Alumni and Friends

A tradition of excellence

Since 1978, the University of Saskatchewan Alumni Achievement awards have celebrated our most accomplished USask alumni. We caught up with a former award winner and his nominator to discover what an Alumni Achievement Award meant to them.

Mark Boots (BE'08, BSc'08, PhD'13)

Co-founder and CTO, **Viamo** (https://viamo.io)
2015 Alumni Achievement Young Alumni Award winner

(Photo: submitted)

What does being a USask Alumni Achievement Award winner mean to you?

Being a USask Alumni Achievement Award winner is a reminder of the communities that shaped us. The classrooms, classmates, teamwork, and professors that planted the seeds of what I would care about, and the knowledge to tackle those goals. But it's about more than knowledge...My USask experience is where I learned a lot about the person I am and the one I want to become. Being honored through the Alumni Achievement Awards takes you back to that foundation.

How does it feel to have your achievements recognized with an award from your alma mater?

As a leader often I've been "heads down", focused with a team on building to the next goal. The Alumni Achievement Awards feel like a chance to pause, lift your head up, and celebrate progress. Especially, it's a chance to share your vision with a bigger community. Being recognized has been a great reminder of alumni support for each other, and an opportunity to invite other people into being part of that vision.

How has receiving the award inspired you in your future goals/aspirations?

It's a kick in the pants to keep striving! When I was recognized as a Young Alumni Award winner in 2015, the company I had founded had identified an important social mission, but we were just starting to scale. At the time, we had supported about two

million people in disconnected communities to access life-improving information and learning opportunities through basic mobile phones. Today, we've grown that to 118 million people across 30 countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. We're now evolving into a new phase, going beyond information to helping people act on information, connecting them to life-improving services and products. Being recognized – especially as a Young Alumni Award winner – was a terrific push to reach toward larger goals.

Dr. Alexander Moewes

Professor & Canada Research Chair in Materials Science with Synchrotron Radiation
Nominator of Mark Boots for his Alumni Achievement Young Alumni Award

(Photo: submitted)

What inspired you to nominate Mark for an Alumni Achievement Award?

There are a number of reasons for Mark's nomination.

Mark continued to excel after his degree by founding a company (Votomobile) that did not only have impact but it helped our world to be a better place. The goal of this company was to help people in Ghana and across the world and it was not mainly driven by profit aspects.

Mark was stellar graduate student and did important and impactful work for our beamline at the CLS. But he switched fields entirely with his work

after his degree which is something that suits especially physicists who are trained to be generalists and apply their scientific thinking to a large variety of problems that matter to our society. Mark was a great example for this.

Why should someone nominate a deserving candidate?

I perceive a nomination as a possibility to disseminate not only research results but draw attention to the research group in general. This can be advantageous for a variety of reasons from publicity to applications for funding to recruitment of graduate students.

Nominate a deserving individual today. (../awards.php)

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