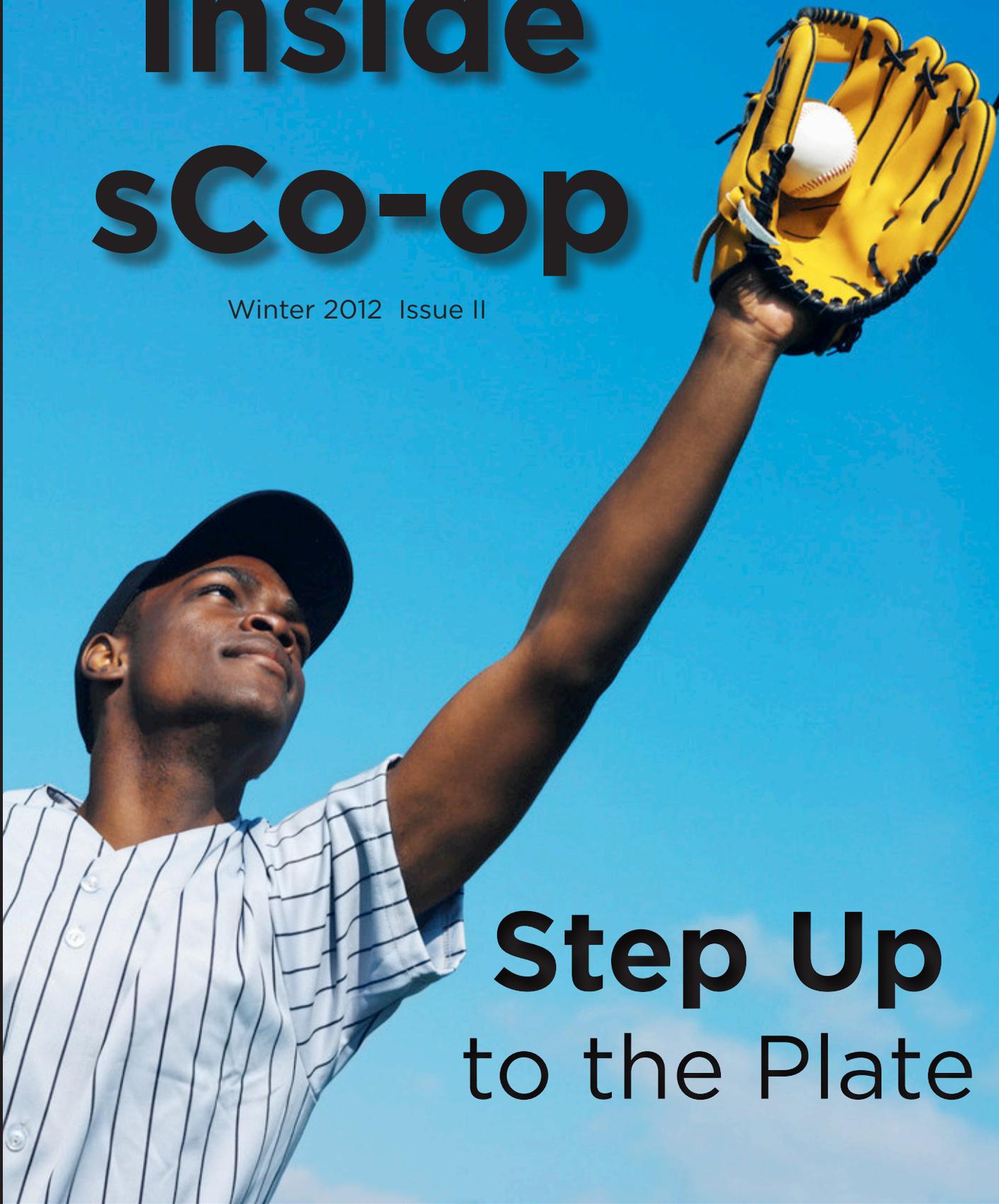


WATERLOO

# Inside sCo-op

Winter 2012 Issue II



## Step Up to the Plate

Waterloo co-ops take their future into their own hands.

# INSIDE sCO-OP

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

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# Letter from the Editor



**NOTHING BEATS THE SATISFYING ‘THUNK’ OF A BASEBALL LANDING IN YOUR GLOVE AS YOU LEAP UP TO CATCH IT.** That was the feeling I was looking for when I signed up for intramural slo-pitch last fall. Now to give some context, I’m not the sporty type. My abysmal hand-eye coordination makes even ping-pong seem ambitious.

However, for some reason, baseball was something I wanted to try. *Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game*, right? With that in mind, I took a deep breath, bought a glove, and signed up.

Stepping up to the plate and facing the pitcher for the first time with all eyes on you is nerve-wracking, to say the least. But I found that it is also exhilarating. And the satisfaction you feel when you’re standing safely on first base makes that tense moment up-to-bat seem a little less daunting each time.

The students in this issue of the Inside sCo-op have stepped up to the plate in their own ways, taking the initiative to make the most out of their co-op work terms. Architecture student Simon McKenzie ventured outside of familiar territory on his past two co-op terms, arranging his own jobs in India and Denmark. He shares his tips for finding the perfect job - on your own. Students at Desire2Learn make an impact closer to home- they work on the LEARN software that all uWaterloo students use. Our six incredible co-op students of the year worked in very different fields - from Great Lakes ecology, to cancer research, to space robotics- but each made a big impact, thanks to their dedication and passion. They went above and beyond all expectations and have amazing accomplishments to show for it.

I hope this issue motivates you to take control of your own destiny and start making your co-op dreams happen.

Chances are, you’ll hit it out of the park!

-Lindsay



Lindsay Kroes,  
Media and Publications Associate  
2A English and History

Got a story you’d like to share?

We’re always on the lookout for interesting, fun, or inspiring co-op experiences. Send your idea to [olaf@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:olaf@uwaterloo.ca), and you just might see yourself in the next sCo-op!

## National Co-op Week Winners

March 19-23 was National Co-op Week, and to celebrate, the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE) hosted a social media contest. Students from across the country weighed in on why they love co-op, for a chance to win daily prizes! Congratulations to our uWaterloo winners, and thanks to all participants!

- Monday Challenge Winner: Kumail Janmohamed
- Tuesday Challenge Winner: Jay Mahendru
- Wednesday Challenge Winner: Tianna Burke
- Thursday Challenge Winner: Faryal Diwan
- Friday Challenge Winner: Emily Brown

### Still Looking for a Summer Co-op?

#### Keep these tips in mind :

- Make sure your skills inventory is up-to-date with your skills as well as your exam schedule and locations
- Be as flexible as possible about location and salary
- Practice your interviewing skills - be able to explain how your skill set relates to the requirements of the job
- Use your personal networks - friends, family, and former employers can be great resources in your job search

We’ve changed our name!

CECS >>> CECA

For students today, planning and achieving career goals is all about *action*.

That’s why the department that you used to know as  
Co-operative Education & Career Services  
is now called

**Co-operative Education & Career Action.**



Every year, CECA honours six co-op students, one from each faculty, for their work term accomplishments. These students have it all: outstanding contributions to their employers, excellent academic records, and active involvement in their school and community. This year there were over 140 deserving nominees. After much deliberation, the winners were chosen. . .

And the 2011

# Co-op Student of the Year Award

goes to...

## ENGINEERING

**Sasanka Nagavalli** - 4B Mechatronics Engineering



Sasanka's co-op term with **Neptec Design Group** was the culmination of six outstanding work terms and a life-long interest in robotics. Neptec is a company which develops space-flight sensors and rovers for space agencies around the world. One of the major projects to which Sasanka contributed was the software design of a prototype 3D scanning Light Detection and Ranging sensor, which sits atop a prototype Lunar Rover and creates 3D models for mapping and navigational purposes. In only his second week on the job, Sasanka presented his preliminary design for the Ground Station software to the Canadian Space Agency. He went on to identify and implement several major improvements to the design process at Neptec. On campus, Sasanka is heavily involved with the UW Space Robotics Group.

## ARTS

**Mei Chen** - Masters of Accounting

On her work term with **IBM Canada**, Mei exceeded expectations with both the size of workload and quality of work that she produced. She completed 30% of the IBM Canada tax return and 80% of IBM's alliance companies' tax returns, consistently producing accurate and polished reports. Recognizing her talent for tax, Mei's manager invited her to sit on the due diligence team for the acquisition of Algorithmics Inc. by IBM, valued at \$387 million. Mei worked alongside a group of top industry professionals to assess the transaction and identify any potential problems. On her work term, Mei also conducted research on the tax implications of business transactions and presented her findings to key business units within IBM. On campus, Mei volunteers with the Academic Coaching Centre and was formerly a peer leader for the AFM Living Learning community. She is also active in the community, as a volunteer with the YWCA.



## ENVIRONMENT

**Samantha Lynne Dupré** - 4B Environment and Resource Studies



While working with the **International Joint Commission**, Samantha conducted extensive research on the monitoring efforts of aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes. She collected data from experts and government officials in Ontario, Quebec, and 8 U.S. states to inform the report and travelled to Wisconsin to present her initial research at the Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Species panel. Using GIS software to map her findings, she created a high-calibre report under tight time constraints and thousands of dollars under budget. She also took the lead in drafting the IJC's final Aquatic Invasive Species workgroup report, summarizing all the IJC's research projects and recommendations. This will inform future aquatic invasive species monitoring efforts by the Canadian and U.S. governments. During her school terms, Samantha is a member of the ballroom dancing club and teaches ballet.



Janet has spent her past five work terms in the Rapid Response Radiotherapy Program at the **Sunnybrook Odette Cancer Centre**. Janet conducted research which indicated that a large proportion of patients do not receive adequate prevention of radiation-induced nausea and vomiting. To address this, she conducted research on more efficacious anti-emetic drugs, and successfully secured a grant of \$0.3 million for a pilot clinical trial. Following this, Janet identified another area for improvement in the quality of life of palliative patients, and drafted a grant proposal and study protocol for a pilot clinical trial that received \$50,000 in funding. Janet has presented her research at conferences from Vancouver to Athens and was a speaker at a Bone Metastases Workshop with over 500 attendees. She is the editor-in-chief of a bone metastases handbook which is used by oncology professionals around the world and first-author of eight publications in peer reviewed journals. In her most recent term, Janet mentored new students in the writing of their own first manuscripts.

## APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

## Christina Marchand - 3A Health Studies

Christina served as project manager of two major initiatives at **St. Michael's Hospital** on her past work term. She was heavily involved with promoting Women in Cancer, a not-for-profit organization which seeks to improve the networking and leadership skills of female oncologists. Through presentations, publications, and a large marketing event, Christina increased membership in the organization by over 30%, while saving her employers \$15,000. Christina was also instrumental in the launch of the COMET Clinical Trials Consortium, a virtual network which links medical oncologists across the Greater Toronto Area with the goal of improving patients' access to current cancer clinical trials. She updated the efficiency of the website and met personally with clinical trials staff at various hospitals to ensure their participation. Additionally, Christina travelled to Texas to present two research papers at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium. While working at St. Michaels, Christina volunteered as a mentor to children battling cancer.



## MATHEMATICS

## Terrence Chin - 3B Actuarial Science, Finance Option



On his work term with **Mercer**, Terrence skillfully completed his duties as actuarial analyst while undertaking several additional projects. He assisted with the implementation of a national employee benefit plan for a large not-for-profit organization, co-ordinating the efforts of six consultants across Canada to create a comparison of proposals from eight different insurers. He also worked alongside two Principals to analyze the benefits plan of a large public utilities corporation. His communication skills served him well during the presentation of this review, as he was able to explain a difficult concept to the client in easily understandable terms. The review was successful in winning new business for Mercer. Terrence also updated the Drug Utilization Tool which is used by Mercer to rank the top 200 drugs used on a particular plan. On campus, Terrence has been heavily involved with the UW Actuarial Science Club. He also represents uWaterloo on the editorial board of the *Future Actuary* newsletter.

## Honourable Mentions were awarded to:

Kaitlin Koo - 3B Health Studies *for her work term with Sunnybrook Odette Cancer Center*

Evgeny Shulyatyev - 4A Computer Science *for his work term with Barclays Capital*

Nathan Jones - 4B Nanotechnology Engineering *for his work term with Ecosynthetix Inc.*

Sameer Shah - 4B Environment and Resource Studies *for his work term with MK Ince and Associates*

Lindsay Kroes, Media and Publications Associate

Before Desire2Learn became a multi-million dollar corporation with clients across the world, it was just a small start-up, working against the odds to revolutionize the way we learn. The company was a labour of love for founder John Baker, a uWaterloo Systems Design grad, and his small team of employees which included co-op students right from the very start.

“When we were only 5 people, we sometimes had more co-ops than full-timers,” recalls Jeremy Auger, Desire2Learn’s Chief Technology Officer and Executive VP. “Some of our earliest co-ops helped us build the company. They were here with us when we were working 100 hour weeks - we’d have co-ops kind of afraid to leave because it was 3 o’clock in the morning and everyone was still working, co-ops right alongside us.”

Given the integral role they played in the early days, it’s no surprise that co-op students remain a big part of Desire2Learn (D2L). D2L now hires over 30 students per term, for a variety of jobs from software development to technical writing to human resources. A lot has changed since its beginnings in 1999, but what hasn’t is the fact that students are treated exactly like full-timers.

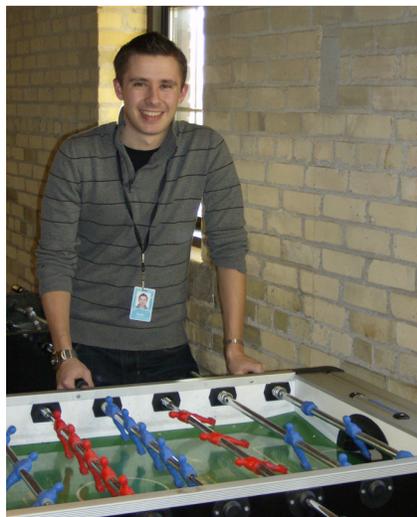
“We give co-ops as much responsibility as they’re willing to take on,” says Jeremy. “We have superstar co-ops that seem like they’ve been here for 10 years. They take on big projects from end to end.”

### “Casual Intense”

One of these ‘superstars’ is Bryan Gamble, a 3B software engineering student who has spent his past four work terms at D2L in a new role each time. It was the laid-back atmosphere, what Jeremy describes as “casual intense,” that first piqued Bryan’s interest in the company.

“No one cares if you wear a suit and a tie or flip-flops, but that doesn’t change the fact that we’re serious about what we do,” explains Jeremy.

Over four work terms at Desire2Learn, Bryan has honed his skills in software development.... and foosball!



The office itself reflects this philosophy: it’s equipped with foosball and ping-pong tables, a spacious patio for the warmer months, and a well-stocked kitchen where co-op students hang out over lunch.

Bryan soon realized that foosball tables were just the beginning of what made Desire2Learn a unique place to work. He jumped at the chance to spend his co-op term improving a tool that he and all of his peers use daily.

“On my first co-op term, I worked at the university as a course administrator for the speech communication department. I had to use ACE, and I saw a lot of the issues with it,” he explains. At D2L, he had a chance to make improvements to LEARN, which recently replaced ACE as uWaterloo’s learning management system.

Each term, he has been able to incorporate his student experiences with LEARN into his work on the LEARN software at D2L. “I try to pay attention when I’m at school, so if anyone says anything, I keep it in the back of my head until I return.”

Currently, Bryan is working on the Content tool, which is in constant use by students. “I’m upgrading it and making it a new and cool experience. The goal is to create a more collaborative environment, and also make it easier to track your progress.”

### The Student Perspective

Michelle Pugne, 2B systems design engineering, is another D2L co-op whose experiences as a student give her a unique perspective in her role as product designer.

“I take market requirements and draw them out into something that software developers might actually create. I like it a lot because I get to see the overall picture and try to put different pieces together.”

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Michelle loves her co-workers - and their dogs! Pets, like Looper here, are welcomed in the Desire2Learn office.



Her major projects involve the integration of third-party software (like Google apps) into the LEARN software.

“When I’m designing, I try to look at it from a user’s perspective, by thinking ‘how would a user want to approach this problem?’” she says. “Usually if you don’t know your user well, you have to do a lot of research. But as a student, I am the user!” Being able to view the software from both points of view is a definite asset to her design work.

Students are encouraged to give feedback in the collaborative atmosphere of D2L.

“The added benefit of having Waterloo as a client is that our co-op students actually use our software. So they come with ideas about what could be better- then they actually go and fix it themselves,” says Jeremy. “People who’ve worked here for a long time might think the way we’ve thought for the past 10 years, so keeping those fresh ideas coming is always a good thing.”

He emphasizes that students at D2L have the opportunity to make a real impact on their work terms. “I want students who are not going to come in and wait for their co-op term to happen to them, but they’re going to grab it and do something with it.”

### Ask Jeremy Auger:

*How can students differentiate themselves from dozens of other candidates in their interview?*



For me personally, when I’m interviewing someone, if you don’t have a specific skill, I don’t particularly care.

But I want to see someone who is willing to learn, wants to learn, is passionate about what they do, and wants to make a difference. There’s an attitude that we look for- that the student is interested in what we do, and wants to go above and beyond and put in extra effort.

Just the way an employer needs to look for the right fit in an employee, employees should be applying to jobs where they have a good fit with the company as well. It’s a two-way interview. If you don’t feel that same passion about the company you’re interviewing for, maybe that’s not the job for you. The fit is what you look for the most.



Meet the

## *Co-operative Education & Career Action Co-ops*

These fifteen students are spending their co-op terms at the heart of co-operative education at Waterloo- the Tatham Centre.



*from left to right*

- Ahad Ismail, Processes and Technologies Support
- Vicky Wang, Project Manager Assistant
- Grace Wong, Events Associate
- Yuner Chung, Career Advisor Assistant
- Lindsay Kroes, Media and Publications Associate
- Caleb Polley, Marketing Associate
- Marcel Humelnicu, Career Advisor Assistant
- Andy Liu, Special Projects Co-ordinator
- Taylor McAlear, Special Projects Co-ordinator
- Monica Lee, Events Assistant
- Vanessa Borshke, Employer Services Representative
- Gabriel Shaughnessy, Business Analyst
- Wayne Chu, Web Developer
- Dixon Cheung, JobMine Support
- Fahim Saber, JobMine Support

# Taking On the World

One co-op term at a time!

Lindsay Kroes, Media and Publications Associate

We all hope for that perfect co-op job- the one that offers education and excitement in equal measure and gives us the chance to explore our field in meaningful ways. But what's a co-op student to do if they don't see their dream job amid the postings on Job-Mine? Sometimes you have to branch out on your own to find exactly the job you want. The rewards are worth the extra effort and time.

No one knows this better than Simon McKenzie, a 3A Architecture student whose two "arranged own" co-op terms have taken him from India to Denmark, with a whole lot of architectural experience and adventure along the way.

## Off to India!

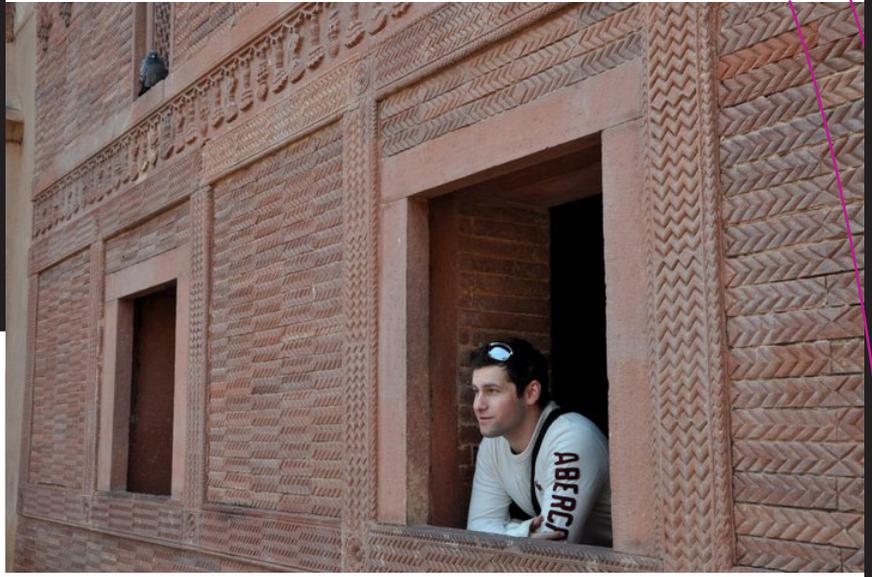
For his first work term, Simon had one goal: to escape the bitter Canadian winter somewhere warm. After individually contacting over 100 firms in the southern hemisphere, he found a job at KGD Studios in Bangalore, India. The ambitious, overworked atmosphere at KGD offered Simon unusual responsibility and many opportunities for creative freedom. He took charge of the design and completion of an entire building for a nation-wide competition- including all digital models, diagrams, drawings, and final presentation material.

"They just handed me the outline and said, 'We want it submitted in three days. The client wants it iconic and sustainable. Go!'" says Simon. "So, it was a little bit stressful but really fun to have that opportunity."

And was Simon's design chosen? "Funny story about that," he chuckles. "It didn't get submitted." The courier delivering the design stopped in at a pub to watch the semi-final game of the cricket world cup. This detour caused the design to arrive half an hour late- so it wasn't accepted. "The good news is India won the semi-finals and went on to win the cup. So there was a silver lining."

Outside of work, Simon revelled in the food, weather, and atmosphere of India, venturing north to visit the Taj Mahal and other architectural gems. He spent his last week in India scuba diving off the Andaman Islands, sleeping on the beach and relaxing before his return to the fast-paced student life.

Not bad for a first co-op term!



above: Simon takes in the view in Rajasthan, India.  
below: *æbleskiver*, a signature NOMA dish.

## Haute Cuisine in Copenhagen

Next, Simon set his sights on Europe, securing a co-op job in the R&D department of 3XN, a Danish architectural firm. Here, he was involved with the design and build of a test kitchen for chefs from Noma, the world's best restaurant.

"They wanted a foodlab where they could design and experiment with recipes. They use different ingredients to make something new and innovative that you could eat," explains Simon. The project was unique because in addition to being involved with the design of custom features (such as coffee tables, glassware trolleys, and shelving), he also helped to complete construction on the room itself.

"It was really cool to see the things that I'd designed on the computer come back to me from the miller, and be able to actually build it on a physical form. Especially as a student, I don't usually get to see my projects realized," says Simon.

Besides the great architectural experience, there was an unexpected benefit of working for the world's best restaurant: a five-hour long, 20 course feast cooked by the Noma chefs which Simon describes as "the most amazing meal I'll ever have in my life."

Simon returned from his co-op term excited to apply his new skills and knowledge to his studies. Both co-op terms have been professionally and personally rewarding: "I learned a tremendous amount about architecture. More than that, I had a phenomenal cultural experience and learned a lot about myself."



If you're wondering how to reap the same rewards from your co-op term, here are

# Simon's Tips

for

# Arranging your Own Co-op Job

## 1. Know what you want.

"I've spent a lot of time figuring out exactly what I wanted to get out of each co-op," says Simon. "And I've found there are three things you can get: one is money, another is a cultural experience, and another is an educational experience. Most jobs only have one or two, but if you can find one with all three, that's awesome."

Consider what kind of experience you are hoping for before applying to jobs.

## 2. Make a short-list, a long-list, and a really-long-list.

"I put together a list with my top 15 choices, my top 30, my top 100, and if I was getting really desperate, my top 200," explains Simon. "The idea was to apply to the best ones first, wait a couple of weeks and apply to the next ones second, then wait a couple of weeks and apply to the next ones. That way the best ones would have the longest time to get back to me."

## 3. Talk to your student advisor.

CECA encourages students to conduct their own employment search in order to prepare for post-graduation, and they offer lots of support to get started. Book a meeting with your student advisor early on, to discuss your job search strategies and to ensure that you are complying with the procedures and regulations in effect in Co-op Ed. Your student advisor can offer great advice and tips as well as additional resources to help with your job search, such as letters of introduction.

See the Co-op Student Manual for more procedural information.

## 4. Prove that you're a good fit.

For his top choices, Simon tailored his portfolio to match the scope and focus of the firm he was applying to. The same goes for the cover letter: "For the 20 or 30 firms that I loved, I had a basic template describing who I was, what the co-op program was all about, and what interested me in architecture. Then I added a couple of lines about why their office in particular interested me. I also tried relating one of their projects to one of mine or showing how their philosophy coincides with mine, just to emphasize 'Hey, I'm a good fit! I belong there.'"

## 5. Take a Risk!

The thought of venturing beyond the secure, straightforward JobMine search is daunting. Simon would be the first to admit that his co-op journey has not been without its challenges, from the stress of finding a job, to culture shock, to more outlandish threats like being chased by wild dogs in Bangalore. However, Simon looks back on these tense times as eye-opening and beneficial to his personal growth.

"I wouldn't say that the entire experience was good, but all of it was amazing. It was a once-in-a-lifetime thing that I've never experienced before and probably won't again."

**If you, like Simon, yearn for a work term that has it all, what's holding you back? Your dream co-op job is out there, and with hard work, perseverance, and a little creativity, you will find it!**

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CORNER

# Living the Suite Life

Rebecca Lalonde has found her **right FIT!**

Inside sCo-op

Bronwyn Forbes

All co-op students are familiar with the housing stress that comes each time they land a new co-op job - relocating for four months, trying to find a short lease, and scrambling to find a sub-letter. For Rebecca Lalonde, her key to success is living in residence each term, while on co-op or in school.

Rebecca is a 4A Combinatorics and Optimization student currently on co-op with the Math Faculty Computing Facility at uWaterloo. She is a developer for a program called Maple TA



- an online database of math questions designed to assist students with extra questions related to their specific math course.

When Rebecca landed this job she thought, what could be more convenient than living on campus and being a 10 minute walk from work? She has lived in residence since her first year and is now in her 5th term living at Columbia Lake Village-South (Waterloo Residences' townhouse community). Rebecca acknowledges that the conveniences of living on campus have allowed her to succeed in both school and her job. "I spend less time commuting, and it's just a short walk to meet up with classmates to work on a group project or to visit a professor if I need extra help."

On top of the convenience, Rebecca also loves the community vibe that's created in residence. Every Sunday the students convene in her Don's townhouse to hang out and

enjoy homemade treats, freshly baked by her Don that day!

What about the cost? She says it's totally worth it. She doesn't have to deal with the emotions associated with landlords or finding a sublet, dealing with maintenance concerns such as plumbing, or worrying about things like having Internet set up - it's all done for her. She also appreciates the lump sum payment - she pays her fees once and doesn't have to worry about arranging payment with someone every month. For Rebecca, the conveniences outweigh the cost, which, when you break it down, isn't that much different to off campus anyway.

Rebecca encourages other co-op students to explore the possibility of living on campus. Whether you're living there for work or school, you'll experience a strong sense of community tailored to upper-years, independence, and a quality of living that's hard to find off campus.

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

The Waterloo Residences and Off-Campus Housing Office is here to help!



» Upper-years can live in rez each term. On a local co-op term? We have spaces for co-op students in the winter and spring terms.

» **APPLY NOW for FALL 2012**  
(two-term contract for fall 2012 & spring 2013)

» **APPLY NOW for SPRING 2012**  
(one term contract)

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

» Want to live off campus? Visit our website to access the online listing service and classified ads for active sublets. Or contact us for more assistance at [och@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:och@uwaterloo.ca)

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



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