



Spring 2011  
**Inside sCo-op**  
Issue II

**First Steps**

Waterloo co-ops make strides toward success

# INSIDE sCO-OP: Contents

> The Inside sCo-op is a bi-term student e-publication released through Co-operative Education and the Centre for Career Action at the University of Waterloo.

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## CREDITS:

Editor and Creative Director: Andrea Banerjee, Media & Publications Associate, CECS  
 Staff Editor: Olaf Naese, Communications & Public Relations Administrator, CECS  
 Photography: Olaf Naese, Victoria de Luna, Jonathan Bielaski  
 Photo submissions: Kartik Vaideswaran, Joanne Toporowski, Margarita Cargher

# LETTER

from the **EDITOR**



**It's hard to feel ambitious or inspired when you're cold and soggy.**

Unfortunately the start of spring term saw most of us accessorized with wet hair, wind-beaten umbrellas and cuffed pants.

When the sun comes out (even if it takes until June), we all feel more alive. We herald spring as the season for growth, new beginnings and new life. It's a time when many creatures take their first steps including uWaterloo co-op students!

In times of change and personal development it's important to remember that even the most successful and seemingly swift transitions in the professional world all begin with the same tentative first step.

This issue of the *Inside sCo-op* will spotlight students who braved that intimidating initial move and were rewarded with mobility in the workplace and with personal achievement. These students took a stand on shaky legs and ended up making strides for their employer, their community and their own professional growth.

Read about Margarita Cargher, a junior student who had trouble taking her first steps in a process that seemed to work against her. Or check out Kartik Vaideswaran's story; he was given a project by his employer and ended up running with it. Then there's Joanne Toporowski, who is taking more than just a *few* steps in the professional world; this fall she will be walking 40K to support her employer's sponsorship of a worthy cause.

Now that you've traded your boots for bathing suits and your sweaters for SPF 30, ask yourself: Where will YOU direct your steps this season?



**Andrea Banerjee**, Media & Publications Associate  
MA Candidate, Literary Studies

*Andrea*



## Meet the Tatham Centre Spring Co-ops

Back Row: **Taqee Ahnaf**, Jobmine & Technical Support Assistant; **Kevin Cheng**, Events Assistant; **Jesus Edwin Corona**, Jobmine & Technical Support Assistant; **Andy Liu**, Student-Faculty Relations Assistant; **Owen Smith**, Web Developer

Front Row: **Amy Sinclair**, Web Content Analyst; **Jessie Bagri**, Program Review Research Assistant; **Andrea Banerjee**, Media & Publications Associate; **Victoria de Luna**, Marketing Associate; **Melissa Gallo**, Business Analyst

Ideas or comments for the *Inside sCo-op*? Email [olaf@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:olaf@uwaterloo.ca)!

## CECS Reminders:

### On co-op?

Don't forget to start your work term report early and know the requirements! See the **Co-op Student Manual** <http://www.cecs.uwaterloo.ca/manual/> (section 9) for faculty-specific deadlines.

Make sure to let your supervisor know about the Employer Evaluation form, and establish your end date.

### Student Resources:

Check out the valuable workshops offered by CECS to get you job-ready! Visit the Career Action website for details and sign-up. <http://www.careeraction.uwaterloo.ca/>  
Googling career info? Save some search time-See the Centre for Career Action's extensive **Career-Related Websites Index** <http://www.careeraction.uwaterloo.ca/links/UsefulWeb.asp?priNav=7>

# >> Interview with a skilled Kraftsman

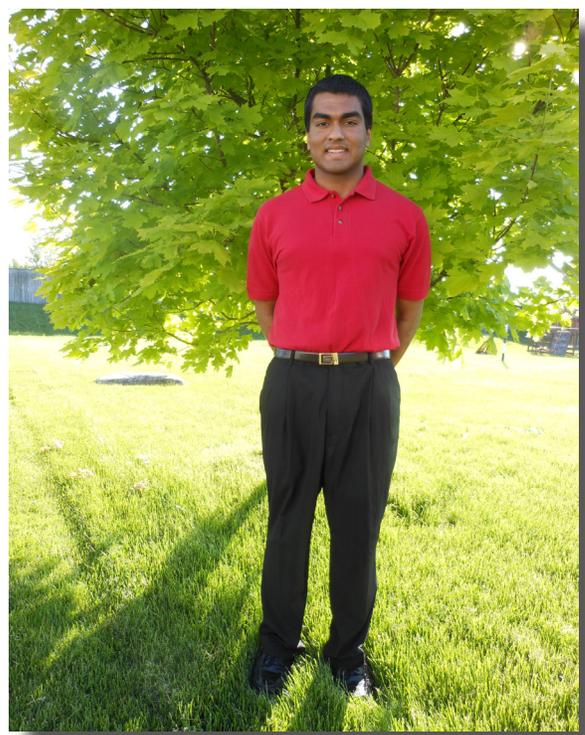
**Kartik Vaideswaran opens up about his work term with Kraft Canada.**

**Andrea Banerjee**  
Media & Publications Associate

**W**hen you're experiencing a "first" of any kind, every move can feel measured. Whether it's a first interview, a first day on the job, or a first major project, new roles and responsibilities make us nervous. As a result, it's tempting to keep your head down and do only what you're asked.

There's no disputing that it's good to do what you're asked in a new job. As Kartik Vaideswaran knows however, sometimes it's doing what you're NOT asked that can really make you stand out. The 2B Chemical Engineering student learned that when you push yourself beyond what is expected-when you turn those first steps into a sprint-you make a lasting impression on your employer.

Kartik recently finished a work term with Kraft Canada as an Engineering Assistant at the Peek Freans East York bakery. Not only was he asked to return to the company for his next work term, he was also invited to present his recommendations at the Kraft corporate office in Toronto this May. Kartik sat down with the Inside sCo-op to share his story, and the secrets of his success.



From kid cookie monster to process engineering

## Building a network from the ground up

As a junior Chemical Engineering student, Kartik, like many of his peers, faces the challenge of competing for jobs. His strategies are to network at every opportunity, and to make the most of those opportunities he is granted. "We are on co-op not just to do a job," Kartik says, "but to network and to meet people; to get connected. That's one of the main reasons why I chose Waterloo." This serves him well as a co-op student, but Kartik is also smart to think ahead. While it isn't easy to build contacts at such a young age, it is a valuable skill. As Kartik points out, "In the future I know exactly who to call for whatever I need."

## The Core Values at

- We inspire trust
- We act like owners
- We keep it simple
- We are open and inclusive
- We tell it like it is
- We lead from the head and the heart
- We discuss... We decide... We deliver!



Kartik made some valuable contacts this winter at Kraft Canada, where he worked to gather data about the company's manufacturing process. Kartik had a number of reasons for wanting the job, one of which he admits is "sentimental." He explains, "I used to eat [Peak Freans] cookies as a kid, so being part of the production process for products that I really love...was an exciting thing for me." More importantly, the job would help him meet his professional objectives. "I was very excited to [act as] a process engineer," Kartik says, "to learn about how to optimize and improve a process." Before his job even began however, Kartik was thinking about what he could bring to it. He urges others to have specific work term goals. "Don't just get in there and stick to the job description," he advises. "Try and go above and beyond. Look for other project opportunities."

## On the job

Kartik's main task was to excavate and analyze data with the goal of improving the production process at the bakery. There were no shortcuts for Kartik; he rolled up his sleeves and took a micro approach. "The number one thing that I make sure I do is spend the time on the production floor, deeply involved in the process," he explains. "That means talking to mechanics, talking to machine operators, talking to everybody involved in the process to see what is and is not working." His detail-oriented work ethic is what gave him confidence in his results. Kartik says the data-excavating process is key in establishing credibility. To achieve true conviction in your ideas and reports, says Kartik, "you can always go back to the numbers." If the data is sound, you know you've done your job well.

From the start, Kartik says he fit well into the "rhythm" of his work environment, surrounded by a supportive team and entrusted with a significant project role by his encouraging boss. "The most important thing was that they listened to me," says Kartik of his colleagues and supervisor. "When I had a suggestion or an idea they would hear it out and we would work together to solve the problem or improve the situation." Being given a voice in the workplace is important, because co-ops- even shy ones- often have great ideas. As Kartik soon discovered, his findings, opinions and recommendations turned out to be very valuable to the company.

## Seeing results

Kartik's project gained momentum quickly, culminating in major success at the end of his term. Thanks in part to his contributions, the Kraft Canada East York bakery was the first Kraft facility in Canada to have a production line certified above three sigma -a universal manufacturing standard level. It was a proud moment for Kartik and his team, and he is eager to return to the bakery next work term to see the fruits of his labour playing out on the floor, in newly implemented lean processes. Kraft arranged for Kartik's transportation back to Toronto during his first week back to campus, so that he could present his observations to the executive team. Kartik recalls how honoured he was to meet the head of engineering for the Canadian Business Unit, saying "it was such an appropriate culmination of all the work that we had done."

Kartik credits his co-op accomplishments to three simple but crucial priorities: "Taking initiative, having a positive attitude and listening." With these objectives guiding him, Kartik was able to contribute in tangible measures to Kraft Canada. His advice is applicable to every job however; going the extra mile is what gives you pride in your work and the confidence you need to stand by your ideas.

There is no slowing Kartik down. He admits he is constantly setting new goals for himself. With his determined and consistently positive attitude, he will doubtless find success wherever his professional path takes him.

## >>>> Employer Insights

Michael Codner  
Business Development Manager  
Kraft East York Bakery

### > Why do you choose to hire co-op students?

Hiring co-op students allows us to see the potential of individuals and how they fit with our company culture. This gives us the opportunity to build our organization with the best talent that is suited for us. I personally like that students bring fresh ideas. They are usually eager to start their career and build a good reputation. They work hard and get a lot accomplished.

### > When you hire co-op students what are some of the key characteristics or skills you look for?

The work term is short and there is not a lot of time available for training. I therefore expect that the student will be a fast learner and have the ability to learn on the fly. It is very important to demonstrate that they can comfortably take an assignment, work independently and not require constant coaching. Many times students will end up with assignments that are put off or avoided by regular employees. Therefore, one of the things that I look for is how willing is the student to try new things and take on any assignment.

### > How can a student boost their chances of earning a second work term with a company?

There are some basic things that will improve your chances for a second work term. The obvious one would be to make sure you accomplish your assignments accurately and effectively and always show willingness to take more where appropriate. Always be enthusiastic about your work assignments. It is important to demonstrate personal development and growth over the work term. Clear improvement in confidence, communication abilities and interpersonal savvy will certainly impress your employer. One thing that will make you stand out, is to make sure that you have a discussion with your supervisor about future possibilities. At the end of your work term when you have a good understanding of the company, suggest assignments and objectives where you could do a great job and accomplish effectively in a future work term.

### > What gives a junior student like Kartik an "edge" over the competition?

Find out as much as you possibly can about the company, the responsibilities and objectives of the position available. Make sure that you fully prepare yourself so that in the interview, all your responses are aligned to the position. This will definitely give you an "edge" over the competition.

# Co-op Students of the Year

One student representative of each faculty was selected to be a 2010 Co-op Student of the Year. Winners were selected for their outstanding academic and work achievements.



## **Mathematics: Adrian Morun** **Business Administration and Mathematics Double Degree**

Adrian worked for Microsoft refining the process of financial forecasting. He successfully calculated results with less than 0.1% variance. Adrian also worked with a team of colleagues on a national marketing campaign to gauge audience-satisfaction. He traveled across Canada to launch Microsoft's student brand, speaking to university students at various institutions. He was granted two awards by Microsoft for his contributions.

## **Arts: Katie Meredith** **Political Science**

Katie lived and worked in Singapore for her eight-month work term, acting as a research assistant at the National University of Singapore Institute of Systems Science. She completed nine projects in eight months. These included independently researching and designing an online survey for the Singapore business community. She wrote a report that was presented by a colleague at the ISS innovation Update Seminar. Katie also assessed a government campaign with a team, and presented recommendations to the government organizing committee. She researched and wrote two independent case studies for teaching purposes at ISS.



## **Environment: Victoria Alleyne** **Business Administration and Mathematics**



Victoria spent a term with BC Nature, working to investigate the effects of government cuts to funding for park interpretation programs in the province of British Columbia. Her process of data collection and analysis involved co-ordinating the province's naturalists, directing camp programs, and assessing feedback. She went on to author and publish a 92-page report detailing her findings. The report was presented to British Columbia's Minister of Environment.

# Co-op Students of the Year

## Applied Health Sciences: Joel Brooks Therapeutic Recreation

Joel spent a unique eight-month work term living amidst the Wemindji Cree community in northern Quebec. He was employed by the Gaul Youth Development Institute to design and implement a youth recreation program. One of his major projects was to co-ordinate a team trip to Toronto, from fundraising, to planning to chaperoning. He successfully raised \$10 000 to fund the trip, which provided Cree youth with the chance to spend time in a major city. Joel also created an after-school program to provide students with a quiet and supportive home-work environment.



## Science: Shaelyn Culleton Biology



Shaelyn has now completed five work terms in the Odette Cancer Centre at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. After her many months of co-operative work as a clinical research assistant, Shaelyn is a highly accomplished medical school candidate. She has authored five book chapters and has eleven published or accepted journal articles. She has presented at two medical conferences, and has conducted an extensive 5-year quality-of-life study. Shaelyn is the deserving recipient of the Most Improved and Most Valuable Student awards at Sunnybrook.

## Engineering: J.S Rancourt Mechanical Engineering

JS has worked in multiple locations across North America. Most recently, he spent a highly successful term with Deloitte in Toronto's Financial District. He took over a high-profile mid-stream project for the company's largest client in the country, when the senior manager went on leave. JS impressed his supervisors so much with his competence that he was awarded an on-the-spot award for outstanding performance.





Little Fish.

# Big Pond.

It's easy to feel small in the world's largest co-op program.

## Andrea Banerjee

Media & Publications Associate

We've all experienced self doubt- especially in the culture of co-operative education, where students are constantly sizing up their competition.

For junior students, it can be even worse. The nerves associated with interviewing and selling yourself seem to grow exponentially when you don't have much work experience, or you've only completed a semester or two of your academic program. Junior students often feel like little fish in a big pond.

Take heart. Not long ago Margarita Cargher felt the same way that many others might. An unsatisfying first work term had left the 3B Public Accounting student feeling under-confident. As she completed interviews for her second work term

without matches, she couldn't help but wonder what was responsible for her luckless job search. Growing disillusioned with the entire co-op program, Margarita applied to an intermediate/senior level job on a whim, for iDesign Solutions, an internet-based company that specializes in the resale of hardware and software. The position intrigued her, but the job description targeted older students. After a long wait she landed a second-round interview for the position.

### Against the Odds

Margarita was caught off guard shortly into her interview. She wasn't anticipating the challenge posed to her in only her second question. "So, I have a web store," her interviewer said. "We just recently opened three months ago. How do I increase my sales?" Gulp.

"I'm a junior student sitting there," Margarita recalls. "I have no clue what to say." Margarita's mind went to social media and she began to talk about using web forums to advertise the company. Her interviewer evidently liked her answer; she was offered a job as an e-commerce project manager, beating out several senior student competitors. The offer came as a surprise to her. She recalls, "I was nineteen at the time and literally sitting there thinking, He's never going to choose me."

“I was nineteen at the time and literally sitting there thinking, He's never going to choose me.”

If the interview wasn't indication enough, it became clear from her first day on the job that Margarita would not be micro-managed. She was given overarching goals rather than a specific task list, and it was up to her to manage her time over the months she spent with iDesign. Margarita's main role was to increase traffic flow to the website and improve sales by developing e-commerce marketing strategies. In spite of being young and a junior student, she had the confidence and full expectations of her superiors to motivate her. In other words: her work was cut out for her.

### Making change

The job structure took some adjustment. Margarita, like many junior students, was not used to having so much freedom and responsibility. "I was really uncomfortable at first," she recalls. "I felt like I needed somebody to tell me what to do." Ultimately however, the confidence that her employer invested in her paved the way to an entirely positive co-op experience. "I felt

like a part of the company-not like a small little piece in a corporation," says Margarita. "I felt like I was making changes."

And indeed she was. Margarita worked to increase sales with her development strategies and use of social media. She also took the initiative to help lower the company's credit card sales charges per transaction, which helped to protect their profit margin. Waiting on a few things to propel her current projects, Margarita recalls looking at the company's credit transactions. "I remember thinking *That will cut into the margin*," she recounts. "So I called the company and we talked."

Margarita reminds students that apparent "downtime" on the job should never be wasted. When your employer gives you the freedom to manage your own time, you are more accountable than ever.

Even when Margarita felt unsure of where to begin, she would spend her time doing research.



Story continued on pg. 8 >>

>> Continued from pg.7

“The more freedom I have, the more I can do,” she says. “Freedom motivates me.”

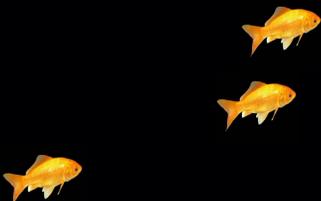
**Positive Feedback**

Margarita proudly recalls the company VP telling her at the end of her term, “See, I knew you could do it.” There is no more feigning confidence for Margarita-she’s finally experiencing the real thing. “I cannot even say how proud I was of myself,” she says of landing the iDesign job and the accomplishments that ensued. She continues to work part time at iDesign Solutions on her current academic semester.

Many moments in Margarita’s journey were both difficult and relatable: scouring JobMine in frustration and fear; a frozen moment in an interview where a tough question seems to make time stop; the weight of responsibility when you are shown to your desk and abandoned on the first day of a new job.

What we need to realize, just as Margarita did, is that we should thank our lucky stars for these scary, challenging moments. They build character and confidence. They push us to do our best and to surprise ourselves. They remind us how lucky we are to be a part of the vast pool that is uWaterloo co-operative education.

Sink or swim. The choice is yours.



**Joanne Toporowski never slows down.**

**Andrea Banerjee**

Media & Publications Associate

She liaises with clients and crunches numbers during business hours. She attends awareness campaigns on her lunch. She co-ordinates walkathons to raise money for World Vision and the Princess Margaret Hospital in her spare time. She holds creative office fundraisers on a regular basis. She teaches music to children with Down Syndrome in a buddy-pairing program she invented. She’s a straight-A student, a conference speaker, a pianist, a volunteer leader, an accountant and a marathon walker.

Is she superwoman? Nope; she’s a 20-year old Waterloo student who radiates ambition and energy.



Joanne Toporowski is a 2A Mathematics CA student who has spent a summer internship and a first work term at Deloitte where she is excelling as a tax analyst. Not only has Joanne integrated herself fully into the company culture, her work now also fits well into her own well-rounded (and very busy!) life. Joanne got her start with Deloitte when she was awarded the Deloitte Tax Scholarship in her first year of university. The company offered her a summer job to get to know the firm. Landing an internship kept Joanne ahead of the game. “What would have been my first co-op term after 2A actually turned out to be my second,” she explains.

**Working the Deloitte Way**

As a musically gifted, active, philanthropic leader, Joanne obviously has many strengths and pursuits. Fortunately Deloitte understands that being an effective, satisfied, and well-rounded employee is about more than your desk job. With the company’s impressive support team and career counselling initiatives, employees like Joanne are encouraged to integrate their job into the rest of their lives, rather than the opposite.

Joanne has a personal development coach and a workload coach to assist with this process. These coaches help all employees to balance their interests, their work, and their career objectives, creating an individualized plan for everyone. New employees are also paired with a mentor within five years of their own age.



Joanne is only in second year, but comes highly qualified

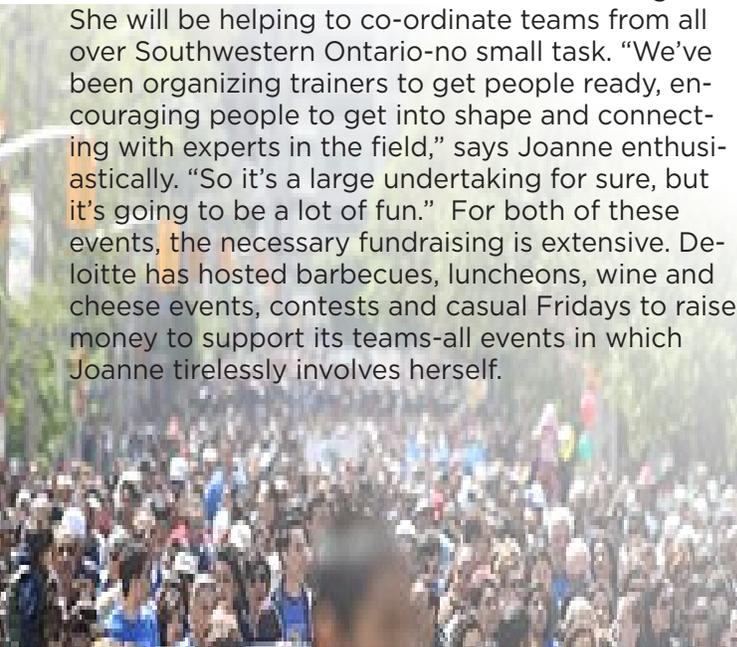


With such efforts to make employees feel welcome, it's no wonder Joanne is looking forward to spending all of her work terms with Deloitte. "There's always someone watching out for you and your best interests," she says.

### Getting Involved

Since high school, Joanne has been an active participant and co-ordinator of many awareness campaigns and fundraisers. Being a university student and co-op employee has certainly not slowed her efforts. This will be Joanne's second year organizing Deloitte's involvement in the World Partnership Walk. This nationwide event is Canada's largest annual campaign to fight global poverty. Corporate sponsors such as Deloitte pay a donation for each team enrolled in the walk. Joanne's job is to raise funds for the participation fee and recruit walkers.

In spite of her extensive efforts in support of this event, Joanne's sneakers evidently needed more of a workout. This year she will not only be involved in the World Partnership Walk, but will also participate in the Walk to End Women's Cancers in September-another huge event Deloitte sponsors. Joanne is excited to take on the ambitious, 2-day, 40-kilometre walk with the rest of her colleagues. She will be helping to co-ordinate teams from all over Southwestern Ontario-no small task. "We've been organizing trainers to get people ready, encouraging people to get into shape and connecting with experts in the field," says Joanne enthusiastically. "So it's a large undertaking for sure, but it's going to be a lot of fun." For both of these events, the necessary fundraising is extensive. Deloitte has hosted barbecues, luncheons, wine and cheese events, contests and casual Fridays to raise money to support its teams-all events in which Joanne tirelessly involves herself.



### The Importance of Well-Roundedness

Participating in community events is a great way to foster workplace unity, make a difference, and develop critical soft skills like leadership and time management. In fact, Joanne says, volunteer work and extra-curricular involvement cultivate abilities that are more important than most students realize. How does she know? She volunteers for the Deloitte recruitment department. She scouts many smart, talented students twice a year at CA Night to choose the best potential employees.

"Essentially people in the Accounting program can look very similar on paper," she confides. "What drives us nuts as recruiters is that people think that all they need to show us is their accounting, their banking, their math skills. But what we really want to see is that you have communication skills and leadership skills." Joanne and her fellow recruiters will save the academic queries for your transcript. At CA Night, it's all about discovering well-rounded identities. "This is the first time we ever meet the students and often we won't talk about grades, marks, or accounting," Joanne says.



**Above:** Joanne exercising her soft skills-and her biceps!- as a Deloitte team leader on Impact Day, an entire day dedicated to bettering the community.

### Defying Stereotypes

Joanne's favourite thing about her professional life is the diversity. She's had the chance to interact with different colleagues on a personal level, and to collaborate on projects that are fuelled by diverse passions. She's made it her mission to defy stereotypes that represent accountants as stodgy, boring people. "At the end of the day, people think it's not a sexy career," she laughs.

Joanne is living proof however, that Mathematics students offer variety, colour and humanity to their places of employment.



## Looking for a place to live while on co-op?

### Residence

On a **local co-op term**? We have spaces for co-op students in the winter and spring terms. Check out our website for **residence application** details or contact us at [housing@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:housing@uwaterloo.ca), 519-888-4567, ext. 32679.

[housing.uwaterloo.ca](http://housing.uwaterloo.ca)

### Off-Campus Housing

Visit our website to access the **online listing service** and **sublet board**. Or contact us for more assistance at [och@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:och@uwaterloo.ca), 519-888-4567, ext. 35725.

[och.uwaterloo.ca](http://och.uwaterloo.ca)



## Career Corner:



# Feeling Lost? Find your way from SCARED to PREPARED

If you're just beginning the co-op process, or if you were unsatisfied with your performance in a previous term, there's plenty of help to be had. Let the following facts reassure and encourage you. If you stay informed of all that this process has to offer, you won't strike out! Here are some hints to get you started:

### There is upcoming maintenance to JobMine.

Know that JobMine will be shutting down from August 8 to 12, during which time all Waterloo user access will be temporarily unavailable. The shut-down is scheduled for a full week of planned maintenance to return to a supported version of PeopleSoft Tools.

### You have a whole network of support.



Here at Waterloo we are lucky to have a top-notch Co-operative Education and Career Action team. There are many workshops and resources available to co-op students, so take advantage of them! If you're feeling uncertain or behind in the game, many of the Career Action workshops are a great way to catch up on key professional skills. They are an accessible opportunity to gain important career knowledge in a friendly learning environment. The Centre for Career Action can also provide you with one-on-one career advising and résumé critiquing. All it takes is an appointment.



### You can take an entire class about career development!

That's right-an entire semester dedicated to developing your career! The Arts 111 course "Career Development and Decision Making" provides you with the chance to learn actual career development strategies in detail-and earn academic credit! This class can give you a better understanding of the entire career-building process, as well as progressively improve your understanding of your own professional goals. After completion, you will feel equipped to make informed choices about your pursuits. Consider it as a valuable elective option.

### You can study to succeed in the professional world too, (not just the academic world!)

There is lots to be learned when preparing to do your absolute best in the co-op process-from applying to interviewing to working effectively on the job. Make sure that you cover all of your bases by familiarizing yourself with all PD course content. There are valuable insider tips from hiring managers, employee do's and don'ts, and practice questions and strategies for even the toughest interview curveballs. WatPD is a wonderfully thorough course for new co-op students, and chances are if you have a question, it's covered somewhere in the course content. Another great study strategy is to learn about the company with which you are interviewing a day or so before your actual interview. Familiarize yourself with their mandate, current objectives or projects, and any history that you think might be important. Keep this information fresh in your mind though, particularly if you have several interviews in a short time span-you don't want to start talking about the wrong company!



### You are part of the biggest and best.

Don't forget how great uWaterloo co-op is! You are participating in a highly accredited co-operative education program; the biggest of its kind in the world! Let that motivate and inspire you. Years of ambitious and hard-working students just like yourself have passed through the same processes you are currently a part of, and they've gone on to succeed in the professional world post-graduation. Honour your institution and do yourself the justice of giving 100 percent in co-op interviews and work. You are a representative of the university, and have a hard-earned, high-calibre reputation to uphold.

### You have all the tools to make yourself -and your school- proud!

## words of wisdom...

"Get out of your comfort zone and show some diversity in talent. That's what really makes you stand out"

-Joanne Toporowski

"I do believe that you can learn something from any job. I also believe that knowing what you *don't* want to do can be almost as important as knowing what you *do* want to do."

-Kartik Vaideswaran

"Every Waterloo student is a diamond. We all have our specific cuts -our individual skills- and we will eventually each find our fit and shine."

-Margarita Cargher