue my master's even after marriage and having a child so that I could support my son for his lifetime. I knew that higher education would help my family become stronger financially and more independent. I'm now able to financially support my son and my aging parents as well.

I am currently working as a health education and nutrition officer at the health department in Skardu, where I work directly with the community. My job helps me serve my community regarding their health issues by providing awareness on preventive and curative approaches. I know I can make a great difference in the lives of many people by helping them improve their lifestyles and dietary habits.



*Annes Fatima, Pakistan*  
**MEd, Aga Khan University –  
Institute for Educational Development**  
*Pakistan*



**I can now not only financially support my family, but I am also directly serving my community as a health education and nutrition officer.**



*Lucia Satragno, Argentina*  
**PhD, International Monetary and Financial Law, University of Bern**  
*Switzerland*

**I am hopeful that my research can provide a banking model that will enable greater financial security for people around the world.**

I finished my PhD studies at the World Trade Institute, University of Bern, in May 2020. It has been a great personal and professional achievement. I have submitted and successfully defended my thesis during the pandemic and lockdown and with my entire family at

home, including three young children ages 7, 5 and 1 year.

I am now working as a research fellow at the Centre for Banking and Finance Law at the National University of Singapore. I am

passionate about the study of international monetary and financial law, especially under the current COVID-19 crisis and all the challenges it has brought to the global community.

I hope that my past and current research can assist students, academics and regulators in international monetary and financial law in their many tasks and challenges.



# OUR ALUMNAE

## where are they now?

*Yusra Shaukat, Pakistan*

**BS, Politics, Philosophy and Economics, Asian University for Women  
Bangladesh**



**I want to provide a platform to students where they have the opportunity to discover their interests with the help of co-curricular activities alongside their academics.**

Born and raised in one of Chitral's small villages, Brep, I always dreamt of pursuing a career in education. Growing up, I always looked up to my mother because she was a teacher. The way she communicated with her students inspired me. From a young age, I had the opportunity to extend my horizons beyond textbook learning, thanks to attending the local Aga Khan Higher Secondary School (AKHSS) in my area for grades 8 to 12.

After graduating high school from AKHSS, Kuragh, I applied to the Asian University for Women (AUW), Chittagong, Bangladesh, for my undergraduate degree. I was fortunate enough to get accepted with a scholarship from the university and also be supported by a scholarship from the Spark of Hope Foundation. I graduated from AUW with a BS degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) along with Development Studies as my minor in May 2019.

After graduation, I worked with an NGO, Foundation to Empower Students (FES), as a Teacher Trainer for five months, where I prepared teaching manuals for the teachers and conducted virtual workshops with them. I also helped prepare lesson plans and

learning materials for students in kindergarten to fifth grade. During this time, I applied to the School of Education at Lahore University of Management Sciences for an MPhil degree. I gained admission with a full scholarship in the department of Education Leadership and Management (ELM).

Due to COVID-19, classes are being conducted online, but I am happy that my learning did not stop. I am also currently a Curriculum Intern with the Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP), where my responsibilities include reviewing student learning outcomes and lesson plans for different ability levels. After my MPhil program, I want to apply for a PhD program. It is my dream to build a school in my area, Chitral, where I want to provide a platform to students where they will be able to discover their interests with the help of co-curricular activities along with their academics.

In ten years, I see myself working in Pakistan's education sector on educational policies. Besides this, I want my school to be similar to Harsukh school, Lahore, a well-respected school that combines academic and co-curricular activities.



*Nilufar Abdulloeva, Tajikistan*

**BA, Management Economics, University of Information, Technology and Management  
Poland**



**I want to build a modern hospital for disabled children, whose mission will be to help disabled individuals feel important in and needed by society.**

The Spark of Hope Foundation is a real “Noor” (light) in the life of girls like myself that come from economically underdeveloped countries. It is a foundation that makes dreams come true and creates leaders. I would like to express my gratitude to Spark of Hope for all its support throughout my student life, for believing in me and helping me achieve my goals.

In 2015 I got accepted into the University of Information Technology and Management in Poland, and successfully graduated in 2018 with a bachelor’s degree in International Management. The Spark of Hope Foundation supported me financially and emotionally. Upon my graduation, I moved to the United States in order to pursue my master’s degree and career development. Here in the U.S. due to the immigration process, I postponed my master’s studies while my bachelor’s degree was evaluated

for U.S. standards and was accepted at almost all the companies I worked with or am still working with. Due to my high-quality educational background, I was offered a job by many organizations and have been working as an accountant. I am currently working as a project manager in New York City.

Now that I am in the U.S. and successfully building my career, I am finally able to help my community and financially support my family in Tajikistan. However, my main long-term goal is to build a modern hospital for disabled children in Tajikistan, with various educational programs. Its mission will be to help disabled individuals to feel important in and needed by society, and I envision it being funded by supporters from all over the world. In the shorter term, I am planning on pursuing my master’s degree in finance and have the ability to further advance my skills and knowledge. After my graduation I hope to help my community on a larger scale.

I thank The Spark of Hope Foundation again for all its hard work and support to students in developing countries, and for being that “Noor” in all their scholars’ lives.



# Current scholars with **BIG** ambitions

*Uzma Vellani, Tanzania*  
**BSc, Nursing, Queen's University**  
Canada



*"I will use my education to assess, diagnose, plan and implement healthcare interventions and provide holistic care to my patients. In five years, I envision being a nurse on a pediatric floor, work with an interprofessional team, and developing my nursing skills further. In the future, I see myself as a travel nurse, working with various communities and populations, because travelling and helping people are both my passions!"*







*"I want to contribute to the world by bringing to light the damage created by some European regulations on international trade in the original producer population, and highlighting their social impact."*

*Pamela Torres, Peru*

**LLM, International Business Law, University of Lausanne**  
Switzerland



*"I want to work with the Nepal government in identifying the most illegally traded wood species, help restore forests and create activities for women of rural and marginalized communities."*

*Dikshya Dixit Lamicchane, Nepal*

**MSc, Wood Science, Université Laval**  
Canada



*Nozigul Tirandozova, Tajikistan*

**BSc, Earth and Environmental Science, University of Central Asia**  
Tajikistan

*"I want to help minimize the environmental impact of human activities and improve the quality of life in mountainous regions."*



*Irfana Khatoon, Pakistan*

**MA, Geopolitics and International Affairs, University of Sussex**  
United Kingdom

*"I want to continue my studies at the PhD level so I can work towards raising political awareness in the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and help address the political problems that people of northern Pakistan have been facing for the last six decades."*





## *Letter from a scholar*

*Vololoniaina Rasoarimanana, Madagascar*

**PhD, Social Forestry, Université Laval**

*Canada*



# *Leading communities in Madagascar to autonomy and resilience*

Dear Spark of Hope donors,

This scholarship allows me to complete my doctoral thesis on time and rapidly begin the project that I am currently developing with a network of community custodians of their territories-of-life.

The objective of my research is to capitalize on the few known good practices that have led a dozen local communities in Madagascar to autonomy and resilience by reconciling sustainable management of nature, livelihoods and social well-being in their territory. Madagascar needs a critical mass of communities

working towards this goal. They need to face the threats of the global trends of mass production and overconsumption that often harm their culture, nature and local production system, and enhance their vulnerability. The research results will be used by local development actors, practitioners and their international partners to improve their approach.

My thesis will also enrich the theory and methods to understand complex socio-ecological systems. Personally, it serves me in my profession to develop territorial projects on renewable energy use within several collectivities,

in partnership with Canadian organizations. In fact, only 30% of Malagasy people have access to electricity. Developing renewable energy with an efficient governance and management system with local communities is a good example of a structured project, leading to multiple economic and social activities and respecting the environment.

In particular, the focus will be on schools, health centres, youth and women for their autonomy and resilience. For instance, the use of oil and wood will be reduced and will improve women's health, while leading to energy transition and reducing environ-

mental degradation. Schools, offices, as well as community and health centres will be able to use computers to learn and communicate with the world. Women, youth, entrepreneurial farmers and fishermen may carry out livelihood activities such as sewing or rice husking and better preserving products such as fish or yogurt.

Each community involved will become a member of a local, national or international network which will allow them not only to share their experiences, but also to learn from their peers, and nurture collaboration and partnership. Without a scholarship, I would have had to divide my time between my studies, my professional aim (presently a voluntary occupation) and the search for work which does not necessarily relate to my objectives. However, my collaborative approach with communities requires that I develop the research project with them and they would have to wait for me if I didn't have the means to go there. The scholarship allows me to channel my efforts efficiently and effectively.



### How is this scholarship helping you further your education?

This scholarship has helped me bridge my financial shortfall and changed the way I view the world and obtain my degree. With its particular focus on women, the Spark of Hope Foundation has helped me delve deeper into the subject of gender roles in traditional societies such as the one in which I grew up. The scholarship has also opened for me a door through which I can view women, similar to me, who are devoted to changing the world for the better.

### Why did you choose to study international development?

I have observed many specialists and noticed that despite their genius, many lack a global outlook, a certain ability to see the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence that define our quality of life. International development, however, is mostly free of this problem, one which both provides professional knowledge as well as experiences, and appreciates the natural links of society. My degree provides great insight into the current issues the world faces, which is what I am interested in solving.

### Where do you see yourself in five years?

My big project for the short-term is linking my department at the University of Waterloo with a few of the local schools in Khorog. This way I hope to connect these two worlds allowing both to mutually learn important lessons and skills. My interest in technology and general engineering has also grown in recent months: I believe technological knowledge paired with international development could bring about the most growth in terms of development, and I want to help my department initiate a dual program with engineering programs, especially considering that Waterloo is one of the best engineering schools in Canada.

### What impact do you hope to make on your community, country and the world?

Daily, my 'community' seems to grow larger and more diverse. While it started as just Badakhshan, today my community is the entire world. I believe Badakhshan is severely under-appreciated. Although lacking certain natural resources, it offers myriad other forms of natural wealth. I think through the industrialization of certain raw materials we can move out of sustenance economies and beyond import markets and become export-led manufacturers of products and resources much demanded by other markets. Constantly finding myself comparing Badakhshan to Switzerland, I believe there is no reason we should lag other countries, if people are empowered and armed with the latest technological advancements.

*Farosat Alamshoeva, Tajikistan*

**BA (Hons), International Development**

*University of Waterloo, Canada*



# INSTITUTIONS *attended*

## BANGLADESH

Asian University for Women  
MAG Osmania Medical  
College Sylhet

## BELGIUM

University of Antwerp

## BENIN

African School of Economics

## CANADA

Algoma University  
Brock University  
Carleton University  
McGill University  
Ontario Tech University  
Queen's University  
Ryerson University  
Trafalgar Castle School  
Trent University



**University of British  
Columbia**

Hover Collective  
UBC Brand & Marketing

University of Alberta  
University of Calgary  
University of Toronto  
University of Waterloo

Université Laval  
York University

## FRANCE

Sorbonne University

## HUNGARY

Central European University

## KAZAKHSTAN

KIMEP University

## KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

American University of  
Central Asia  
University of Central Asia  
(Naryn campus)

## LEBANON



**American University  
of Beirut**

Lebanese American  
University

## LIBERIA

Cuttington University  
Monrovia Bible College  
United Methodist University

## NEPAL

Nepal Engineering College

## NETHERLANDS

UWC Maastricht

## NICARAGUA

Managua University Medical  
College - UNAN Managua  
UCAN Managua: Universidad  
Cristiana Autonoma de  
Nicaragua

## PAKISTAN

Aga Khan University -  
Institute for Educational  
Development



**Aga Khan University  
Medical College**

Allama Iqbal Medical College  
Ayub Medical College  
Benazir Bhutto Medical  
College  
Fatima Jinnah Medical  
University  
Institute of Space Technology  
Government College  
University Lahore  
Lahore University of  
Management Sciences  
(LUMS)  
National University of Science  
and Technology (NUST)  
Rawalpindi Medical College

## POLAND

UITM - University of  
Information, Technology and  
Management

## SWITZERLAND



**University of Bern**

© Universität Bern, Kommunikation & Marketing  
Photo: Nadine Steinmann

University of Geneva  
University of Lausanne/EPFL

## TAJIKISTAN

University of Central Asia  
(Khorog campus)

## TURKEY

University of Ankara Yildirim  
Beyazit

## UK

Coventry University  
London School of Economics  
and Political Science  
University of Birmingham  
University of Sussex

## USA

Mount Holyoke College  
Wartburg College

*Damase P. Khasa,*  
**Professor, Department of Wood and Forest Sciences**  
**Université Laval**  
Canada



# Collaboration with Université Laval

## Tell us a bit about your department at Université Laval.

Founded in 1910, the present Faculty of Forestry, Geography and Geomatics (FFGG) is one of the oldest among the 17 faculties at Laval. The Department of Wood and Forest Sciences I belong to is the largest department, and its mission is to provide training at all levels and develop knowledge in the fields of forestry, wood engineering and the conservation of forest ecosystems. It is the only one in Canada to offer postgraduate studies in agroforestry.

It trains students in five undergraduate programs and 10 MSc and PhD programs, totaling more than 185 courses and training activities. With grants and contracts totaling \$10 to \$12 million dollars annually, it has eight research chairs, two

research centers recognized by the University Council and a research consortium.

## How did the collaboration start and what does it entail?

I met Narmin Ismail at a conference in Ottawa, and what struck me most is that SoHF provides university-level scholarships to bright young women from the developing world. This is significant when we know that women are underrepresented in Natural Sciences and Engineering even here in Canada! The underrepresentation of women is worse in the developing world (e.g., in sub-Saharan Africa, only 8% of women are enrolled at university, compared to 11% of men, according to the 2019 World Bank Report on higher education). After multiple discussions, we signed a collaboration agreement in June 2016.

## How are students selected for the SoHF scholarship?

The selection committee is run at the autumn academic session by the Vice-Dean's office of the FFGG. The FFGG publishes a call for applications and presents shortlisted candidates to SoHF. The FFGG assists students with completing the appropriate SoHF application forms and submitting all documentation. The official announcement to students is done during the winter academic session at the Evening Remittance Awards Event presided by the Dean of the Faculty where all our Donors and Partners are invited.

## How does this partnership help FFGG students at the university?

In the words of our Director of International Office, Professor Richard Poulin:

“By working together, the University's and Foundation's financial assistance has made it possible to support bright female leaders from the Global South at the PhD and Master's level over the past four years. We look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship, and to the deep impact that we are confident these students will have in their communities, countries and in the world.”

## What are your post-graduation expectations of students?

We expect to see these young women leaders participate equally with men as powerful agents of change in the construction of more post-COVID resilient, peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable societies. This is especially critical given the growing urgency of climate change on our planet.



# FROM OUR *benefactors*

The Nanji Family Foundation supports The Spark of Hope Foundation as we are confident that educating and empowering the next generation of women leaders will lead to long-lasting change in their communities.

*Gulshan and Pyarali Nanji*

*Markham, ON*

I have been honoured to support the Foundation since its inception to help make a difference in the lives of marginalized communities. It's amazing to see the impact SoHF scholars are already making, and it's inspiring to learn about their ambitions to positively impact their communities and the world.

*Doug Lawson*

*Toronto, ON*

Educating a woman is equal to educating many generations. Higher-level women's education creates unlimited possibilities in society by improving health and helping alleviate poverty, particularly in underprivileged and conflict-torn areas of the world. It also helps increase female labour force participation, and enables women to achieve economic self-sufficiency. This is the vision of the Spark of Hope Foundation which it implements remarkably well.

It has been our pleasure and privilege to support the Foundation over several years, and we look forward to continuing with this association for years to come.

*Mithoo and Nabat Gillani*

*Calgary, AB*

## BECOME A *benefactor*

**Our goal is to assist 1,000 students over the next decade with the multi-year support they need.**

1. Your helping hand supports young women from areas of conflict and remote areas to become tomorrow's leaders.
2. These bright women will break the cycle of poverty in their families and make huge changes in their communities.
3. Your donation is multiplied 6x by participating universities and other partners. This increases your impact dramatically.
4. Your donation is tax deductible, reducing your actual cost significantly.
5. You can take advantage of convenient, affordable, and tax-smart ways to make a strategic donation, including gifts of stocks and securities, annuities, and bequests.

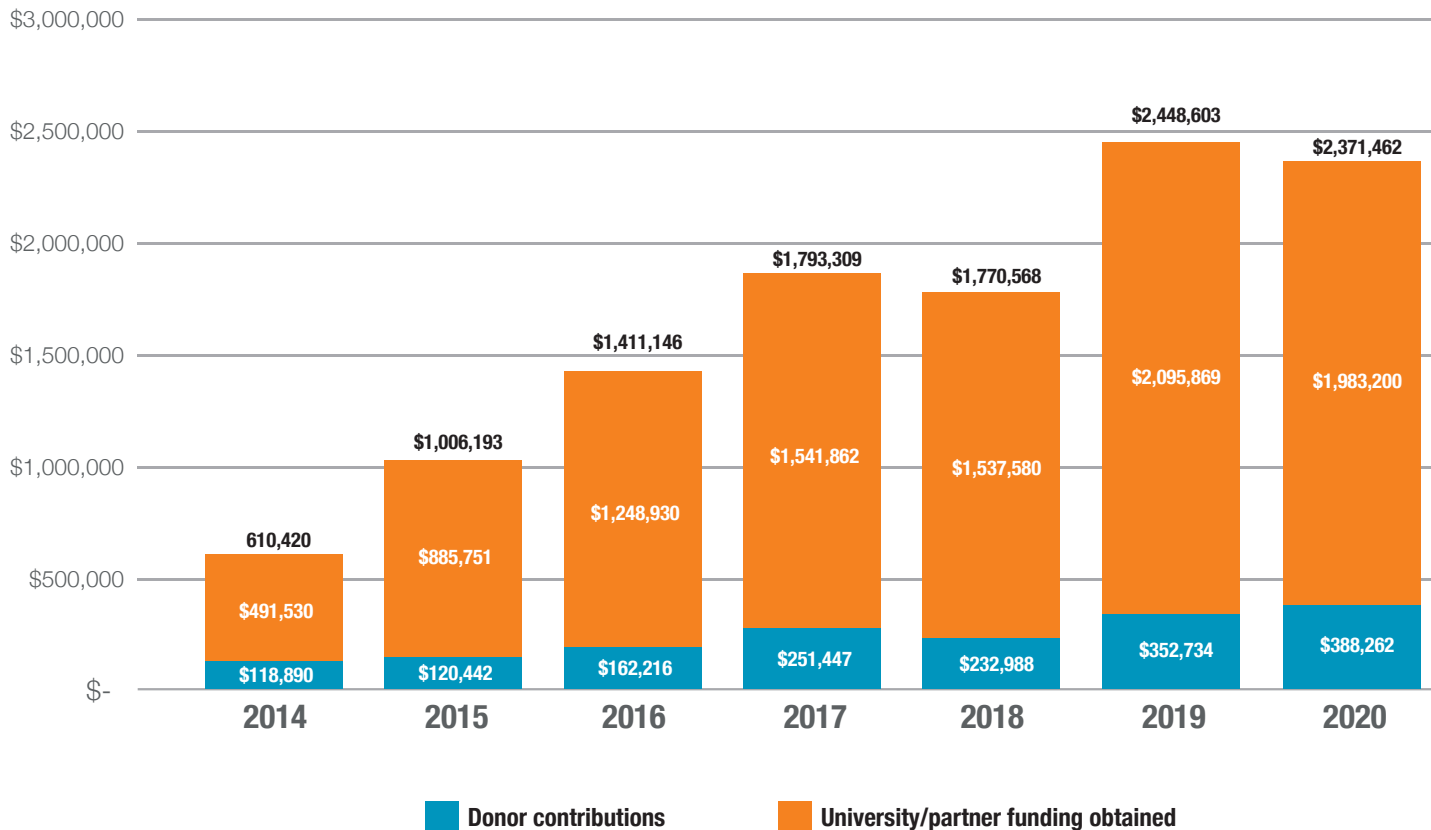
**Silver Benefactor:** \$250 per month or \$3,000 per year for four years provides a half scholarship.

**Gold Benefactor:** \$500 per month or \$6,000 per year for four years provides a full scholarship.

# REVENUES *and* COSTS

Our annual revenues, raised through donor contributions, are allocated primarily to scholarships to help support our students. This generous donor support helps secure six-fold funding from university and partner collaborations.

Our program management, evaluation, marketing, and reporting costs amounted to only 7% of total funding in 2020. The Foundation's Board of Directors, partnerships and volunteers help us maintain this efficiency.



**PROGRAM MGMT.  
AS % OF  
TOTAL COSTS**

16%      12%      9%      8%      7%      7%      7%

# ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FEDERALE DE LAUSANNE (EPFL)

*Lausanne, Switzerland*



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