

Idea to impact: In conversation with the Seneca team that won a \$30,000 research grant

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We often hear the words 'Be the change you want to see,' but for the #SenecaProud winning team, this has become their reality. Under the guidance of Seneca professor Dr. Juan Marcelo Gómez, a team of students from the School of Human Resources and Global Business were awarded a \$30,000 research grant through The Wawanesa Climate Champions: Youth Innovation Grant.

This grant is part of the Canadian Colleges for a Resilient Recovery (C2R2) initiative that supports young leaders who aim to address climate change adaptation and mitigation. We asked the team to share their journey and delve into what inspired this remarkable accomplishment.

Reflecting on Being Chosen as One of Only Five Recipients in Canada

"It is extremely satisfying and humbling to be chosen as one of the beneficiaries of this prestigious grant. It is a testament to the dedication and hard work put into developing an applied research project that addresses pressing ecological challenges. Being aware that our study was distinguished from other entries is both affirming and inspiring, as it confirms the importance of our research endeavours in addressing both climate change and agricultural efficiency", adds Dr. Gómez.

Seneca student and principal investigator on the project, Navdeep Singh adds, "Since I arrived in Canada, I've awaited an opportunity like this. With unwavering support from Dr. Gómez, this dream has become a reality. This acknowledgment fuels my motivation to continue working on innovative solutions and drive meaningful change. It's a privilege to join a cohort of passionate individuals dedicated to creating a more sustainable future for generations to come."

The Unexpected Journey and Perfect Timing

"One day, while at work, I found myself conversing with an AI application called 'Pi'. Amidst the surrounding noise, Pi misheard my query and ended up explaining about Variable Rate Technology (VRT) instead. It was both amusing and intriguing as I delved into the subject. This unexpected encounter coincided with the announcement of a grant by Dr. Gómez expressing his willingness to supervise the project.

I immediately conceived the idea of utilizing VRT to mitigate carbon emissions to address climate change; however, VRT is primarily used for improving resource efficiency and profitability in huge farms. Upon sharing this concept with Dr. Gómez, he was enthusiastic about it. After extensive research, numerous discussions, and countless hours refining the proposal, coupled with Dr. Gómez's unwavering guidance and team support, we did it!" says Navdeep.

The inspiration behind the cause

Seneca student and co-investigator Clarissa Getigan on the team shares, "My inspiration to address reducing carbon emissions in agriculture comes from my studies in urban agriculture and sustainable development. Learning about agriculture's significant environmental impact, especially its carbon emissions, highlighted the urgent need for sustainable practices. Experiencing the potential of sustainable agricultural methods firsthand in urban projects solidified my commitment to a more sustainable future."

Making a Difference: From Awareness to Action

"As an agriculture graduate with a keen understanding of soil emissions and agricultural practices, I've long been aware of the pressing need to tackle this issue. Throughout my studies, discussions on agricultural emissions and carbon sequestration were commonplace, further fueling my determination to make a difference in this field. When I became aware of the grant opportunity, my immediate thought was, 'Let's take action and make a difference using these funds.'

Furthermore, agriculture is profoundly affected by climate change, leading to reduced yields, increased pest attacks, and severe weather. Recognizing agriculture's vital role in feeding the world, our project was motivated by the urgent need to address these challenges and safeguard global food security", shares Navdeep.

Seneca's Commitment and Support Shines Through

"Seneca has always been dedicated to promoting practical research, encouraging creativity, and providing assistance to students and staff members in their pursuit of significant research projects. The support and resources provided by the community at Seneca have undeniably been instrumental in the submission of the grant request. The achievement is a testament to the favourable academic atmosphere and the assistance offered by Seneca Polytechnic," shares Dr. Gómez.

Empowering Advice to Influence a more Sustainable Future

Seneca student and co-investigator Mohammad Bassim Faridy shares, "My advice to fellow

students is to remember that every action, no matter how small, can make a difference. Firstly, educate yourself. Take the time to learn about the various facets of climate change, from its causes to its impacts and potential solutions. Secondly, don't underestimate the power of collaboration. Seek out like-minded individuals and organizations who share your passion. Together, we can make a difference and create a more sustainable future for generations to come."

In conclusion, Dr. Gómez adds, "It is crucial to never underestimate the profound influence that your research and innovation may exert in defining a future that is both sustainable and egalitarian. Anticipate encountering obstacles and failures along your journey but have a strong and determined mindset towards your objectives."

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