



KmEVGILp

Ryan Wishak

Entry details

Nominee Name	Ryan Wishak
Nominee Organization	Western University

Impact Story: Describe the effort or initiative led by the nominee and the impact it had on your campus or community.

Ryan is a natural chef, leader and educator whose work has had a meaningful and measurable impact on the student experience at Western University. He joined Western over five years ago, bringing experience from an organization dedicated to teaching and community engagement through cooking. In his new role as Unit Manager, Ryan combines culinary expertise with operational leadership to help deliver one of the strongest and most engaging student dining experiences in Canada. From the beginning, it was clear that Ryan would not only manage operations, but also enrich campus life through food, education and connection.

Ryan quickly immersed himself in our residence community and made an immediate impact through inclusive student engagement. One of his early successes was his direct engagement with students. Drawing on his passion for teaching, Ryan organized a hands-on cooking class for first-year students at our largest dining hall, attracting over 30 participants. Working in partnership with our dietitian and Executive Chef, Ryan delivered a practical, accessible session focused on safe cooking practices and nutritious eating, equipping students with real-life skills that extend well beyond campus.

Ryan continually seeks innovative ways to connect with students and elevate their dining experience. He has introduced trendy pop-up concepts such as a Montreal-style bagel bar with eight unique cream cheese flavours and a devilled egg bar reimagined with creative toppings. Beyond these initiatives, Ryan orchestrates full-scale themed events with thoughtful details and a true 'wow' factor, consistently demonstrating creativity, leadership and a strong commitment to excellence.

Leadership & Collaboration: How did this person lead, collaborate, or inspire others?

Ryan is an intuitive, observational leader who approaches challenges with thoughtfulness, strategy and collaboration. He takes time to assess situations, engage stakeholders and develop well-informed plans.

As a chef himself, Ryan has an innate ability to connect with our culinary teams in residence dining. His extensive knowledge and experience have been invaluable in this area.

In 2022, Ryan assumed responsibility for our largest residence dining operation, serving over 1,500 students daily. At the time, the unit faced significant challenges including service gaps, labour constraints and the lingering impacts of the pandemic on staffing and morale. Rather than scaling back, Ryan focused on empowering his existing team, instilling confidence and elevating performance to meet student expectations. As a result, food production and

menu variety increased without significant changes to labour or operational costs. This demonstrated Ryan's ability to deliver strong results through leadership rather than resources alone.

Over the past two years, Ryan has revitalized the dining experience at Saugeen-Maitland Hall through collaborative innovation. He reintroduced teppanyaki service, launched a gourmet sandwich program and developed two new micro-concepts. He brought the pizza oven back to life, delivering fresh-made pizzas daily and introduced a mini diner featuring student favourites such as smash burgers, poutine and the ever-so-popular crispy fried chicken sandwiches.

Ryan's success is rooted in strong partnerships. He works closely with culinary teams, dietitians and managers to ensure ideas are co-created, operationally feasible and driven by student needs and feedback. Whether engaging directly with students or reviewing suggestions in his feedback book, he ensures their voices shape the dining experience. His dedication has significantly enhanced the quality and variety of offerings, elevating the overall student experience in residence dining.

Personal Qualities: Share how this person embodies the spirit of Paul Fairbrook through compassion and service.

Ryan's defining quality as a leader is his unwavering commitment to creating a positive, inclusive and memorable student experience. His love for food extends beyond meals. It is a vehicle for building community, fostering joy and creating moments that students will remember long after they leave Western. He approaches every initiative with creativity and enthusiasm, ensuring that dining is not just functional, but meaningful.

Ryan's compassion and empathy shine through in the way he connects with students and staff. He listens, understands and responds with care, making everyone feel valued and included. Whether it's hosting themed events, leading cooking demonstrations or supporting cultural initiatives, Ryan consistently demonstrates a deep respect for diversity and individuality. His calm and positive demeanor creates a culture where collaboration thrives, even under pressure. Challenges are met with optimism and solutions, never stress.

The impact of Ryan's work is best reflected in the voices of those he serves. As one manager shared, "His type of student engagement is what I love to see and is truly inspiring." A student wrote, "Even if you've never cooked before, Ryan and his team will guide you through it with patience and kindness, making sure you end up with some amazing food." From cultural projects to themed experiences, Ryan's efforts inspire gratitude and admiration: "Our special gratitude and tons of overwhelming love goes to Ryan Wishak. Thank you for believing in your Ukrainian team and giving them an opportunity to show their talents!"

Ryan's ability to combine passion with empathy, creativity with calm leadership and positivity with professionalism makes him an extraordinary asset to Western. His influence extends far beyond dining and shapes the students' experience in meaningful, lasting ways.

Please submit a short video (1–3 minutes) featuring the nominee and/or their work. Videos may be used in conference presentations and marketing to celebrate all nominees. The content may be edited by NACUFS staff to create a broader video celebrating the winners.

- **Testimonials (colleagues, supervisors, or students)**
- **Social media highlights**
- **Photos of the nominee in action**
- **Survey results or other metrics**
- **Letters of appreciation**
- **Newsletters or articles featuring their work**

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.

Attachment name Video Submission
https://youtu.be/jo7KE...


Attachment name Nomination Document
https://drive.google.co...


Attachment name Photography
https://drive.google.co...


Attachment name Social Posts
https://drive.google.co...