



Imprint

Your Stories, Your Voice

July 2026
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How does UWSA
compare to other
staff associations?
P3

Quiz: Where should
you get your
perfect cold treat?
P10

Students share
preconceptions
about UW
P17

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 Why is UWSA not unionized?
by Veronica Reiner

14 Understanding scholarships: Looking beyond the dollar figure
by Annora Jo

07 UW talent: Student built projects turning campus life into viral products
by Emma Danesh

17 Delulu or trelulu? UW students respond to popular assumptions about the university
by Radha Vyas



20 The digital cameras comeback
by Annora Jo

22 Recipe: Carmelized shallot tomato paste with anchovies
by Ingrid Au

12 Skills you can still build before September
by Carla Stocco

23 July crossword
by Joseph Cushman



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Why is UWSA not unionized?

Veronica Reiner, Executive Editor



The majority of staff associations at universities across Ontario are unionized, including the Wilfrid Laurier University, York University, Queen's University, and The University of Western Ontario. Here at UW, the University of Waterloo Staff Association (UWSA) is one of the few exceptions, remaining an association instead of a certified trade union. But what are the pros and cons to a staff association compared to a union?

University of Waterloo Staff Association (Non-unionized)

The UWSA represents more than 3,000 staff members at UW, including staff who are not unionized, not casual, and non-academic appointments. The UWSA also represents the staff who work for the Faculty Association, Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association and the Graduate Student Association.

Staff hired before Oct. 26, 2022 had to opt in to UWSA membership. Since that date, new hires automatically pay dues and are part of the association. The UWSA's dues are 0.28 per cent of a staff members' salary. "Alongside

member events, workshops, and community building, much of our time is spent advocating for staff. That includes advancing better working conditions through policy work and other engagements with the university, as well as providing direct support to individual members. We are seeing more staff reach out for that support than ever before," said UWSA president Alyssa Kuron.

Kuron attributed this to an increasing volume of employees, along with some specific member complaints, as well as more outreach about the UWSA's services.

"Return-to-campus and hybrid work are top concerns we're hearing from staff, especially around inconsistent implementation of the new flexible and hybrid guidelines," Kuron said. "We raise this regularly with the university

and have also developed our own guide to flexible and hybrid work to support members."

Kuron added that other member concerns included the university budget situation, job security, increased workload and burnout, along with increased parking costs and more.

The UWSA is not certified as a trade union through the labour board, meaning that members do not have the right to strike and do not pay into a strike fund. This also means that the UWSA does not engage in comprehensive collective bargaining, where all terms of employment are negotiated at once.

"It's certainly not something we're pursuing at this time," Kuron said, on unionization. "We are intentionally structured as an association, not a union, which allows us to focus on representing staff through our memorandum of agreement with the university, which we recently strengthened to reinforce our role. Laura McDonald, communications officer at UWSA, noted that their recent Memorandum of Agreement changes has given the association more of the same powers as



UWSA president Alyssa Kuron. (Photo contributed)



Sarah Landy, Chair of UWSA. (Photo contributed)

a union, including salary negotiations and third-party arbitration for both negotiations and association grievances.

In addition, the UWSA operates similar to a union, such as being formally recognized as the sole representative of university staff, getting equal say in approving staff employment policies, and access to labour lawyers.

McDonald said that to her knowledge, the Staff Association has never formally attempted to unionize, although external groups have tried in the past.

A staff member not affiliated with

the association ran a campaign to unionize in 2001 through the Canadian Auto Workers. It was later called off. There was another attempt in 2007 by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, which went to vote and failed, with 27 per cent voting in favour (227 votes in favour, 587 against). Faculty made it to a certification vote in May 1996, but it failed, with 287 ballots marked in favour of unionization, 361 against, and four spoiled ballots. The UWSA consists of about 2,000 members and the UWSA Board consists of typically eight to

ten elected directors (currently at eight), which includes chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary. They have monthly meetings with the operations team, including the president and support staff.

“We talk about issues related to the association specifically, such as governance, finances, staff relations, outreach, and other big topics that come up,” said Sarah Landy, UWSA chair.

The organization also holds annual members meetings where voting members are invited to attend and ask questions. Members elect new directors to

the board in this meeting, review bylaw changes, as well as review the treasurer’s report and financial statements.

The history of UWSA dates back to 1969, when a steering committee was formed by staff members. By 1973, the UWSA was incorporated, and became officially recognized by the university two years later.

“The University of Waterloo values its long-standing, collaborative relationship with the UWSA, grounded in a formal Memorandum of Agreement that defines how we work together on matters affecting staff. The UWSA is the recognized representative body for staff and provides an established framework for input on policies, compensation, and workplace concerns, including formal processes for negotiation and dispute resolution,” said Lisa Yuhasz, interim chief human resources officer at UW, in a statement to *Imprint*.

“While the UWSA is not a certified union, the university recognizes it within a formal framework that supports structured engagement and ongoing, collaborative dialogue. Our recently renewed agreement and memorandum of settlement reflect this ongoing partnership and our shared commitment to a positive work environment for University of Waterloo staff.”

University of Western Ontario Staff Association (Unionized)

The University of Western Staff Association (UWOSA) is an independent union and represents about 900 staff members, including administrative, clerical, technicians, drivers, and technical staff.

UWOSA is unique in the sense that

it remained independent, rather than joining a national union such as CUPE or Unifor.

“Joining a national union has its pros and it has its cons,” noted UWOSA president Arzie Chant. “The pros are, in theory, that you might receive

support from the national union, so if you’re in a position of a particularly nasty grievance, there is typically a national office you may be able to draw upon. During a strike, you may be able to get support from a national union.”

He added that one of the benefits

of being an independent union is lower dues. Current dues at UWOSA are 1.75 per cent of a staff's salary, which Chant noted was lower than most unions.

Members of the organization receive confidential advice for any workplace concern, officers advocating for their rights under the collective agreement, legal representation, stewards training, and a strike fund.

Chant emphasized the importance of having a union to protect worker rights, especially as employees face increasing

“The union is there to step in and say, ‘Excuse me. You do not have the right to force this person to work unpaid overtime.’”

— Arzie Chant, UWOSA president

workloads.

“Wage theft is so rampant,” Chant said. “Employers are constantly using coercive tactics to try to force people to work unpaid overtime, to force people [without remuneration] to cover for off for colleagues that are on vacation, that are on sick leave, that have resigned, that have retired, and force them to work at higher levels of sophistication, or potentially more dangerous work, or work inviting more risk than other types. And so having a union allows us to combat that.”

He added that wage theft manifests itself in a number of ways – for example, one issue he commonly sees is if an employee retires or resigns from a position or transfers elsewhere, months and months will go by without rehiring for the position. This leaves other employees in the department to pick up increased workloads or responsibilities without any additional compensation.

“When people can’t get the work done because of excessive volume or expectations... what happens in a non unionized environment is they get chewed out, they potentially get punished, they get made to fear for their job,” Chant said. “But in a unionized environment, when people start coming down on them, saying you have to work extra and we’re not paying you overtime. The union is there to step in and say ‘Excuse me. You do not have the right to force this person to work and to work unpaid overtime.’”

Chant said this is different from reporting a workplace concern to the Ministry of Labour, where a worker is more likely to face reprisal for doing so.

“In a unionized environment, reprisal is specifically prohibited under our collective agreement. And it can be severely punished if they attempt to punish people for going to the union,” Chant said.

Article 44 of the collective agreement addresses job evaluation, which sets out the way in which a job will be evaluated and the frequency of which it will be evaluated. For example, an incumbent employee may request a job evaluation review provided there has been a significant, permanent change in the duties performed at the job.

The majority of resolutions provided through UWOSA are informal. Af-

ter a staff member voices a concern to the union, the UWOSA will either train the staff member as to how to address this with the supervisor, or request an informal meeting with the supervisor.

If that fails, they may move to the next step, which is a formal grievance, where the UWOSA would file a standard form indicating that the collective agreement has been violated, and indicates what the violation is and what the remedy is. If that failed, the UWOSA would escalate the concern to the person who oversees the faculty or department. Following that, the UWOSA would contact the head of human resources.

“After that, if we still can’t come to an agreement, we would file for what’s called arbitration,” Chant explained.

An arbitrator is an objective third party to resolve a conflict outside of court, who evaluates the evidence and hears arguments from both sides, then comes to a firm, binding decision.

How UWOSA Resolves Workplace Concerns



University of Guelph Professional Staff Association (Non unionized)

The University of Guelph Professional Staff Association (PSA) operates similarly to UWSA as an association, not a union. The Guelph PSA was established in 1982, and staff noted there is no record of members attempting to unionize in the past.

“We’re a staff association, not a union,” said Sameer Al-Abdul-Wahid, chair of the PSA. “Many of us are managers, but not all of us. It’s a bit of a different environment from most of the other employee groups on campus who are unionized through USW or OSSTF or CUPE and more.”

The PSA represents about 1,200 employees, with about 960 members. The rest have opted out, or have been at the university for a long time and did not opt

in. Staff hired after May 2024 are automatically opted in. Membership dues are about \$10 a month (or \$120 a year) through payroll deductions.

About every three years, the Guelph PSA negotiates a compact with the university on behalf of its members, outlining policies around salaries, vacation leave, career coaching, sick leave,

performance assessment, and more.

“So that is really the largest task we will take on as a group because it touches everyone,” Al-Abdul-Wahid noted.

The Guelph PSA also hosts events such as conferences, provides staff awards with cash prizes, offers legal subsidies, as well as offers professional development resources.



Unifor 5555 (formerly McMaster University Staff Association)

The union Unifor 5555 represents some McMaster University employees, including non academic administrative, professional and technical employees, parking and transit staff, facility services and special constables. There are more than 3,400 employees represented across all six units.

The McMaster University Staff Association (MUSA) was established as an association in 1973, and was later recognized as a certified trade union by the Labour Board of Ontario in 2000.

Emily Heikoop, president of Unifor 5555, clarified that she was not directly involved with the unionization process, but that she was able to speak to the general idea of what happened.

“One of the members in the staff association had a problem... The university recognized automatic dues check-off for the union, and a member had a problem with that. They [said], ‘We’re not a union. You can’t take dues off my

paycheque,’” Heikoop said. “Then they took MUSA to the Labour Board.

“‘The member said, ‘You can’t take dues off me. That’s what a union does.’ And the Labour Board said, ‘Absolutely. That’s what a union does. You’re walking like a duck, you’re talking like a duck, you’re a duck.’ [The Labour Board] granted them an independent charter.”

MUSA operated as an independent union for several years before being accepted for a direct charter with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in 2003. In 2005, MUSA members voted to join the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW). In 2013, CAW and Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada merged into the union, Unifor, representing 300,000 members.

The minimum dues that a Unifor local charges is 1.35 per cent of an employee’s salary, and locals can set

dues slightly higher with approval from membership.

“For us, it’s the resources of our national union,” said Heikoop, on the difference between an association and a union. “If I need research done, the national educational department does it. Most stuff we have – grievances within the workplace, up to including arbitration, our national rep takes care of. We’re paying arbitration costs, but we’re not forking out for a lawyer on top of that.

“Then we have our pension department, health and safety, education... having all of the backup behind you... you’re not an island on your own.”

The Unifor 555 offers its members recreational events, workshops, and educational programs, such as health and safety, grievance handling.

UW talent: Student side projects turned into viral products

Emma Danesh, Staff Writer

Side projects are rarely just side projects at UW. They often begin as jokes, frustrations, or shared student experiences and quickly evolve into viral tools used far beyond campus. From avoiding geese on the way to class and turning student stress into a score to gamifying lecture boredom, Waterloo students are repeatedly proving that some of the most compelling tech ideas come from everyday campus life.

Waddleloo: mapping the campus goose problem

For many UW students, geese are more than wildlife, they're a daily obstacle. What may seem like a campus running joke has effects on how students move through space, especially during nesting season. That shared experience became the foundation for Waddleloo, an interactive map designed to help students avoid goose hotspots across campus.

Second year computer science student Anirudh Dabas began working on Waddleloo in spring 2026, launching the platform publicly on March 23. The idea came after experiencing Waterloo's famous geese firsthand.

"It honestly started pretty simply," Dabas said. "I had my first real goose encounter at Waterloo and realized very quickly that the goose problem here is not exaggerated at all."

As he talked to classmates, he realized it was a problem nearly everyone could relate to. "This felt like one of those very real Waterloo problems that everyone knows about, but nobody had really solved in a modern way."

Waddleloo uses artificial intelligence to analyze user-submitted photos of geese and display risk levels on an interactive campus map, helping students navigate around nesting areas.

But Dabas says the goal was never to pit students against the geese.

"I do not see it as students versus geese," he said. "The geese were here before us, and I think the goal is more about peaceful coexistence."

What started as a joke quickly became a tool students relied on. Since launching, Waddleloo has reached more than 1.5 million views, attracted over 5,000 daily users during peak nesting season, expanded to Wilfrid Laurier

University, and earned coverage from CBC and CTV.

"Since Waddleloo launched, the traction has grown much more than I expected," Dabas said. "It started as a funny Waterloo-specific idea, but it quickly became something students were actually using and sharing."

For Dabas, the biggest takeaway has been seeing students embrace something built specifically for their campus.

"Impact does not always have to start as something huge," he said. "Sometimes it starts with noticing something everyone around you is experiencing and caring enough to build for it."



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Goose Trials: Turning campus competition into a game

If Waddleloo helps students avoid geese, Goose Trials embraces them. Built by a team of first-year software engineering and computer engineering students, the platform transforms campus culture into a competitive gaming experience.

Goose Trials features seven mini-games designed specifically for university students, including reaction time tests, memory challenges, aim training, and maze-based pathfinding puzzles. Together, they form a browser-based arcade where students can compete against peers across campus and beyond.

The project began with a simple observation: students were already looking for ways to entertain themselves during class.

The team, consisting of Nate Lamarche, William Cagas, Kavir Auluck, Mohammed Naqi, and Krish Vijay, bonded quickly in their program and shared a desire to build something meaningful together.

“We all knew we wanted to start a project together... [we were] in software and comp engineering together,” Cagas said.

But beyond collaboration, there was also a shared understanding of execution. The group worked over winter break and into the term, balancing ambition with realism as deadlines approached.

“There is a fine line between fixing bugs and overoptimizing, and actually launching,” Vijay said. “It’s really important that we thought of minimal viable product (MVP). It doesn’t have to be perfect, because it will never be perfect.”

Cagas echoed that mindset: “We valued speed and quality. We launched and we can fix it quickly.”

That focus on shipping paid off. Within 24 hours of launch, the platform had already reached over 1,000 users. Even early technical hiccups became part of the learning experience rather than setbacks.

“We were making noise and they wanted to see what was going on as well. It felt encouraging for us,” Lamarche said, recalling the launch in the software engineering lounge.

The project also reinforced practical lessons about development, teamwork, and iteration. As Vijay puts it,

“Learning correct protocols and working with these guys was an important experience.”



Singe: Measuring what it means to be “cooked”

While some Waterloo projects solve physical or digital problems, other address emotional ones. Singe, created by management engineering student Neiloy Chaudhuri, takes one of the internet’s most common student phrases: “I’m cooked” and turns it into a measurable score.

The idea came from observing a shared sentiment across campus.

“Everyone was feeling it together but nobody was actually tracking it,” Chaudhuri said. “I wanted to turn that into something you could quantify and share.”

The result is an AI-powered platform that generates a “cookedness” score, allowing students to compare results and share them instantly. By launch day, 227 scores had already been generated.

“When your score tells you you’re 87 per cent cooked, you screenshot it because it’s funny and painfully relatable,” Chaudhuri said. “That shareability was core to the concept from day one.”

Building virality also came with challenges. The system needed to feel personal without becoming generic, and moderation became necessary when users began abusing leaderboard features. Still, the project quickly proved its value beyond entertainment. Singe later appeared in a product manager interview, where it became a live demonstration of

Chaudhuri's work.

"[The interviewer] got roasted, saw their score, and got the full product loop without me narrating it," he said.

For Chaudhuri, the lesson was clear. "A resume tells someone what you've done in the past. A shipped product shows how you think and whether you can actually execute."

"We were making noise and they wanted to see what was going on as well. It felt encouraging for us," La-marche said, recalling the launch in the software engineering lounge.

Beyond the metrics, the project also reinforced practical lessons about development, teamwork, and iteration. As Vijay puts it, "Learning correct protocols and working with these guys was an important experience."



The Aphrodite Project: Building real connections beyond campus

While many student-built apps focus on solving everyday campus problems, The Aphrodite Project set out to solve a different one: help students form genuine connections.

The project first launched at the National University of Singapore in 2019 before expanding to the UW in 2020, where founder Aiden Low was completing an exchange term. Created by a small team of computer science and

psychology students, the platform asks participants to complete an in-depth questionnaire before matching them with one carefully selected person based on compatibility. Rather than endless swiping, Aphrodite focuses on creating one meaningful connection at a time.

The idea came from seeing friends become frustrated with dating apps and wanting to create something "more thoughtful and human than swiping," Low said. He was also inspired by seeing a transgender friend struggle with dating and acceptance, motivating him to build a space where people could "be fully accepted for who they are."

What started as a passion project quickly exceeded the team's expectations.

"We thought it would be fun and meaningful if it helped even a small group of people meet someone or learn more about themselves," Low said.

Today, Aphrodite has connected more than 85,000 students and alumni across universities in Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Campuses including Waterloo, Harvard, MIT, the University of Toronto, UBC, McMaster, and UCLA have all participated in the platform. For communications lead Maya Bozzo-Rey, however, the project's impact became real in a much simpler way.

"I was casually talking to one of my friends and mentioned the Aphrodite Project," she said. "Their response was that they actually knew two people who had started dating because of it."

For both Low and Bozzo-Rey, those stories matter far more than the numbers.

"The marriages and engagements are obviously very special," Low said, "but even beyond that, it's meaningful to know that something we built as students helped people feel a little bit more hopeful about connection."

Looking back, Low credits Waterloo's community for helping the project grow.

"I've met the most warm, accepting, quirky, creative, and loving people there," he said. "That's really what made Aphrodite possible."



Quiz: Where to find your perfect cold treat in Waterloo

Carla Stocco, Staff Writer

With rising temperatures and sunshine lengthening our evenings, you're sure to be craving something refreshing (and sweet) this summer. Whether that's a frozen yogurt or a couple scoops on a classic waffle cone, there's plenty of amazing spots in town to get your cold treat fix! Take the quiz below to find your perfect cold treat.

1. Is your perfect cold treat creamy?

- a. Absolutely, but the most important factor is the quality of the dairy
- b. Creamy, but not too heavy
- c. As creamy as it gets!
- d. I prefer something refreshing, rather than creamy
- e. Classic creamy

2. How would your friends describe you?

- a. Conscientious
- b. Creative
- c. Bubbly
- d. Disciplined
- e. Easy-going

3. Pick your favorite breakfast food.

- a. Omelette
- b. Yogurt parfait
- c. Oatmeal
- d. Smoothie bowl
- e. Corn flakes

4. Pick a vacation activity.

- a. Beach yoga
- b. Painting the ocean
- c. Making s'mores
- d. Going for a run along the beach
- e. Relaxing on the sand

5. Who's your favourite female artist?

- a. Billie Eilish
- b. Taylor Swift
- c. Olivia Dean
- d. Oliva Rodrigo
- e. Lady Gaga

6. Pick your favourite color.

- a. Gold
- b. Sky blue
- c. Burgundy
- d. Violet
- e. Fuschia

7. Pick your favourite building on campus.

- a. Davis Centre Library (DC)
- b. Hagey Hall (HH)
- c. Dana Porter Library (DP)
- d. Physical Activities Complex (PAC)
- e. Student Life Centre (SLC)

Mostly a - Four All Ice Cream

Address: 75 King St. S. Unit 56, Waterloo

Key features: Gluten-free waffle cones, dairy-free whipped cream, ice cream for those with milk sensitivities, vegan ice cream

Perfect if: You're seeking a locally-owned company and all-natural ice cream from locally-sourced ingredients!

Transit time from UW: About 20 minutes by bus to arrive.

Four All Ice Cream is founded by UW engineering alumnus Ajoa Mintah. Mintah graduated from UW's chemical engineering program, worked in the automotive sector for six years and then pursued consultant work for nine years. She grew disinterested in that career path, and sought something more creatively inclined. Mintah had taken a course on food process engineering during her undergraduate years and came up with the idea to make ice cream. She developed ice cream that was both locally-sourced and well-tolerated for those with milk sensitivities, as the milk is derived from Guernsey cows whose milk protein is

typically better tolerated.

Four All Ice Cream offers four standard ice cream flavours, including vanilla bean, chocolate milk, salted caramel, and mad cat espresso, using coffee beans supplied by a business in Cambridge. Each month, you'll find an additional variety of four new flavours to choose from. If you're keen to visit this spot for a sweet treat, head on down to Uptown Waterloo for a scoop (or four)!

Mostly b - Menchie's

Address: 247 King St. N. Unit 3, Waterloo

Key features: Wide assortment of topping options

Perfect if: You love the freedom of customizing your frozen treats!

Transit time from UW: About 15 minutes by bus to arrive.

Are you a fan of fro-yo or sorbet? Love the freedom of getting as much or as little as you like? If so, Menchie's is the spot for you! Grab yourself a cup and add as many toppings as you wish, just keep in mind the final cost comes down to weight. From gummies to lychee bubbles to fresh fruit, there are bound to be toppings you'll love. A medium frozen yogurt cup, toppings not included, comes to \$11.49 + HST.

Mostly c - Old Firehall Dessert Café

Address: 35 King St. N., Waterloo

Key features: Unique ice cream and gelato flavours, other assorted drinks and desserts available

Perfect if: You want to try some high-quality gelato or want to try out one of their milkshakes while you're there!

Transit time from UW: About 20 minutes by bus to arrive.

Located in the heart of Uptown Waterloo, Old Firehall Dessert Café opened in December 2025. Although it's a rather new dessert spot, it's become a favourite of many locals due to its high quality and varied menu options and pleasant ambience. A single-scoop cup is \$6.50 + HST and a classic single-scoop waffle cone is \$7.50 + HST. Prices are the same whether your scoop is ice cream or gelato. Toppings are \$0.89 each and options include sprinkles, peanuts, Skor, Oreo, Smarties, and M&Ms. Gourmet ice cream sandwiches are also available for \$10.99 + HST in an assortment of flavours, or you can even customize your own.

Mostly d - OAKBERRY Açaí Bowls & Smoothies

Address: 308 King St. N. Unit 111, Waterloo

Key features: Authentic açaí from the Brazilian Amazon

Perfect if: You want a superfood that tastes amazing and boosts your health!

Transit time from UW: About 20 minutes by bus to arrive.

Who needs to head to Brazil when you can grab fresh açaí right here in Waterloo? It might not be ice cream, but this tropical treat is sure to help you cool off on a hot day. Açaí is a violet berry that grows in Brazilian rainforests and it's often called a superfood for its high antioxidant and nutrient profile. Açaí contains healthy omega-6 and omega-9 fats, alongside minerals and nutrients such as vitamin E, calcium, and potassium. A classic 12 oz cup of açaí costs \$12.45 + HST and toppings can be added for an additional fee. Smoothies, bowls, and matcha are also available for purchase.

Mostly e - Smarty Pants

Address: Student Life Centre, UW

Key features: Dairy-free alternatives, classic brand name toppings (Reese's, Smarties, etc.)

Perfect if: You're seeking a budget-friendly, classic frozen treat!

Transit time from UW: Zero minutes, located on campus

Experiencing an ice cream emergency? If you're in urgent need of a frozen treat, you don't need to go far. Located in the SLC, Smarty Pants is one of the newest and sweetest additions to the food court. You can grab a classic waffle cone soft serve for just \$3.99 + HST. Milkshakes are \$4.99 + HST, and you can snag a 'brain freeze' (similar to a DQ blizzard) for \$5.99 + HST. There are an assortment of toppings available, all for \$1 each. Toppings include Reese's Pieces, Oreo, Smarties, hot fudge, hot caramel, strawberry, sprinkles, and even crushed waffle cones.

Skills you can still build before September

Carla Stocco, Staff Writer

These days, it's become clear that simply having a bachelor's degree, or even a graduate degree, isn't always enough in today's competitive job market. The good news is that there are still plenty of ways to make yourself stand out from the competition. This summer, consider finding ways to build your soft skills. There are plenty of free and valuable certifications you can pursue when you have a little free time. When it comes time to complete job interviews, not only will you have some new certifications and skills to discuss, but also a bigger network and more self-confidence. Who knows, maybe the growth you invest in this summer will be exactly what leads to the career you're dreaming of in the future. So, let's dive into some key soft skills and ways of building them!

Leadership

Certificate: Community Leadership Certificate (CLC)

If you're looking for an accessible, free, and meaningful way to build your leadership and collaboration skills, look no further. UW's CLC certificate combines four workshops with a 10-hour leadership requirement to earn this certificate. Once completed, you'll be better informed about what it means to support collaborative team building, lead with curiosity, and effective means of conflict resolution. This certificate is open to all UW students. You can register for workshops on UW Portal.

Personal initiative

Certificate: Sustainability Leadership Certificate

If you're looking for an accessible, free, and meaningful way to build your leadership and collaboration skills, look no further. The Sustainability Leadership certificate is the perfect opportunity to advance your knowledge of sustainability and empower yourself to integrate a similar mindset to your current and future career and educational pursuits. To get started, you'll want to login to LEARN and select the self-registration tab to register in the certificate course. From there, you can review the required activities under each category and submit your proof of completion as you progress through the requirements.

Interviewing

Certificate: EDGE Certificate

If you're a current student not enrolled in a co-operative education program, consider participating in UW's EDGE program. You'll have the opportunity to complete certificate requirements at your own pace and develop valuable professional skills that will stand out to future employers. There are six required milestones to receive this certificate. In total, you'll complete one skills identification and articulation workshop, one career development course, three work/community experiences, and one capstone workshop. Register for the EDGE Certificate by logging into WaterlooWorks and selecting the 'Submit a Form' tab. From there, enter your respective personal information and submit the form. UW's EDGE team will reach out to you regarding your current eligibility status for the program and next steps.

Self-reflection

Certificate: Journaling for Wellbeing

Sometimes, taking the time to slow down and self-reflect through the written word can open the door to the most meaningful kind of personal and professional growth. Developed by Lynn Long, a Senior Education and Learning Specialist at UW, she developed a self-directed course available to students seeking personal transformation through writing. As you progress through the course, you'll be introduced to six different reflective writing tools. You'll develop a practice of writing your thoughts regularly, enabling the chance "to listen to the things you are telling yourself on a daily basis." During the reviewing and revising process, you may find a new perspective emerges as you look over older journal entries. In time, you might just be able to identify emergent themes in your writing that can ultimately lead to developing a healthier sense of self. To get started, you'll want to login to LEARN and select the self-registration tab to register in the course.

Personal well-being

Certificate: Rewiring for Happiness

Campus Wellness offers a self-directed wellness program: Rewiring for Happiness. This self-paced course helps you build a toolbox of well-being skills. The course is based on positive psychology strategies, promoting the value of empathy, connection, mindfulness, gratitude, and kindness. You can enroll in the course by logging into LEARN and selecting the self-registration tab to select the course and register.

Mental health leadership

Certificate: More Feet on the Ground

A great certificate for anyone looking to improve their understanding of mental health concerns and understand the symptoms of varying conditions. This free online certificate can be completed on the More Feet on the Ground website anytime. You'll be better equipped to support yourself and fellow students.

Other opportunities to build meaningful skills

There are a variety of programs and learning opportunities both in-person and online you can consider pursuing.

Aquatic Leadership Certification

The City of Waterloo is offering a free adult aquatic certification program! If you've ever wanted to be a lifeguard or swim instructor, now's your chance. This program is open to anyone over the age of 21. You'll be asked to register in a swim skill assessment to determine suitability for the leadership program. If you pass the assessment, you'll be invited to pursue their daytime certification program. The program takes place twice a week from September to December 2026. You'll graduate the program with the following certificates:

- Bronze Medallion, Intermediate First Aid and CPR C
- Bronze Cross and National Lifeguard
- Lifesaving Society Instructor and Swim Instructor

Register in the skills assessment by visiting the City of Waterloo's aquatic program registration page and searching for 'Skills Assessment: Free Aquatic Certification Program.'

Campus Wellness Volunteering

Campus Wellness offers a variety of unique volunteer opportunities that can help you not only build highly employable skills, but also expand your network.

Campus Response Team (CRT)

If you already possess a valid First Aid and CPR certification and are interested in taking on a role as a campus first responder, apply to join the CRT team. Visit the CRT page under UW's Campus Wellness website to apply.

Peer Health Education (PHE)

Help support holistic student well-being on campus! As a Peer Health Educator, you'll work with Campus Wellness staff to plan and support a variety of health campaigns tied to mental health, harm reduction, physical health, and sexual health. Visit UW's Campus Wellness volunteering page to complete the Peer Health Education volunteer application form.

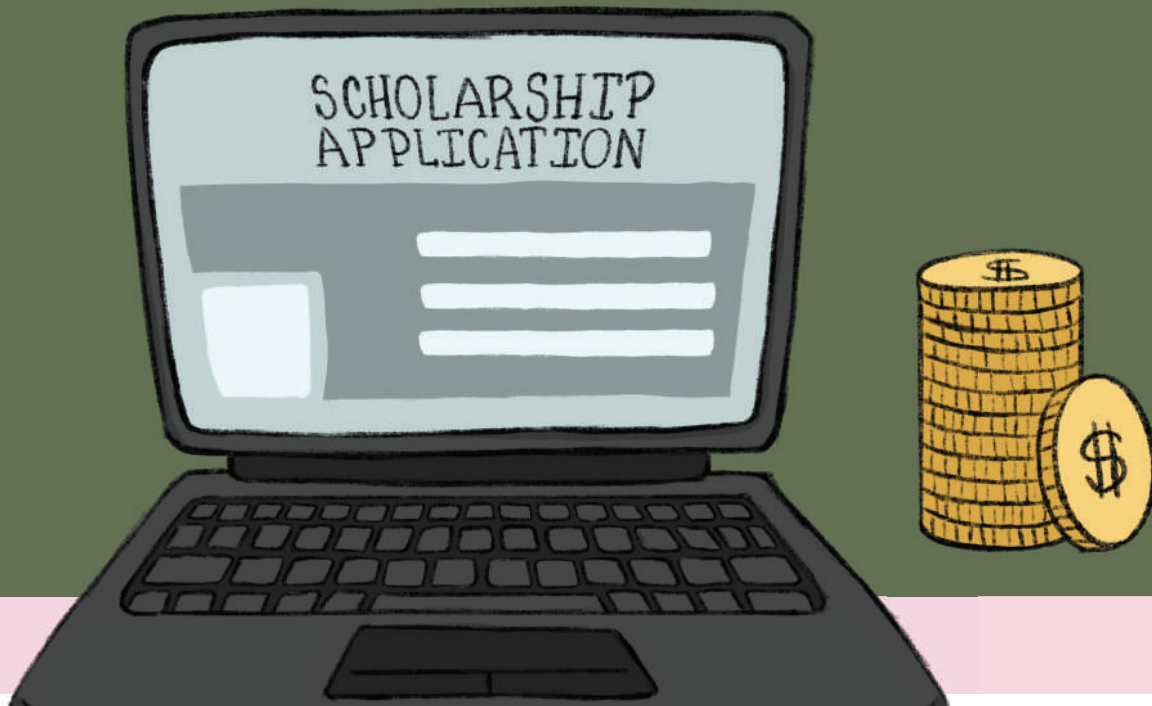
Understanding scholarships: Looking beyond the dollar figure

Annora Jo, Contributor

For most students, scholarships are often treated as money on the table. However, behind every award, there is a donor, a thorough selection process, and a deserving student who receives the gift that offers greater value than just the amount of money. “What I appreciated most about receiving a scholarship is that through writing essays about my personal story and goals, I was able to gain people who support me besides my family,” said Joshua Cho, a second-year mechatronics student at UW and a recent scholarship recipient. If you are someone who is looking for a scholarship, it is significant to acknowledge the motivation behind the donor’s decision to award someone. And if you are already a recipient, showing gratitude through demonstrating your best behaviour as a student is important.

How students perceive scholarships

Back in February, the Ontario government made a major cut in OSAP grants. On top of this, starting from September 2026, post-secondary institutions will also be allowed to annually increase 2-3 per cent of tuition fee for the next three years. As grants are getting smaller, more students tend to seek non-repayable financial aid to cover their expenses. For students who are already struggling to afford their education, these changes put greater financial pressure on them. Especially for international students, the pressure becomes more intense because the majority of financial aids are not eligible for them. Even if they do receive one, they must pay tuition fees that are several times higher than the domestic rate, so scholarships might not provide significant help.





Cho shared in an interview the meaning of scholarship to him. This April, Cho received an Award of Excellence worth \$2,500 through the Korean Canadian Scholarship Foundation (KCSF). After finding the opportunity through a friend last year, Cho prepared the application by writing three essays about himself, along with acquiring two reference letters. “Honestly, as an international student who pays triple the amount of domestic tuition, the amount is relatively small compared to the amount that I have to pay, so the practical financial support isn’t enormous,” he said.

But for Cho, the emotional support that this award provides him could not compete with the dollar amount. “The fact that I have people supporting me, it serves as a driving force that helps me overcome burnouts and hardships,” he shared. “Just like how help given during difficult times is something you never forget, these scholarships feel like that to me.” As an individual studying far from his family in South Korea, knowing that there are people who acknowledge his efforts and invest in his success makes all the difference.

“There were times when I wanted to give up on my studies for financial reasons, but the gratitude I feel toward the people who support me makes me want to push even harder regardless of the money.”

— Joshua Cho, International student and recipient of KCSF’s Award of Excellence



Cho’s story highlights something that many students overlook when they seek for and receive financial aid. No matter the amount or where the funding is coming from, someone made the decision to invest in a student’s future. This is a privilege only given to students and gratitude is the duty of a recipient. This awareness influenced how Cho approached his studies: “There were times when I wanted to give up on my studies for financial reasons, but the gratitude I feel toward the people who support me makes me want to push even harder regardless of the money.”

Motives of donors and the selection process

When someone chooses to fund a student's education, they are expressing a belief that the student's future is worth supporting. Understanding the motivation that drives donors to give is important in terms of gratitude. "Many donors create awards because the university has been important in their lives and careers. They want other students to enjoy the same types of experiences, and with reduced financial barriers," the Student Awards and Financial Aid (SAFA) office said in an emailed statement. Furthermore, many of the donors were a scholarship recipient as students, and they feel fortunate to be able to give back. "Our goal is to draw strong candidates each year while keeping the selection process as straightforward as possible," the office explained. "We want to ensure that the award has the intended outcome, to support and encourage students."

“Many donors create awards because the university has been important in their lives and careers. They want other students to enjoy the same types of experiences, and with reduced financial barriers.”

— Student Awards and Financial Aid (SAFA) office



For undergraduate and graduate students who are considering to apply for scholarships, understanding the selection process can bring you an advantage. At UW, the selection process varies, and many awards automatically select the recipients based on specific eligibility and criteria depending on its funding source. While some require an application, selections are handled by central offices at UW like the faculty or SAFA. For donor-funded awards, the donors and the university work together in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Commission's scholarship policy. This means that the selection criteria are based on the donor's preference and institutional priorities, while considering the student's academic success, financial need, and other contributions.

To ensure authenticity of the student voice, the use of generative AI is not permitted for written applications. Students should keep in mind that all applicants are required to sign a declaration confirming that the information they provide is true at UW. Since the selection committee wants to know about the genuineness of the students, it is important for applicants to show their earnestness.



Delulu or trululu?

UW students respond to popular assumptions about the university

Radha Vyas, Contributor

We've all had assumptions about UW before coming here. Some of it starts in high school, some during applications, and some stick around even after you've accepted your offer. At some point, you start to wonder what's actually true and what's just talk. So here's what some students at UW feel, based on their own experiences.

Co-ops in California

Anthony Maocheia-Ricci

Third-year accelerated master's in computer science student

"What you hear online, especially related to CS and co-op, is like, oh, you go to Waterloo, you're gonna get to California. That's not true. I did not go to Cali, and I know a bunch of people who didn't. Well, I also have some friends who are working full-time jobs in San Francisco right now. But it takes a lot of work to get in there, and if you want to do anything outside of software development, it is significantly harder to get a job outside of Canada, especially if you're not an American citizen. Like, I'm just a Canadian citizen, and I pretty much got ghosted by every U.S. company because I didn't have a recruiter, I didn't have contacts, and it was just like, I'm not eligible for an immediate U.S. visa. So, I can't imagine how much harder it is for international students. While it happens for some, it's a loud and vocal minority. Most people I feel that I've talked with are kind of just like, yeah, I can get a job, but it's not going to be the dream six-figure."

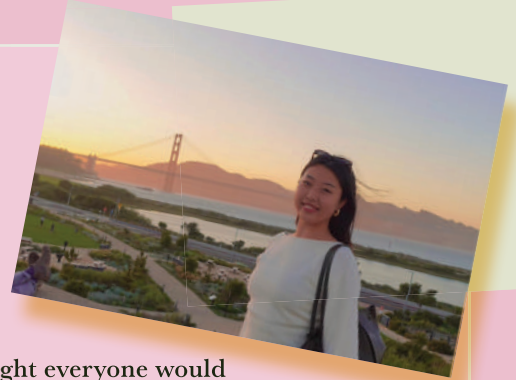
Cutthroat and competitive

Nicole Yu

Fourth-year biomedical engineering student

"In engineering, I thought everyone would be cutthroat and competitive, but I've found there to be so many amazing people and opportunities for community inside my faculty and outside. There's more community than I originally thought there would be. I thought it would be very competitive and isolating, but as long as you're open-minded, there are plenty of people waiting to build community with you! For incoming students, I think being open-minded and putting out positive energy can go a really long way in cultivating community."

A lot of my friends from other schools also similarly ask about the competitive nature of the school and how I maintain social balance. I think other students also think it's hard to socialize at UW, but what actually happens can be quite far from that, with various opportunities to connect with peers that are happy to help you out when given the chance."



Village 1 is an annoying place to live

Haya Kharouba

Third-year communications student with a minor in English

"Everyone says that V1 is [an] annoying place to live, but I would do anything to live in V1 again with all of my friends. It's where I met my best friends. I would vouch for it over and over again. You get your own room, but you're on a floor with so many people that you just

feel so connected to everyone. The dorms with the kitchens in them and the private roommate apartment style are overhyped. No one has ever actually become friends with those roommates.

My thoughts on UW food services? The food isn't actually that bad, and people are just complaining for no reason. One thing I will say is that if you just talk to the food service workers, it could change a lot. I became very close to one of the workers to the point where I actually asked for her number. And she was actually kind of like a mom to me in the dorms. Like, she would text me sometimes, and she would just check if I had eaten. Just because I took the time to get to know her. Like, a compliment can go a long way. So I think when you see a food service worker, tell them that the food was good today or thank them for their services or just say anything. At first they might look snappy, but they're really not. And they're just tired because all they do is cook food that they don't even get to eat and then they go home and then they have to cook more for themselves and their families."



Intense academic expectations

Anajanaa Vimalathas
Fourth-year health sciences co-op student

"Before coming to UW, I expected it to be very academically intense with little focus on social life, based on what I had heard from others. After entering university, I realized this was a myth, especially since many of the people expressing these thoughts did not even attend Waterloo. Nonetheless, since joining, I've realized that while academics can be challenging, as is expected, there are many ways to get involved and still maintain a social life, whether it be through coursework, clubs, volunteering, research, or events. This has helped me build a much more balanced and enjoyable university experience. At the end of the day, it really is what you make out of your experience.

Personally, I've often heard that being in the UW co-op stream isn't worth it or that it's too hard to succeed in, even if you're already enrolled. From my experience, while it is competitive and can feel challenging at times, that doesn't mean you're not capable of succeeding. There are so many opportunities available; it really depends on how open-minded and proactive you are. The co-op team also sends frequent check-ins and updates, and I found it really helpful to take advantage of those resources and reach out when needed."

Extraordinary university

Rahmah Bacchus

Third-year computational chemistry student

"I had heard that the UW was a great school because of its co-op program and strong focus on computer science, especially since it's such a competitive field. Now that I've been here for a while, I'd say a lot of the myths surrounding UW make it seem like the school everyone wants to attend, but in reality, it's more of an overall good university rather than something completely extraordinary.

From my experience, people outside of UW often assume that most students are overly competitive, arrogant, or socially awkward, but that honestly hasn't reflected the majority of people I've met here. It feels like a small minority gets generalized to represent the entire student body.

Speaking of residency life, residence wasn't much of a challenge for me, to be honest. I was nervous at first about sharing a space with two other people, but luckily one of my roommates and I really hit it off, and we're still in contact and on good terms.

Overall, I think UW is challenging depending on the type of student you are, if that makes sense. If you aren't willing to adapt and change some of your old habits, I don't think you'll get the full university experience. I've grown a lot since coming here, both academically and socially. "



"My thoughts on UW food services? The food isn't actually that bad, and people are just complaining for no reason."

- Haya Kharouba, third-year student

Focus on engineering/math

Ridam Panesar

Upcoming fifth-year honours health sciences student



“Among Ontario high school students, UW is widely recognized as a powerhouse in engineering and mathematics. This reputation, while well-deserved, often overshadows the university’s equally robust offerings in

health and science-related fields.

However, this perception does not reflect the reality experienced by students within the faculty of health. In practice, Waterloo offers extensive research opportunities across disciplines such as kinesiology, health sciences, recreation and leisure studies, and public health. The university is home to a wide range of research initiatives, many of which are internationally recognized. Each year, numerous undergraduate students from the faculties of health and science secure prestigious NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Awards, often working alongside faculty in the school of pharmacy. These experiences not only strengthen academic resumes but also provide valuable exposure to real-world research processes, including experimental design, data analysis, and scientific communication. In the faculty of health, students can engage in hands-on research through both thesis and apprenticeship-based courses. For example, KIN 391 allows students to assist faculty members with ongoing lab work in a pass/fail format, offering an accessible introduction to research. In contrast, KIN 472 provides a more independent, directed research experience under faculty supervision. Many projects are interdisciplinary, with professors often cross-listed in departments such as biology, allowing students to explore both the biological mechanisms and public health applications of their work.”

Unbearable workload

Saskia Coossa

Second-year honours health sciences student



“Before coming to university, I expected the workload to be unbearable. I also thought that the faculty of health would be boring compared to math and engineering, and that my experience would be similar to my two older siblings — who have now graduated from UW. But I now realize that none of those things are true. Your experience at university can be as diverse and unique as you want it to be, no matter your major! The Waterloo community has so much to offer beyond academics, and the city has some pretty cool spots to explore. And while the workload can be challenging, there is always support to help you navigate it all.”

Prestigious and intimidating

Amrit Kaur Mann

Upcoming fourth-year honours science student

“UW is definitely seen as a prestigious school when you are a student waiting to get in. It has a world-renowned engineering and co-op program, which is what truly makes it stand out. So, the school did seem intimidating for sure at first glance, especially as a student in grade 12. Many around me, including myself, were so nervous about getting in despite having amazing grades and extracurriculars. It was the name that the school had built that made everything seem much more nerve-wracking. When I got into the UW, and now being a student involved in many parts of the undergraduate student society, I no longer feel nervous or as if I am a small individual in a pool

of large people. This university and its opportunities have given me the ability to have my own identity, demonstrate leadership, and meet so many other individuals like me who share similar interests. So, it wasn’t all that scary or bad, and I wish I could tell my grade 12 self, who was anxiously waiting to get in, that fact.”



The digital camera's comeback

Annora Jo, Contributor

“I just like the feeling of going back home, looking at it and then exporting it. It’s all about that experience,” said Ivy Zhang, a global business and digital arts (GBDA) student who is a current digital camera user. From writing to typing, experiencing to scrolling, and clicking to tapping — as existing skills are being replaced by new methods, the nostalgia of analogue grows deeper, while tactile experiences become more valuable. According to the BBC, the nostalgia cycle usually runs 20 to 30 years, which is when the new generation feels curiosity about what came before. For Generation Z, that curiosity has landed on “digicam,” the early 2000s point-and-shoot camera.



Canon PowerShot SD750,
digital camera photos



How did it come back?

Through the prevalence of smartphones in the 2010s and its continuous evolution, digital cameras were pushed aside. However, these became one of the trendiest aesthetics after two decades. By the spread of social media posts taken with vintage digicams, this trend hit its peak rapidly. According to eBay UK in 2022, there was a 13 per cent increase in searches for “vintage digital camera” and a 52 per cent surge in searches for “refurbished camera.” Moreover, this ongoing trend created a noticeable growth globally in the second-hand markets. An article from the Japanese publication Dime reported that the price of these cameras rose by 20 times in a single year due to its high demand in 2024.

This trend is not just about the retro aesthetics. In a generation where smartphones produce nearly perfect photos, and AI auto-enhances anything we ask for, Gen Z is choosing imperfection on purpose. The old digital camera does none of the automatic refinement. It produces raw images that

are flawed by today’s standards, and that imperfection is the point. Jonathan Baltrusaitis, a filmmaker and professor in the GBDA program, explained that this trend is not a surprise. “Sometimes it’s because of a particular aesthetic in the images the device’s technology produces. Sometimes it’s because of the ‘modal shift’ the device imposes compared to a modern device. Either way, the device’s differences and limitations become an expressive tool in opposition to the current ‘state of the art,’” he said.

Baltrusaitis compared it to how some people write in a journal instead of typing into a digital device; this trend is a deliberate choice to engage differently with the photography process. “Older digital cameras definitely do not hold up well today if we’re talking about image quality and fidelity to the world in front of the lens,” he said. “I imagine this trend is a romantic engagement process — using an antique digital camera is an experience to be appreciated.”

How do people feel about its return?

Users of this trend are not simply drawn in by the nostalgic curiosity but because it serves a specific purpose that smartphones cannot fill. Zhang described her use of digital cameras as an intentional aesthetic. “It’s not about the convenience. It’s more about the look and the vibe that I want to give off when I’m taking a photo at a specific scenario. If I want a more professional, influencer-type look, I’ll go for a digital camera to get that flash, especially if it’s in a dark area. That’s where I prefer to use a digital camera over a phone, whether it’s convenient or not,” she said.

Zhang noted this item has become part of her identity. “Usually if no one has one around me and I have one, they obviously want a picture with the digital camera,” Zhang said. “It’s definitely always a want for everybody.”

As a professional in filmmaking, Baltrusaitis sees the vintage digicam as a temporary trend rather than a long-term

phase. “The people enjoying this resurgence will likely find another creative way to experiment with imaging technology, and that phase will be fun for them too.”

According to Baltrusaitis, batteries are usually the first parts to go: “Batteries are a chemical technology that degrades over time. I imagine that people trying to revive old digital point-and-shoots that used proprietary rechargeable batteries will have a hard time.” As these devices are a few decades old, it is difficult to find legacy parts like batteries, memory cards, and chargers, which can lead to limitations in long-term usage.

Those looking for affordable, used options can find digital cameras for sale on Facebook marketplace and Kijiji. New digital cameras are available for purchase at Henry’s Camera, Best Buy, or Walmart.

Questions to ask before purchasing a used camera

Physical condition

Are there any severe scratches? Do all buttons function? Do the battery and memory card doors open and close properly?

Lens condition

Does the lens work? Does it zoom in and out?

Flash check

Is there a flash? Does it work properly?

Batteries/Accessories

Are the battery and memory card easily available for purchase? Are the accessories replaceable?

Image quality

Is the image out of focus? Is there any colour issue? Is the image clear?



Caramelised shallot

tomato paste with anchovies

Ingrid Au, Contributor

For each month of the spring term, I will introduce a primary ingredient and illustrate its capabilities through a key dish. For July, the ingredient of the month is... salt! Yes, salt. This mundane seasoning ties every dish together with just a pinch! In any food, it heightens umami compounds like glutamate to enrich flavours. Additionally, salt acts as a preservative by drawing out moisture to prevent microbial growth. In other words, salt may feel like an everyday seasoning, but it has been used for centuries as the basis of cooking.

For this month, a caramelised shallot tomato paste with anchovies is the perfect condiment to illustrate the characteristics of salt. The saltiness of the anchovies enhances the sweetness of the tomatoes and richness of the caramelised shallots, with a hint of spice to balance the fattiness of the anchovies. I hope you enjoy this recipe and learn a bit about how salt performs!



Ingredients

- 5-6 large whole shallots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2-3 cloves of garlic, peeled and grated
- 156 ml of tomato paste
(Note: typically, both tube and cans of tomato paste comes in 156ml, you should not exceed this amount)
- 7-10 fillets of anchovies; adjust to saltiness preference
(Note: typically, a whole tin equates to about 50ml, yielding about 6-7 fillets; if you exceed this amount, it will not affect the outcome of the dish)
- 1 tbsp of dried chilli pepper flakes
- 1 tsp of brown sugar
- 1 tsp of dried basil
- 1 tsp of dried oregano
- 3-4 tbsp of cooking oil of your choice

Tools

- An airtight container or jar
- Cooking pan

Instructions

1. In a pan heated with oil, cook the shallots at medium-high heat for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the shallots have softened and are golden brown.
2. Add the dried chilli flakes and anchovies to the shallots and continue cooking for about 2 minutes. You do not need to chop the anchovies before adding them to the pan as they will melt on their own.
3. Combine the tomato paste and cook for another 4 minutes at medium-low heat or until the paste has slightly darkened in shade. Once cooked, put aside to cool.
4. Once cooled, store in an airtight container. This can be stored in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

July crossword

Joseph Cushman, Contributor

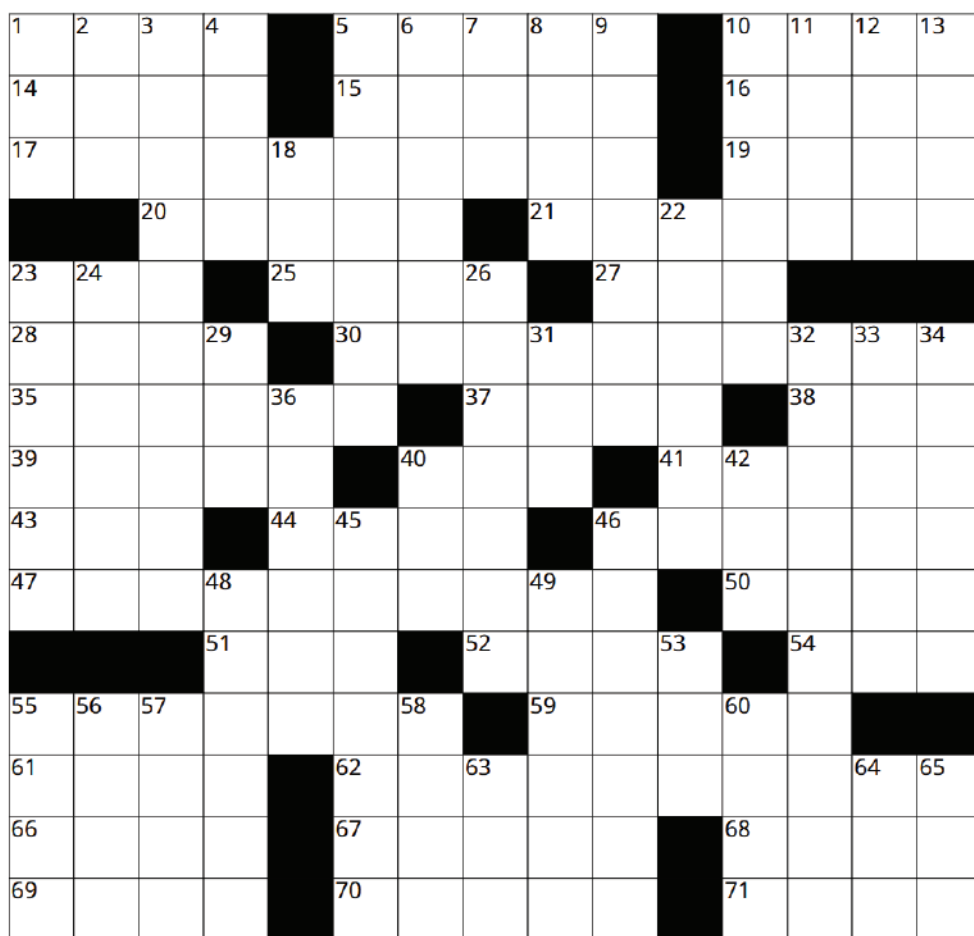
ACROSS

- 1 Pledge
5 Tear to pieces
10 Supersonic speed measure
14 Prozac or Lexapro (abbreviated)
15 Annually (two words)
16 "See ya!"
17 With 46A, 2026 AMC show based on a 1985 novel (three words)
19 Key used in many keyboard shortcuts
20 Location
21 Provide commentary
23 "Half game, half prank" played with one or more decks of cards
25 Standard percussion instrument
27 ___ culpa ("my bad")
28 "It's worth ___" (two words)
30 Remorseful
35 Video-game company with an eponymous cheat code
37 Power singer Simone
38 "My DMs are open" (abbreviated)
39 Long-stemmed eating mushroom
40 Mitochondrial molecule (abbreviated)

- 41 ___ and bounds
43 Internet-era singer Miller
44 Internet-era singer Sawayama
46 See 17A
47 Following, as rules (two words)
50 Disney character who adopts a little blue alien
51 Persona ___ grata
52 Son of Aphrodite
54 Frodo's companion
55 Unfavorable
59 Jungian inner self
61 Hideout
62 For the bit, for example
66 Drip
67 Thereafter
68 Carnival attraction
69 Exclusively
70 Heads, in French
71 Exam

DOWN

- 1 A video game's music (abbreviated)
2 Campfire residue
3 "Born a Crime" author (two words)



- 4 Bees' nest
5 Johnny Silverhand's band in the *Cyberpunk* franchise
6 Drum up excitement for (two words)
7 Counterpart of Akari in Pokémon Legends: Arceus
8 Deserve
9 1973 Aerosmith hit (two words)
10 "In Flanders Fields" poet John
11 Subreddit where posters ask for outside perspectives (abbreviated)
12 Something to avoid putting before the horse
13 Something to patch or sew up
18 Furthermore
22 Entertain lavishly
23 South African singer/activist Miriam
24 Made amends
26 Film technique that may feature a dead wife
29 Shaggy ox
31 Backtalk
32 "NOT true!" (four words)

- 33 "The Less I Know The Better" artist Tame ___
34 Made-to-order
36 Reflect
40 ___ Arbor, Michigan
42 Subject for many international students (abbreviated)
45 "Really, it's my treat!" (two words)
46 One-dollar coins
48 What's stored in 40A
49 Hypnotic state
53 [someone else made this mistake, not me]
55 To boot
56 First light
57 Pharmacist's container
58 Second-smallest Great Lake
60 Shopping center
63 UW's province (abbreviated)
64 Mormons (abbreviated)
65 Thus far

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