

WATERLOO CO-OP

THE Inside sCo-op

Spring 2012 Issue 1



Time to Bloom!

Waterloo co-ops make the world a brighter place.

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Letter from the Editor

When I began my co-op career (four short months ago!), I knew the benefits of co-op from a student perspective. Real world, experience, insight into my future, a monthly paycheck ... the list goes on. I also knew that employers benefit from co-op- from our brilliant ideas, our hard work, and the fresh perspective we bring to their companies.

But what I didn't realize was that the benefits of co-op go beyond the employer and the student --- co-op students really do make the world a better place.

Skeptical? Peruse through the pages of this issue, and you'll see just a few of the many ways that Waterloo co-op

students are making a difference - from stem cell research, to bedside gardening, to children's holiday parties. As you continue with your own co-op journey, I hope you feel inspired by these students to put your passion, intelligence, and dedication to work on changing the world for the better!

-Lindsay Kroes
2A English and History



Got a sCo-op-worthy story?

Send your ideas, comments, and suggestions to olaf@uwaterloo.ca!

CECA Reminders

- Don't miss out on the chance to network and learn about employers. Check out the [Employer Information Session calendar here!](#)
- Brush up on your interview skills, explore your personality type, or learn how to network - through a [Centre for Career Action workshop](#). See the schedule [here](#).
- Mark your day-planner with this term's [Important Co-op Dates](#).

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CREDITS

Editor and Creative Director: Lindsay Kroes
Media and Publications Associate, CECA
Staff Editor: Olaf Naese, Communications Specialist, CECA
Contributor: Brian Orr, Sony Network Entertainment

Bringing the Flowerbed to the Bedside

Meghan West and her garden-on-wheels made sure that every patient could stop and smell the flowers.

Lindsay Kroes, Media and Publications Associate

There's something very rewarding about coaxing life out of the soil and watching as delicate shoots slowly unfold into beautiful flowers. Gardening is a source of joy and hope, especially for those whose daily lives are riddled with challenges. The backyard flowerbeds are a popular place for patients to spend the summer at West Park HealthCare Centre, which provides care to adults with long-term disabilities. However, there are many patients whose physical limitations prevent them from leaving their beds, let alone getting to the garden.

Meghan West (4B Therapeutic Recreation) wanted to change this on her work term as recreation therapy intern at West Park. If these patients couldn't get to the garden, she would bring the garden to them, thanks to a bedside gardening program which she singlehandedly created.

The Seed is Planted



It all began with Meghan's desire to make a lasting impact as she returned for her second work term at West Park. "Going back to West Park, I was really excited," says Meghan. "I already knew the ropes, and this time I wanted to focus on a project that I could contribute to the department.

On her work term, she became interested in horticultural therapy. "It's a form of recreation that a lot of people enjoy, and there are so many things you can do with it that you wouldn't expect," she says. Megan determined that a year-round gardening program would benefit patients who were less involved with other activities. With that, she set off to make it happen.

From the Ground Up



Meghan admits that not everyone was on board with the idea at the beginning.

"My supervisor said to me, 'Just be prepared that some people aren't going to like your idea. They may question why you're doing it and present all the challenges you are going to face,'" she recounts. "'But as long as you're passionate and confident about it, you can convince them that it's going to work.'"

With that advice (and a whole lot of planning), the bedside gardening program was born.

"I talked to patients about what they would be interested in planting or what they used to grow when they were at home," says Meghan. They chose red pepper, cucumber, and various flowers.

Slowly but surely, the program began to take shape.

"Sometimes I'd take the trolley of plants up to the patient's room or other times I would take a little pushcart with one of the trays, and bring a bowl of soil, spray bottle, gloves, and seeds," Meghan explains.

Getting their Hands Dirty



With these supplies, patients could garden to their hearts' content right from their beds. Each session was a learning experience for Meghan, who tweaked the program as she went along to fit each patient's needs.

"Some patients weren't able to scoop the soil, so I had to find a way for them to work without struggling with their fine motor skills," Meghan explains. "The first session was a huge mess, with soil all over the bed! I think it added to the experience, though, because gardening is all about getting down in the dirt."

How does your garden grow?



Little by little, the seeds that they started from scratch began to poke through the soil. "Every session I'd bring the plants up and be like, 'Look! They're growing- this is what you did.'"

"It became a source of conversation for us," says Meghan. "As it went along, you could see they were really enjoying it. It was an activity that gave them a sense of purpose."

Her cart of flowers attracted a lot of attention in the halls of West Park, which gave her a chance to talk about the growing field of recreation therapy. "I think everyone took an interest because they saw the impact it had with the patients."

The program's success was a source of inspiration for Meghan as well. "It has given me motivation to go out into the workforce and apply my ideas. On past co-op terms, I've always thought, 'oh, they might not appreciate my suggestions.'" Now, I'm more confident in sharing my ideas and facing the challenges that come with it." Sometimes, all it takes is a little encouragement for a flower to bloom in all its glory.

Co-op at the **Leading Edge** of Stem Cell Research

Lindsay Kroes, Media and Publications Associate

Think of some of the worst diseases which plague the modern world: Cancer. Alzheimer's. Stroke. Heart Disease.

Many scientists believe that the cures for these and other diseases will be found in stem cells, the building blocks of the human body. At the Sue and Bill Gross Stem Cell Research Centre, some of the world's leading stem cell scientists are conducting ground-breaking research towards this end. Among the many exciting initiatives currently taking place at the centre are some of the very first human trials using embryonic and neural stem cells.

This prestigious facility is also home to two Waterloo nanotechnology engineering students, Benson Fan and Yih Yang Chen, who are spending eight month co-op terms as researchers in Dr. Weian Zhao's lab.

"One of the focusses of our research is working on stem-cell based therapy," explains Zhao. "For example, we engineer stem cells to target them specifically to the diseased organ, so we can use the cells as a long term in vivo 'drug store.' We could use stem cells to treat tumours, or other neurological diseases such as strokes."

Zhao first began hiring Waterloo co-ops during his post-doctoral work at Harvard/MIT under Dr. Jeffrey Karp. Fifteen co-op students later, Zhao continues to hire out of his own lab at the research centre on the University of California Irvine campus.

The Heart of Stem Cell Research

Working in such a world-class facility is not without its benefits!

"Our students have the opportunity to learn skills that they could not learn anywhere else," says Zhao. "In fact, Benson and Yih Yang just completed a training course here in the building for culturing embryonic stem cells. That course was offered free to the students who were working here, but it would cost a few thousand dollars if you came from outside."

"Working at the stem cell centre is very exciting and eye-opening," adds Yih Yang. "The average day quite possibly would include going to a talk by a visiting professor on current advances in regenerative medicine, cancer therapy, or stem cell therapy trials."

The access to state-of-the-art equipment and the latest knowledge opens many doors for these budding scientists. "Working in this facility really gives me the initiative to actively search for novel projects and learn more about certain aspects of this field," says Benson.

Mentorship and Networking

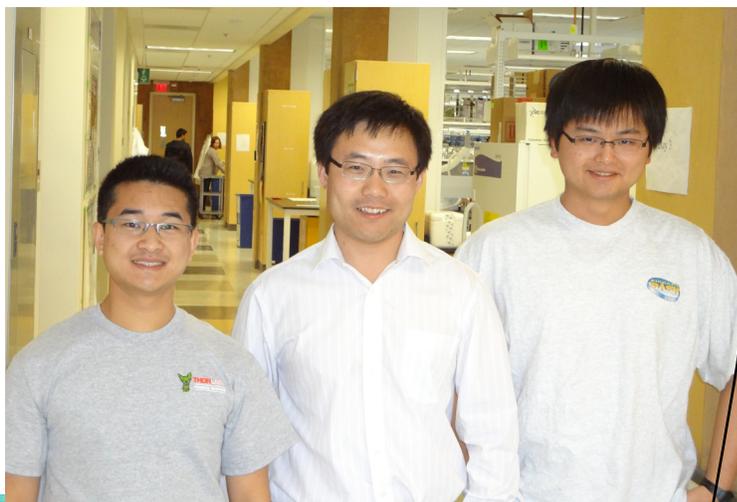
In addition to equipment and resources, Benson and Yih Yang can also rely on the mentorship of Dr. Zhao to guide them.

"We really train the student as a true researcher. They have to learn how to design and take the lead of their own project. Then we have discussions, and they go back to optimize the plan," says Weian.

"Dr. Zhao strives to teach us how to conduct high-impact research and what considerations we have to take into account when planning our own research topics," says Yih Yang. He advises other co-op students on the importance of finding a good mentor for their research co-op. "When looking for a research position, try to find out what kind of person the prospective professor is. Look at their research websites and contact the current employees to get a feel for what kind of a lab it is."

Zhao also encourages students to "interact with colleagues, in seminars and in conferences, because it is extremely important to build up your network for the future."

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Yih Yang, Dr. Zhao, and Benson in the UC Irvine lab. >>

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This hasn't been difficult at the research centre, especially given the multitude of seminars, conferences and courses that the students attend. "There are lots of opportunities to reach out and communicate, especially when a lot of big names in bioengineering and medicine are in California," says Benson.

The Chance to Change Lives

California is a good place to spend the winter term for other reasons, too - even in January, the temperature rarely dips below 10 degrees C. "Coming from the part of the world where icy roads and snow define much of the winter, I was surprised to find how warm California can get," says Benson. "I especially love the beaches - it is beyond words how awesome they are."

As if all this weren't enough, the biggest reward of Yih Yang and Benson's co-op terms may be yet to come, in the results of their current research.

"I will be working on a DNA-based drug delivery vehicle that can selectively target and destroy cancer cells," says Yih Yang. "Hopefully it will save many lives if it works!"

Whether you are a co-op student or a world-renowned researcher, the chance to improve the lives of so many others is perhaps the most valuable opportunity of all.

Benson and Yih Yang with colleagues at the Society for Laboratory Automation and Screening (SLAS) Conference in San Diego. >>



Ask a Graduate!

Ilia Droujinine graduated from Waterloo last fall with a degree in biochemistry - and two years of experience working in research labs, including Dr. Weian Zhao and Dr. Jeffrey Karp's lab at Harvard/MIT.



Today, Ilia is back at Harvard pursuing his PhD. He shares his insight on making the most out of a research co-op position:

How did your co-op term with Dr. Karp and Dr. Zhao prepare you for your future career path?

During my co-op terms, I have become a better scientist by designing experiments, analyzing data, preparing a manuscript, and presenting. My work term with Dr. Zhao and Dr. Karp was truly a life-changing experience.

What advice do you have for co-op students doing research?

Don't be shy about speaking to the experts in different fields. Science is all about communication, and you can learn a lot more from people than from reading papers and textbooks. Take any opportunity you get - they will help to define who you are.

Interested in learning more about stem cell research? Check out the Sue and Bill Gross Stem Cell Research Centre website!

takesnerve.com

On co-op in Toronto next Fall? Check this out!

Take Chinese, Japanese, or Korean courses in Toronto and earn course credits at Waterloo!

- China 101: First-Year Chinese 1 (Tues/Thurs 7:00-8:30pm)
- China 120: Advanced First-Year Chinese (Tues/Thurs 7:00-8:30pm)
- Japan 111: Japanese for Business 1 (Sat 9:00am-12:00pm)
- Korea 101: First-Year Korean 1 (Thurs 6:30-9:20pm)

All classes take place at Hudson College, 21 Ascot Avenue (Dufferin and St. Clair), Toronto, Ontario.

For more information please email fshimoda@uwaterloo.ca.



Beyond 9-5 Microsoft Co-ops Discover a World Outside the Cubicle



Lindsay Kroes, Media and Publications Associate

Do you dread spending the dog days of summer in a dreary office? Do you find your eyes wandering to the clock every half hour, counting down the minutes until 5 p.m. and freedom?

It doesn't have to be that way! On their co-op terms at Microsoft Canada, Yen Ho, Joe Connolly, Momo Sun, and Jessica Pellow got out of the cubicle and took advantage of all the opportunities that a work term at Microsoft Canada has to offer. From joining clubs, to trying new things, and even travelling to the Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth, each found a way to spice up their workday - and make the most out of their co-op term!

A Step in a *New* Direction

When Jessica Pellow took a job as Business and Marketing Associate with Microsoft Canada, she was pretty comfortable with the business side of things. However, marketing was uncharted territory for the 4B Mathematics and Business Administration student.

Before long, Jessica found herself deep in the throes of planning Microsoft Canada's biggest event - the annual Tech Days. "Tech Days connects Microsoft brand ambassadors who have a strong technical background with developers and professionals. They give them the true reason to buy our product, beyond the flashy packaging," explains Jessica.

Jessica was heavily involved with laying the groundwork for the event, scheduling, and organizing the many details which come together to make an event successful. The level of ownership that she was given was both exciting and intimidating. The level of ownership that she was given was both exciting and intimidating.

"Microsoft is very much like, 'this is all you- go for it!' They support you but also give you a lot of independence," says Jessica. "You have to be open to accept the challenge."

At the event itself, Jessica took on yet another unfamiliar role: conducting video interviews with participants and speakers. "As a technical student, I'm not used to interviewing people and asking them questions which get the personal human aspect out of an environment like that," she said. "I walked around for two days with a large tripod attached to my back and a giant digital camera. Sure, my feet were almost falling off by the end of the day, but it's worth it to know that you did a good job and were part of something incredible."

Though she came into the term with no event management experience, four months later she felt like she could do it in her sleep. "This ended up being the perfect position for me because it allowed me to marry my creative side and my analytical, problem-solving side," she reflects. "There's nothing quite like the satisfaction of getting involved with a project that you didn't think you could do, giving it all your effort, and coming out with a finished product that you can really be proud of."

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ABOVE: Ankusha Patel (a WLU co-op), Momo Sun, Yen Ho, and Jessica Pellow hang out in the X-box area of the office.

BELOW: Jessica, Momo, and Yen with Olympic figure skater David Pelletier at Battle of the Blades.



On the Job at the Calgary Stampede

When Joe Connolly (3B Economics and Philosophy) applied for the position of Marketing Specialist at Microsoft Canada, he did not expect the term to include rodeo clowns, ten gallon hats, or chuck-wagons. However, when the experiential marketing team was short one person for their stop at the Calgary Stampede, he was only too happy to don a cowboy hat and join them. He accompanied the team as both a promotional marketer and program analyst, spending most of his time in the Microsoft tent. There, he demonstrated Microsoft products to Stampede-goers while collecting feedback and recommendations to improve the program.

According to Joe, there is nothing like Calgary during the Stampede. “Basically, the entire city shuts down for two weeks and has a huge party,” says Joe. “Oil and gas corporations bring people from all over the world with whom they’re trying to do business, to schmooze them. All the hotels sell out, it’s just packed – it’s madness actually!”

“We were always working while we were there- from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day for eleven days! It was pretty crazy,” says Joe. “But we had breaks in between. So you could take an hour break, and go see the rodeo. Because we were on the Stampede grounds already, we had a pass that could get us in pretty much anywhere.”

Joe got to see the chuck wagon races and the finals for many of the rodeo events. Another perk was the team’s day trip to Banff after the crowds dispersed at the end of the week. There, he took in the view of Lake Louise, spotting some elk (and later sampled elk steak for dinner)!

When it came time to trade his cowboy boots for dress shoes and step back into office life, Joe brought back a wealth of experience in promotional marketing- not to mention a great story to tell!



ABOVE Joe at work in the Microsoft tent.
BELOW: Relaxing in Banff, with a co-worker.



Getting Involved and Giving Back

Yen Ho (4B French) and Momo Sun (4B Math and Business) found a way to contribute to their company and their community, through the Microsoft Corporate Citizenship Council, which supports various charitable initiatives in the community. Together, Momo and Yen hosted the Microsoft Children’s Holiday Party, which brought together 350 kids from Boys and Girls Clubs across the GTA for a day full of holiday fun. Yen, Momo, and a team of other volunteers created a youngster’s paradise, with games, arts and crafts, bouncy castles, clowns, food, and even a visit from Jolly Old St. Nick himself.

“The party gave the children an opportunity that they wouldn’t have anywhere else,” says Yen. “It was great to see their faces and brighten their day,” Momo adds.

The Corporate Citizenship Council is just one of the many ways to get involved at Microsoft, where clubs, sports teams, and staff outings abound. Yen and Momo were members of Toastmasters, a club which helps staff improve their public speaking skills. and Momo played on the Microsoft soccer team. Both agree that there is a lot to be gained from getting involved outside your regular job.



ABOVE: Momo at the Children’s Holiday Party.

“It’s a good opportunity to connect with people and learn about them,” Momo says. “As they tell you about their experiences and goals, it gives you insight into your own goals.” Furthermore, it can help you do your job better. “Clubs and teams help to break down the walls between departments.”

On top of all this, it’s just plain fun! What better way to alleviate the numbing nine-to-five routine than playing hockey with your manager? Or sampling cheese with your co-workers in the Cheese Club (there is one at Microsoft!)

Yen sums up the experiences of her and her colleagues with the following advice: “Don’t be afraid to deviate from your listed responsibilities- get out there, see what’s in the company and make the most of it!”

A Foot in the Door



Insider information on how to make your résumé stand out from the stack.

Brian Orr, Senior Manager, Engineering, Sony Network Entertainment

At Sony, we've been hiring software engineering co-ops for about 12 years in Waterloo, and we are always looking for top talent to join our team. But sometimes talent is hard to find because students don't market themselves well. Since I've looked at literally thousands of résumés, interviewed hundreds of candidates, and hired dozens and dozens of co-op students from uWaterloo, I thought I could share some tips from the employer's side on how co-ops can find a job, even without any work experience.

Tip # 1: You have to stand out.

The co-op advisors tell you this, your professors tell you this, your parents tell you this ... but it's true. You have to stand out. Literally, your résumé is given 15 seconds to make an impression, and if no impression is made, it's on to the next candidate.

I'll leave it up to Tip #2 to give you a sure-fire way of getting noticed. First, let me talk about ways of not getting noticed. You won't get noticed if your résumé looks like everyone else's. Remember that all of your peers have taken the same courses, have done the same projects, and probably have as little work experience as you. So quoting that you "wrote a Tetris game for course X" is not that helpful because everyone in your class did the same project. And employers notice this because they are looking at many résumés from students in your class.

So unless your marks put you at the top of your class, you have killer scholarships, or have worked somewhere in the industry before, you have to get creative.

A few ways of getting creative:

- Write a cover letter. Tailor it specifically for the company you are applying to, and discuss how you could see yourself fitting into the team based on your background and strengths.
- Have a well-designed résumé. Find a design student to help you if you aren't design savvy.
- Write a different résumé for different companies. If the job only asks for a certain skill, showcase that skill.

Tip #2: Make a personal website.

If all your résumé said was: *My Name | My Program | www.myname.com* you'd probably get some funny looks, but you'd also likely get a click-through. This example is a bit drastic, but my point is the following: making a website is a guaranteed way to stand out.

If a candidate's résumé lists a personal website, I'm bound to check it out. Granted, if the website has nothing on it, or is designed poorly, there's obviously no value. But here's where you can showcase yourself and your projects.

There are also some hidden benefits to making a website:

- Statistics. You can monitor how many people have viewed your website, their IP, and what pages they focused on. You could even make a special link for each employer.
- Your résumé can be a living document. Employers always get the most recent "you," especially if you are making progress on a project or have learned a new skill.
- You now have a face, a personality. Your website design and writing style show more of "who you are," and demonstrate those ever-difficult-to-showcase "soft skills."

Hint: Spend the \$10 a year to buy a personal domain, like *www.myname.com*. This adds a level of professionalism that employers appreciate and makes your website address easier to remember. Oh, and don't even think about putting ads on the page to help offset any costs.

Tip # 3: Highlight your personal projects.

If you have projects that you do for fun which relate to your field, showcase them on your résumé! These personal projects often mean more to employers than course work because they show you have a genuine interest in your field. If you are in accounting, write a blog with tips for students on managing their budget or doing their taxes. If you are in design, planning, or architecture, invest some time in personal projects, and showcase them on your website. If you are in a field such as physiotherapy, use your website to display photos of your volunteer work and to share your philosophy about healing and nutrition. If you're a coder, produce games and apps on your own time to show that you love making software. These are just some examples, but hopefully you get the idea.

So, now you're equipped with some fool-proof ways to get noticed. What I've outlined here is easy! Mind you, it's a lot of work, but think of it as an investment. The more you put in now, the better off you'll be, not only for your first co-op term but for the rest of your career.