

## Two Hamilton women named DiverseCity fellows

Hamilton Spectator | Feb 13, 2017

Two Hamilton up-and-comers are among 25 'rising leaders' to win a fellowship with CivicAction.

Kate Whalen, who works at McMaster University, and Alyssa Lai, at Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation — were among those selected as "DiverseCity Fellows" — for a year-long program of monthly sessions focused on career-building but also city-building projects, according to CivicAction spokesperson Sarah Harris.

Lai, digital marketing co-ordinator at the HHS foundation, says she is extremely honoured to be part of the fellowship. She hopes to get a greater understanding of how Hamilton issues are interrelated with those of the other cities in the region.

"There's a lot to learn about having the regional perspective ... to learn from other cities will be extremely valuable."

Lai, 26, came to Hamilton from Malaysia eight years ago and is a graduate of McMaster's communications studies as well as theatre and film studies.

Whalen, 31, the senior manager of academic sustainability programs at McMaster, says she is thrilled to have been chosen.

"I know it's a highly competitive program. It will lead to engaging and serving communities better."

Having exposure to diverse leadership will give her a new perspective on issues, she adds.

Both Whalen and Lai have been active leaders in the city.

Whalen is an executive board member of the Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network, where she directs the Leadership in Sustainability initiative.

Lai is with Hamilton HIVE, a network of emerging leaders and young professionals in the city. She is a winner of the 2014 YWCA Hamilton Women of Distinction Award for public affairs, the 2015 McMaster University Alumni Hamilton Community Impact Award and was a 2016 Connect the Sector Fellow.

CivicAction, formerly the Toronto City Summit Alliance, which runs the DiverseCity Fellows program, was described in 2015 NOW magazine article as a forum where governments, corporations, unions and academic institutions can work together to advance issues affecting all of them.

Among the issues tackled in the past, for example, is a study conducted last April that found mental health issues affect more than 1.5 million workers in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas.



Kate Whalen is the senior manager of academic sustainability programs at McMaster University.



Alyssa Lai is the digital marketing co-ordinator at the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation.