

Inside sCo-op

**Here Today,
Gone Tomorrow**

uWaterloo students know
how to make the most of
their brief time in co-op

Inside sCo-op: Contents

The Inside sCo-op is a bi-monthly student e-publication released through Co-operative Education & Career Services at the University of Waterloo

PAGE:

3



From jobless to career-ready

Learn how Numaira Obaid went from no work experience to a full-time job offer (less than halfway through her degree!)

5



Adventures in Switzerland

Meet six lucky students who spent the work term of a lifetime at the Leysin American School in Leysin, Switzerland

7



The True North

Two students discover unique work environments in northern Quebec and apply their academic knowledge on the job

9



Connection: The Art of Powerful Conversation

Get some communication tips from Stuart Knight that will help you reach new levels of success while on your work term

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Letter from the Editor

Credit: Paramount Pictures



Matthew Broderick as Ferris Bueller

Dear fellow co-op students,

The other night I was watching one of my favourite John Hughes movies on TV – Ferris Bueller’s Day Off. In the final scene of the film, Ferris says the now famous closing lines: “Life moves pretty fast. You don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

I couldn’t help but be reminded of student life when recalling those last words. As co-op students, most of us are in five-year programs, which may seem like a lifetime when you’re consumed with everything relating to academic and work terms, but before you know it you’ll have graduated. Hopefully by then you will have many valuable co-op experiences to look back on.

Although our work terms are only 4 months in length, within this short time frame we receive a wealth of information about working in different industries. The terms go by fast, but it’s important to take Ferris’ advice and make the most of the short time that you have before you realize it’s over.

This issue is all about co-op students who have taken advantage of their brief time in co-op and made lasting impressions on their employers. Like Numaira Obaid, whose hard work and dedication during her first work term resulted in a full-time job offer. Also, meet six students who spent this past Fall term working at a boarding school in Switzerland with a gorgeous view of the Swiss alps every day (not your average work term!). Don’t forget to read about two students – Deb Roth and Ivan Surnin – and their experiences in northern Quebec, where their academic backgrounds were put to good use. If you want to make a lasting impact on your own co-op job, don’t miss our Career Corner article on powerful communication in the workplace.

Co-op terms allow us to get so much more out of our university experience, so make sure you stop and take it all in before you depart, degree in hand.

Enjoy,

Anneet



Anneet Dhillion

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and International Studies

Have a suggestion for the next Inside sCo-op? Think you have a sCo-op worthy co-op experience?

E-mail olaf@uwaterloo.ca now!
We’d love to hear your ideas!

CECS Reminders...

For Students on Co-op

Be sure to . . .

Keep up with your PD courses!

By now you should have logged on to ANGEL and familiarized yourself with the materials for your PD course. It is important to stay up-to-date and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

To find out more about each of the course topics, view WatPD’s webpage at <http://www.watpd.uwaterloo.ca/about/courses.html>.

For Students in the Interview Cycle

Be sure to . . .

Look into info sessions and workshops!

Check out the Employer Information Session calendars to find out when your future employer is presenting on campus: <http://cecs.uwaterloo.ca/students/sessions.php>.

If you’re looking to brush up on interview skills or curious about grad school opportunities, also check out the Student Workshop Calendar: <https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/cecs/cs/index.php?page=Public.Workshops>.

From jobless to career-ready

By Avneet Dhillon

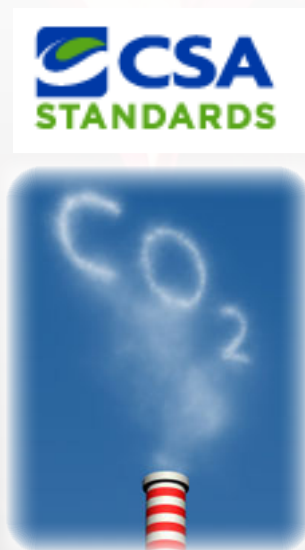
Numaira Obaid, a 2B Chemical Engineering student, had no previous work experience when she began searching for her first work term. While the job search process can be difficult for any student, it is especially challenging for an individual with no work experience to show for themselves, who must somehow set themselves apart from the stiff competition.

As the end of term was closely approaching, Numaira didn't think she would be hired through the JobMine process. Then she was granted an interview with Canadian Standards Association (CSA), a not-for-profit that works in Canada and around the world to develop standards that "address real needs, such as enhancing public safety and health, advancing quality of life, helping to preserve the environment and facilitating trade." CSA also tests products to see if they are complying with these particular standards.

Not only was Numaira hired by CSA for her first co-op job, but after completing her 4-month term CSA wanted her back for all of her subsequent work terms and offered her a full-time job upon graduation! Numaira says that receiving a full-time offer "makes you feel like you're on top of the world, especially when you're in first year. That's why I decided to go back for two more work terms. I wasn't expecting it at all."



Numaira was hired as an Environmental Co-ordinator at CSA. She compiled a greenhouse gas inventory and was also responsible for projects that would reduce the organization's carbon emissions, as CSA has an "unwritten policy of becoming carbon-neutral." Her initiative and dedication to her work impressed her employer and, as she took on more and more responsibility, her employers at CSA realized they would be wise to offer her a full-time position.



Numaira also drew on an experience from her Engineering studies to show her employer that she was a quick learner. "We used a new program in first year, called Visio, and I told them that within a few hours I was able to do my project very efficiently using this program. Small details like that can really set you apart."

Numaira is currently completing a work term with Research in Motion, after deciding that she should diversify her experiences. CSA agreed with this and Numaira is looking forward to taking the next step in achieving her long-term career goals.

"I aspire to upper management in the future and I have a long plan for my life, where I see myself studying for many years," Numaira says, "I plan on doing a Masters in Engineering, then I would like to join a company and complete an MBA."

Numaira claims that she was lucky to receive the initial job opportunity so close to the end of term: "I got my job around the 20th of December, for the January work term," Numaira explains, "So I was really lucky because by that time I was about to start looking for a volunteer position."

Although Numaira may attribute luck to her success in finding a job, she worked hard to market herself in her application and during her interview. "Even though I did not have the work experience, I had the educational background that I needed," Numaira says, "When I was in high school I did loads of environmental volunteering and was the President of our Environmental club. So I did a lot of research and I knew so much, without having applied it. I made sure to bring that out in the interview."



No matter what Numaira chooses to do in the future, it is clear that co-op has allowed her to broaden her reach in the professional world, while it has also proven what a major asset she has been for CSA.

continued on page 4 >>

Numaira's Tips for Success in Co-op

BE CONFIDENT

"Within the first month of my first work term, I went to our Ottawa office - which is our climate change division. They're the experts on greenhouse gases - there was a whole panel of experts and I was basically telling them in a meeting that everything they did with the previous project was wrong. It was a big step. If you can show you can stand up for yourself and have an opinion, it sets you apart."

ALWAYS NETWORK

"You should try to get out of your department and do some networking. That's how I came across the job at RIM. So definitely just get out of your own little box. Co-op is such a BIG experience and we're really lucky to have it. So we need to make the most of it."

BE ADAPTABLE

"I wrote the company's HR policy manual. I had no experience in HR coming from Engineering, but our company VP sat with me and said 'I know you can do it. If you need any resources just tap into them.' Completing something that's outside of your comfort zone can show you're a quick learner. That's something I know will help me in my future work terms because it shows I'm adaptable."

TAKE ADVANTAGE

"Luckily I was working in HR, so I had my résumé looked at by everyone there, as well as my supervisor. When I started applying to other jobs, I sat down with my supervisor, asking her what I messed up on during my interview. Asking them why you were or were not their first preference could be a question that might hurt you, but it's an experience you can have now that you can't when you're working full time."



Co-op is such a BIG experience . . . we need to make the most of it



Come on out to the 2011 Job Fair!

Network with potential employers and learn more about their organizations, careers and potential employment opportunities!



**RIM Park, Waterloo
Wednesday, February 2, 2011
10:00AM - 3:30PM**

For other information about the fair, including lists of participating organizations, how to prepare and employer guidebooks, visit www.partners4employment.ca

Also check out http://www.partners4employment.ca/documents/bus_schedules.pdf for student bus schedules

Adventures in Switzerland

By Avneet Dhillon

The Leysin American School (LAS) in Switzerland is an International Boarding School for students from grades 8 to 13. The school is located in a mountain village in the Swiss Alps, with about 380 students from around the world. Located in the French area of Western Switzerland near Lake Geneva, Leysin is a ski resort and LAS offers an extensive ski program in the winter.

While this may sound more like a vacation spot than a school, six lucky uWaterloo co-op students spent this past fall term working at the school in different positions. The jobs are offered through JobMine, however, only students who are citizens of Switzerland or an EU country can apply. Each of these six students - Vanessa, Jacky, Julia, Craig, Matthew and Tamara - share their unforgettable work term experience with the Inside sCo-op.

To find out more about LAS, check out their website at www.las.ch

Vanessa Diaconu

3A Mathematics Student Life Assistant

Part of the culture at LAS requires employees to be involved in the student life at the school, including supervision of the travel program within Europe. As a Student Life Assistant, Vanessa Diaconu not only helped supervise students in the dormitories, but also co-ordinated events, ran the student lounge and led some after-school activities. "I was one of the 3 coaches of the varsity tennis team and I ran two additional sports with students," Vanessa says. She also helped tutor students in Math and Science. Vanessa's favourite part about working in Switzerland has been, not surprisingly, the amount of travelling she has been able to do.



"I've had the opportunity to travel to Geneva, Montreux, Lausanne and Paris via train, and I biked across the Alps and beyond the France border." She has also enjoyed acting as a role model to young adolescents, "teaching them and helping them grow both academically and inter-personally."

Jacky Lam

4B Kinesiology Student Life Assistant

One of the many unique benefits of working at LAS is the exposure to a work environment with such a great amount of diversity. Jacky Lam, also a Student Life Assistant, explains how he has been learning a few words in different languages because "almost everyone at the school speaks a minimum of two languages." Students from all over the world attend the school, and within the first month of his work term, Jacky "met people from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Vietnam, Russia, China, Japan, Korea, England and Spain" - just to name a few! After working in various Kinesiology-related fields during his previous work terms, as well as office jobs, Jacky says that this work term in Switzerland has inspired him to consider a career in teaching. Upon graduation, Jacky plans to continue his travels, this time in Asia. "I'll be going to Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam." Safe travels, Jacky!



Julia Lubczynski

4A Kinesiology Science Lab Technician



Julia Lubczynski has been able to use her Kinesiology background in some unexpected ways during her term at LAS. Aside from working as a Science Lab Technician, she was the girls' Varsity Soccer coach. In addition to teaching the girls about proper nutrition and warming up, she has also used skills learned in KIN140L "by dealing with sports injuries and taping lots of ankles." While Julia feels very appreciative of the opportunity to work in such a great position and location, it's the little things that she has found difficult to adjust to in Switzerland. "It's hard to find normal milk here. In the school cafeteria we drink 4%, which tastes a lot like cream," Julia remarks, "The lowest I have seen here is 2%." Despite the lack of skim milk in Leysin, Julia has enjoyed her experience at LAS and says it has been a great opportunity to make life-long friends. "When you work at a boarding school you live, work and play with the same people every day," Julia explains, "On weekends, many of the teachers go hiking together, and travel to different countries."



The group with their boss, Mary Field-Keenan (far right), at their on-campus Canadian Thanksgiving dinner



Part of the students' view in Leysin

Craig Mutch

3A Environment & Business IT Assistant

When Craig Mutch visited Switzerland as a teenager, he was "blown away by the beauty of the country and the culture." When the opportunity arose to travel back to Switzerland, this time for a co-op term, he didn't think twice before going after it. As part of the IT department,

Craig was responsible for responding to staff requests for help with computers or classroom equipment and training them on how to use the databases and printers.



While working in this role, Craig noticed that LAS had been spending more time and money than necessary on maintaining the printers around school. "I researched and realized the school could save up to an estimated 20% by performing a needs analysis for each printer," Craig says. "In some cases printers were only kept running for convenience." While Craig will miss everyone he has met in Leysin, he won't be missing the Swiss prices. "I had a meal at one of the hotels in Leysin not long after arriving in Switzerland and recall ordering two salads and some spaghetti - the bill came to 80CHF! I didn't go back to that restaurant!"

Matthew Robinson

3A Chemistry Science Lab Technician

After viewing the JobMine posting for a work term in Leysin, Switzerland, Matt Robinson "quickly Googled the location to find that it was in a small mountain village in the Swiss Alps." The picturesque environment, coupled with the opportunity to teach Science at the high school level, was more than enough reason for Matt to apply.

"My main role within the school was to prepare and design labs for reinforcing the topics covered in the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum," Matt says. In the past, Matt has spent co-op terms working in research labs, but decided to try out a different type of Chemistry job, since he views teaching as a possible career path. "I decided that my co-op experience should be about working in different environments," Matt remarks, "so I branched out into the world of teaching." Matt also enjoyed the small-town atmosphere of Leysin, reflecting that "the town itself is about the same size as Huntsville, Ontario. The people in the town are all polite and greet you with a cheerful 'Bonjour' when you pass."



Tamara Yantha

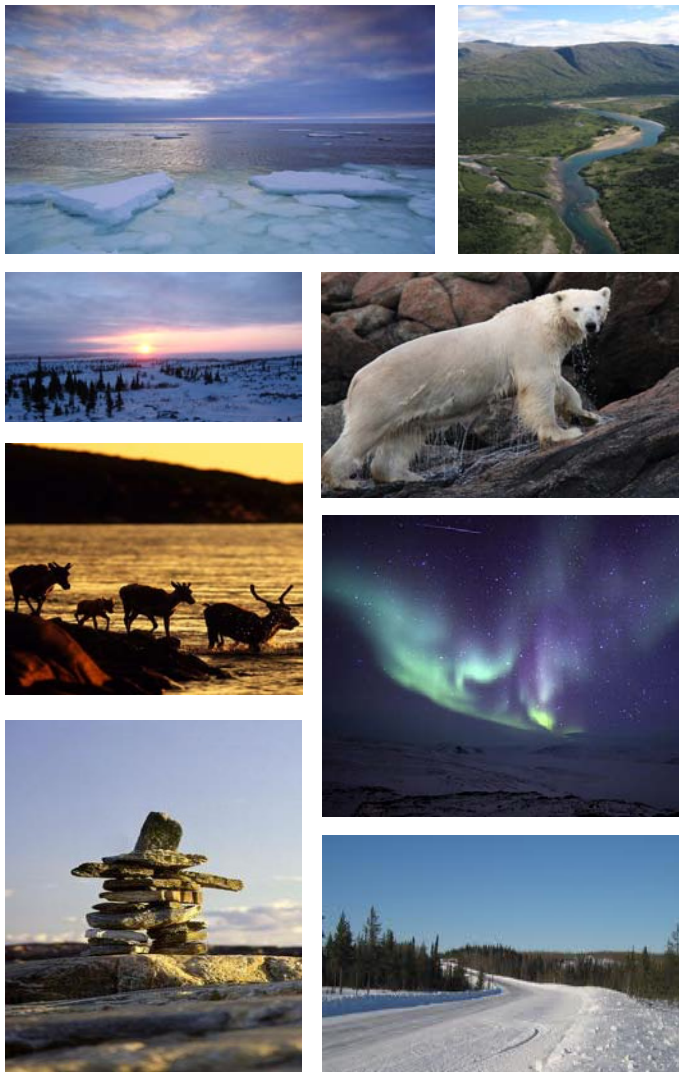
3A Arts & Business Student Life Assistant



As part of her International Trade specialization, Tamara Yantha is required to participate in a foreign co-op term, which she completed during her first work term in Germany. She had such a great time that when she saw this opportunity at LAS, she just couldn't resist another international experience. "I knew it would be another one of those opportunities of a lifetime and had to apply for the job," she says. Also working as a Student Life Assistant, Tamara says that her most valued experience from this co-op term has been connecting with the students. "It's so interesting to hear about where they are from and the different stories that they have to tell about the travels they have already been on." Tamara and the rest of the co-op students at LAS have done plenty of travelling on their own as well, due to the ease of getting around Europe. Tamara has also tried to take advantage of working in an area so culturally diverse, and spent some time trying to learn Polish. *Dobre dla ciebie, Tamara!*

The True North

By Avneet Dhillon



Bordered in the West by Hudson Bay and James Bay, and in the North by the Hudson Strait and Ungava Bay (yes, I had to look that up too), Northern Quebec is a largely unexplored region of Canada. Home to beautiful wildlife breathtaking landscape, those who travel to this area of Canada are in for a great surprise.

The inhabitants of this region, which include a number of First Nations people, aren't the only unique part of Northern Quebec. The vast landscape includes rolling tundra with huge rivers, boreal forests and the highest mountains in all of Eastern Canada. While the Arctic climate and sparse population distribution don't attract many tourists, those who do come to this region are adventure seekers.

A region defined by the beauty of nature, Northern Quebec is home to some of the earth's last untouched realms. A number of uWaterloo students find jobs in this region of Quebec each term, and they all enjoy the benefits of working in such a unique area of the world.

Meet two students who recently completed work terms in the Nunavik territory of Northern Quebec: Deborah Roth and Ivan Surnin. Deborah worked for the Cree Nation of Wimindji, while Ivan worked for Xstrata at the Raglan mine, near the coast of the Hudson Strait. Both students were asked about their co-op experience in this region by the Inside sCo-op.

Ivan



Deborah



continued on page 8 >>

Deborah and Cree Nation

Before Deborah left for her work term in Wimindji, she hadn't been on a plane since she was nine years old. She soon found herself flying out of Montreal in "a 40-seater plane with propellers." This is only one of the many new experiences Deborah was able to have after accepting a job offer as a Land Registry Clerk in the Cree Nation of Wimindji. She had no idea just how much she would learn by the time she returned south.



Deborah, a 4B Planning student, worked on tasks relating "primarily to GIS and Planning." She also wrote an environmental bylaw for anti-idling. "I based it off of their plastics bylaw and Waterloo's anti-idling bylaw," Deborah says, "The previous winter I had taken Environmental Law and Planning Law so I knew a lot about bylaws through school."



After completing the bylaw, Deborah discovered that the pace of that municipal structure was very different from a city like Waterloo. As she explains, "twelve weeks wasn't long enough to actually implement most of what I had laid out, but it was enough to start it." Deborah also took the time to educate her bosses on these environmental matters, who had no previous experience with the issue but were eager to learn.

During her downtime, Deborah was able to take advantage of her surroundings by camping along the James Bay highway, touring the Robert Bourassa dam and even learning how to make a tepee! When Deborah was applying for jobs before she began her work term in Wimindji, she had also received an offer as an Environmental Planner in London. She says she chose this job instead because she was looking for a challenge.

"It was easy to take the London job and just commute," Deborah explains, "but I chose the harder route and I learned a lot about myself while I was up there."

Mining with Ivan

While Deborah was writing bylaws, 3B Mechanical Engineering student Ivan Surnin was working with the Mobile Maintenance department of Xstrata Nickel, at the Raglan mine site. Ivan has spent four of his five previous work terms working for Xstrata - a global mining group - and two of these jobs have been at their Raglan mine in Nunavik.



Xstrata has operations all over the world, and while certain features are standard across the company, the sites themselves vary tremendously. So while Ivan has worked for Xstrata at various times, each experience has been eye-opening in different ways. "Every site a unique place with its own laws, rules, regulations, and procedures," Ivan reports, "So I wasn't limiting myself to the same workplace."

Ivan was also able to employ his Mechanical Engineering background while working at the site in Nunavik. "I've used a number of concepts from different courses," Ivan explains, "Thermodynamics and MODS (Mechanics of Deformable Solids) to better understand and deal with brake systems, as well as Digital Computation, which provided me with sufficient knowledge to complete an update for an electronic parts book for mobile equipment used at Raglan."

Ivan spent this past fall working for Xstrata in Kristiansand, Norway. "I asked for that location myself, after having witnessed the mining of the metal from the ground," Ivan says, "I wanted to see the final part of the mining process - the product our company delivers. I also knew that I would get a lot of pure Mechanical Engineering experience in Norway because the plant has a very high degree of automation."

One of Ivan's favourite parts of this work term has been "meeting new people and visiting new places." He travelled to Oslo various times, which he calls "a beautiful Nordic city with a very diverse population and a mixture of cultures." While taking advantage of his travel time, Ivan also visited Trondheim and northern Norway, went Nordic skiing and saw the famous fjords - long and narrow inlets of the sea between steep cliffs, which are common in Norway.

Working for Xstrata within the brief, 4-month work terms he has had, Ivan was able to expand his knowledge and experiences in ways he did not expect. After completing such gratifying work terms, Ivan plans on remaining in the mining industry and pursuing a career there.



Connection: The Art of Powerful Conversation

By Avneet Dhillon

Throughout this issue of the Inside sCo-op, you have read about students who, despite the time constraint of a four-month co-op job, have gained various marketable skills and built lasting relationships with their employers and co-workers by the end of their work terms. Such relationships can only be created with the proper set of communication skills.

Stuart Knight knows exactly how to use these skills in the workplace. A graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University's School of Business and Economics, Stuart is now "an entrepreneur, actor, entertainer, writer and producer extraordinaire." Since establishing his company, Stuart Knight Productions, he has spoken nationally to some of Canada's biggest companies and "helped them reach new levels of success."



Stuart Knight

Stuart recently spoke to uWaterloo staff at the Tatham Centre about how to engage in powerful conversations, which he says will lead to stronger relationships that can increase a company's achievements. During co-op terms, we all interact with a new set of co-workers and supervisors. Sometimes you may find yourself having quick exchanges simply about what work you have to do, and soon you've completed your work term and don't know much of anything about the people you worked with.

During his entertaining speech, Stuart stresses the importance of getting to know employees of a company as people - whether you work for them or with them. This builds strong bonds that carry over into the work itself. "Leaders who take the time to create relationships with three groups - customers, clients and their team - will have a competitive edge," Stuart explains.

Some of Stuart's tips can apply to students who want to have a successful work term, as well as for networking skills. One of his tips for engaging in stronger conversations is what he calls "peeling the onion."

When conversing in the workplace, many people will ask questions like "How was your weekend?" but after the question is answered they either move on to another topic or end the conversation. Stuart says we need to ask questions based on someone's answers, which will get you closer to the core of who a person is - like peeling the layers of an onion. Stuart calls this "part-two questioning."

Stuart recommends avoiding "file dumping," which is when we receive answers to a question without pressing further, instead just 'dumping' the information. Similar to when parents ask, "How's school?" and a child simply replies with "Fine," and ends the conversation.

Now a successful entrepreneur, Stuart illustrates that his success is largely due to his ability to connect with people just by meeting them for a few minutes. He explains a situation where he once ran into a woman from a company at which he had given a speech, who was shocked that he remembered her name as well as one of her favourite hobbies. By asking the right questions when they met over two years ago, it wasn't difficult for Stuart to remember her name because he associated her with this hobby. This memorizing trick seems quite simple but it can impress clients as well help you network.

So be sure to try some of these communication tips during your own co-op terms. As Stuart says, "One conversation can change your life!"



Staff members interacting according to Stuart's workshop

If you're interested in learning more about these communication skills, you can pick up a copy of Stuart's book, *You Should Have Asked - The Art of Powerful Conversation*, or visit his website, www.stuartknightproductions.com for more information.