

# The Inside sCo-op

Fall 2013, ed. 1

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's hard to believe, but summer is over and the Fall term is here once again. Whether you're starting an academic or a work term, now is the time to take advantage of the opportunities that can be found at Waterloo.

At Waterloo, we believe our students are the best and brightest with fantastic ideas just waiting to be shared with the world. This issue of the Inside sCo-op takes a look at some of the entrepreneurs at Waterloo.

Meet Michal Ulman, a 1B Systems Design Engineering student who has started two companies, all before the age of 20. Then you can read about Lindsay Kroes, who spent an E co-op term writing a book based on the stories of Stratford residences. If Lindsay and Michal's stories have inspired you, you can find some information on the e co-op program too.

Waterloo entrepreneurs do great things after graduation, as demonstrated by our last story about Ivan Yuen, co-founded of Wattpad, one of the fastest growing online literary communities.

I hope these stories will inspire you to make the most of your academic and work terms!

*Shannon Tigert*

4A English Literature

WATERLOO

# INTUITION GONE RIGHT »

Michal Ulman's entrepreneurial instincts have paid off in a big way

Michal Ulman (1B Systems Design Engineering) has started two companies before the age of 20, and he's just getting warmed up. In November 2012, he co-founded uIntuition with his friend Melissa Morgan. uIntuition is an agency representing talented university students in both academic and creative areas. These students are then contracted out to people interested in their services. "Because of their talent and passion, we are able to offer extremely professional services, but at a non-professional price," says Michal. The students range from tutors, to graphic designers, to musi-



cians, all of them highly talented. Normally, if such individuals wanted to find a job to put their skills to use they would do this through Craig-

list or Kijiji. "The moment they mention 'I'm a student,' trust levels go way down because students are apparently inexperienced, they're too young, and they don't know what they're getting into." uIntuition is changing that perspective, one client at a time.

## From idea to reality

uIntuition has had over 250 applications from students at Waterloo and Laurier hoping to be contracted out, with 15 of them making the cut so far. "We only take the best of the best," says Michal. "uIntuition ensures you won't get someone that can do an 'okay' job. You're only getting a student who will go above and beyond expectations."

In February 2013, uIntuition became incorporated, and is now run by Michal and Melissa, along with a third exec and three student volunteers. So far they've completed projects for 25 clients. The secret to finding clients? "Network, network, network," says Michal, explaining that the uIntuition team attends conferences and finds any way to make connections. The clients are mostly in the GTA, but as Michal points out, the company has worldwide potential. "We could do a web design for someone in Australia, because it can all be done online."

## Movie magic

Running one start-up company might be enough for some people, but Michal has more than uIntuition on his plate. He also started Green Pixels Productions, a one-man operation through which he produces movie special effects. Currently working on a film entitled "Love, Guns, and Christmas" that will be premiering at the 2014 Sundance Festival, Michal has enjoyed working with movies since high school.

After applying to his high school's film editing club in grade 10, his Windows Movie Editor films weren't enough to allow him to join. Undeterred, Michal spent the next year teaching himself how to edit films with Adobe programs by watching tutorials online. He got sucked in to special effects and motion graphics. He applied to the club again, and what happened? "I became the president," says Michal. "It's just about motivation and the drive to do something." He looked for jobs on Craigslist, eventually finding someone needing a last minute special effect. It ended up making it into the movie and Michal was credited. He came back to work with the same people a year later, which became a stepping stone for bigger jobs.



Michael (centre) and the uIntuition executive team Nicole Papp and Melissa Morgan

## Classroom connections

Michal says a great deal of his success thus far is due to his engineering degree. "I never envisioned myself in an engineering job, but engineering is about more than just learning the principles; it will teach you many things. I know what it's like to meet strict deadlines, what it's like to be under constant pressure. Isn't running a business kind of like that? I know that I never would have been able to start a business if I hadn't pursued engineering at Waterloo."

As for the future of uIntuition, Michal has big plans. "We would love to franchise and put a branch in every university in North America. Every university has extremely talented students. You just have to find them."

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# E CO-OP »

Are you an entrepreneur in the making? Waterloo's E co-op program supports students looking to undertake their own ventures

If you are looking for an opportunity to put an entrepreneurial spin on your undergraduate degree at Waterloo, consider Conrad's specialized undergraduate programs in entrepreneurship. They can take your degree from great to exceptional.

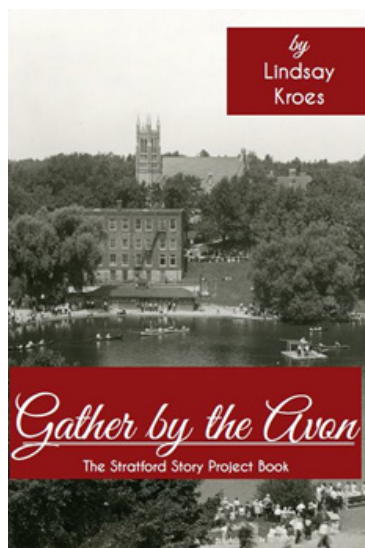
Waterloo is known around the world for its co-op program and for innovation. A signature program at Waterloo, Enterprise Co-op (E Co-op) allows students to pursue an entrepreneurial co-op option where students start their own business while earning a co-op credit.

After graduation, E Co-op students continue with their venture, begin a new one, or use their E Co-op know-how to obtain employment. E Co-op is a great experience that builds business knowledge, capabilities, and independence that employers will value.

E Co-op is open to students from all faculties with any type of business concept: no-tech, low-tech, high-tech, service, consulting, and more. If you have an idea you want to take to market and have the passion to build your venture, Enterprise Co-op may be for you. We are looking for students with a well-formulated idea, a strong understanding of the target market, and the entrepreneurial drive to excel as an entrepreneur.

As an undergraduate E Co-op student, you'll enter the program during a work term with a business idea and the drive to turn it into a business. Over your term, you'll receive ongoing mentoring and feedback on your business development. You'll be part of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports and propels students to succeed. You will have access to a full-time professional staff, a wide network of mentors, entrepreneurs, and professionals, workspace in the Communitech Hub in Downtown Kitchener, practical workshops and seminars to help you build your business, and access to conference passes, distinguished guest speakers, and presentations.

## The Stratford Story Project: E Co-op in practice



Riding on the wagon with workers during Stratford's General Strike of 1933; gathering milkweed pods for the war effort; distributing the first electric lawn mower: The memories of 50 Stratford seniors have been collected into a book by Waterloo student Lindsay Kroes that launches today. "Gather by the Avon" is an anthology of stories collected through interviews with 50 Stratford residents between the ages of 70 and 98.

According to Kroes, who is a third-year student of English and history at Waterloo, the book is a "community history initiative" that aims to preserve the stories and life experiences of Stratford's seniors.

Kroes began the Stratford Story Project in May for her summer co-op term as part of the E Co-op program, which allows students to create their own business for a semester. She was inspired to write the book after her experience in an earlier work term at Doon Heritage Village, a living history site in Kitchener. There, she was astounded by the recollections that senior citizens shared.

"I realized the importance of recording and preserving these stories for future generations," she says. "Not only are they historically rich, but they're also full of charm and wisdom."

The resulting 250-page book, illustrated with period photographs, was released at a launch party in August at the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus. The party celebrated the seniors who shared their stories in the book.

Lindsay's book is the perfect example of the type of innovative ideas our entrepreneurs at Waterloo are capable of achieving when given the time and resources.



Lindsay signs her book at the launch party  
(Photo courtesy of [stratfordstoryproject.ca](http://stratfordstoryproject.ca))

Ivan Yuen (*right*), co-founder of Wattpad and uWaterloo alumni, created a multi-million user e-reading application and contributes to the success of the co-op program by hiring Waterloo students at Wattpad every term.

Ivan graduated from Waterloo's Computer Engineering program in 2000. He says that the co-op program is "the best thing that I've ever come across." After four co-op terms at computer hardware jobs, he was hired at a software start-up company for his last work term and discovered his true passion for software: "I was hooked. I knew that's where I wanted to be."

After graduating, Ivan worked for various hardware companies and software start-ups before starting Wattpad. His idea for the program came from a personal need: "I read a lot, and there were few options for taking reading with you. Like most engineers, I just built my own thing."

In 2006 Ivan approached his friend and previous co-worker Allen Lau with the idea for Wattpad. Coincidentally, Allen had been working on something similar. They banded together to bring Wattpad into existence. For the first couple of years they struggled to gain users because, as Ivan notes, "we were just too early for the technology to take off, but we stuck it through and I'm glad we did." By the end of 2007, the iPhone and the Kindle had been launched, upping user accessibility: "the fact that we were already there opened up a whole new way for people to use Wattpad."



*"BRINGING IN CO-OP STUDENTS REMINDS FULL TIME STAFF THAT WE ALWAYS HAVE TO LOOK FOR DIFFERENT WAYS TO DO THINGS"*

Canadian author and advocate for youth literacy Margaret Atwood recently became a contributor to Wattpad. She described it as the perfect tool for youth – whom you might not associate with creative writing or being highly involved with fiction – since it is native to the digital age. "She's been very involved and we're happy to have her on board," says Ivan.



Happy to work: Wattpad's office space is open and engaging, encouraging staff to do their best work while having fun

Wattpad is in its prime, and Ivan and Allen want to help young talent get experience. They hire five to six Waterloo co-op students each term, and encourage them to jump in the deep end from day one. "It's really important for software developers to know their work can reach our millions of users on a daily basis," says Ivan. "We tell them 'what you're doing has a really big impact.'"

The co-ops at Wattpad bring ideas different from their full time staff to the work environment. Ivan attributes this to their "breadth of experience," as a result of working multiple jobs over such a short period of time. Students are "very re-

ceptive to change and that's pretty rare even for people with a few years of experience. Bringing in co-op students reminds [full time staff] that we always have to look for different ways to do things."

With 15 million users every month, Wattpad does not show any signs of slowing down and has big plans for the future. "We want to make Wattpad a place for everyone: synonymous with reading AND writing," says Ivan. "To have the social and cultural impact that we envision, we want that [number] to be 100 million to 500 million people. This is only the first step on our way."

Ivan and Allen were recently named by the Financial Times as one of seven Canadian tech stars to watch due to their overwhelming success with Wattpad.