

Communiqué

The Communication Co-op
Newsletter | Spring & Summer 2009

TAKE THE LEAP! JOIN CO-OP!

► An almost missed opportunity...

By Winetta Lee, Communication Co-op Student

The co-op program at Simon Fraser University is simply amazing and I strongly advise any students who are contemplating this experience to take the leap and join! When I first stepped foot into Simon Fraser University, I knew that I wanted to be involved with co-op. I had heard many great things about this program from my family and friends. So, as I entered my second year, I began to seriously think about joining co-op. In January of 2008, I completed my first Bridging Online course and submitted all my intake documents. Not long after, I was officially admitted into co-op and was ready to seek for summer. Or so I thought...

As summer approached and deadlines for jobs came at lightning speed, I became nervous and overwhelmed. Each time I would look at job descriptions, I just could not bring myself to apply for them. I felt that I was not capable to do co-op yet and I began to contemplate this opportunity and its benefits. My co-op advisor was very understanding of my situation and allowed me to postpone and seek for the fall semester.

This time, I knew what to expect. As I searched for jobs, I began to see that it was not so hard. With the guidance of my co-op advisors, I was able to turn my simple standard resume into



one that sets me apart from others. I also learned how to tailor my cover letters for each employer. The co-op advisors during this time are your mentors. They are there for you when you need them; all you need to do is ask!

Part way through the semester, I landed my first interview and was I nervous. At the same time, I was excited. I scheduled a mock-interview with my co-op advisor and she prepped me so well that I eventually got the job. Landing this job would not have been possible if I had chosen not to do co-op and without the guidance of my co-op advisors and the workshops.

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ARTHUR YEE: STUDENT COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR

► International Association of Business Communicators (IABC/BC) awards student efforts

By Jessica Doherty, Communication Co-op student

Many Communication Co-op students know first-hand what it is like to work tirelessly on a project over the course of a work term. Maybe these efforts helped their company reach sought-after goals or maybe they were acknowledged with praise from their department or supervisor—whatever the result, the experience was surely well worth it. But what if these students—YOU—could win \$500 and the attention of business communicators from all over the Metro Vancouver area all because of a work term project? Recent Communication Co-op grad, Arthur Yee, did just that, and it helped him land his current position in communications with Vancouver Coastal Health.

Arthur joined the local chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC/BC) early on in his co-op career. With SFU staff like Communication Co-op coordinator Erika Wah, and Work Integrated Learning Marketing and

Communication coordinator John Grant, heavily involved in the professional association, it did not take much to convince Arthur of the benefits. “Unparalleled professional development opportunities, a chance to network with top communicators both locally and from around the world, topped off with a genuinely warm and friendly bunch of people in the BC chapter; what’s not to love about IABC?” Arthur says. “A new communicator could not ask for anything more.”

While Arthur completed his first co-op work term with SFU Co-op, it was John Grant who first encouraged him to enter a project into the running for Student Communicator of the Year (SCOY). SCOY is an award program through IABC that recognizes students who have shown excellence in the field of communications with a \$500 prize and the critical acclaim that accompanies the title of Student Communicator of the Year. While Arthur did not win that first time around, he credits the application process as a huge learning



From left: Erika Wah, Arthur Yee, Melissa Chungfat (2007 SCOY winner), Marcia Schimizu, Christina Wu (2008 International Student Gold Quill Award winner)

experience—one that would eventually help him in his winning bid the following year.

For his second co-op work term, Arthur worked as the Communication Intern for AIDS Vancouver, a local non-profit AIDS service organization. While there, he took on a project to rebrand the organization, based on feedback from clients and staff. “My personal goal was to help give a human face to the organization,” Arthur says. “HIV/AIDS is far too often characterized by cold hard stats and indecipherable scientific jargon.” After putting in hours of hard work on the project, it was his friends, many of whom had had their own success as IABC student award winners, who gave him the final push to apply.

“You really have nothing to lose when applying for SCOY,” he reflects. “Not only do you have a solid portfolio piece at the end of the application process, but you get that very rare chance to sit back and analyze your work.”

“You really have nothing to lose when applying for SCOY”

“When else do you have opportunity to have communications professionals from all over BC review and provide feedback on your work?” he adds. “That in itself is worth its weight in gold.”

However, winning Student Communicator of the Year in 2008 proved even more valuable for Arthur, who received an internship offer as a result, that has now turned in to a full-time contract position with Vancouver Coastal Health. “[Winning Student Communicator of the Year] definitely helped show me that, with hard work and wisdom from people around you, the sky is the limit with what you can achieve.”

Last year’s winner has one last tip for those thinking of applying for future SCOY awards: “Do not be afraid

to approach senior communicators and ask for their advice” Arthur advises. “I was really surprised by how warm and open people were to lending their wisdom.”

With countless Communication students working on work term, volunteer, and class projects, the opportunity for another SFU Communication student to take home the big prize is there. From co-op student to Student Communicator of the Year, Arthur Yee proves that taking advantage of new opportunities always reaps a reward.

For more information on next year’s SCOY award or IABC, visit www.iabc.bc.ca or email students@iabc.bc.ca. 

► TAKE THE LEAP! JOIN CO-OP!
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To think that I had almost missed this opportunity makes me really glad that I stayed with co-op. Just from applying for jobs and preparing for the interview, I learned so much about myself. I recognized my fears, became aware of my hopes and started to believe in my dreams – all because I took that leap. From this experience I learned how difficult looking for a job can be. By working with my co-op advisors, I was able to land the job I wanted. However, if I was to do this all on my own, I would not have known where to begin. This almost-missed opportunity has made me appreciate the benefits of co-op so much more. So, the first step is to take that leap and embrace all opportunities by joining co-op! I can guarantee that you will not regret it! 

QUEST FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CO-OP WORK TERM

► Now is the time to start planning for your next adventure!

By Lisa Tuyen, Communication Co-op Student

To gain unbelievable life experience, to immerse oneself in a new culture, to acquire invaluable work experience while learning how to 'survive' on your own, these are all valuable reasons why I am on my quest for an international co-op work term. The goal: Summer of 2009!

I have been pondering, wondering, day dreaming and debating for the past two years, and after all this wonderment, I am finally ready to start my quest to find my dream international co-op work term. There is something very fascinating about a new culture, and the thrill I experience at the thought of traveling abroad reminds me that I REALLY want this.

So with three co-op work terms almost completed, my plan is to find this dream international co-op work term in time for summer 2009 in EUROPE! I salivate at the thought of all the culture, the history and the amazing food that I will be fortunate enough to experience.

Before I get to Europe, there are many things that I need to do first. Research for one (rolls eyes), as we all know how crucial research is. With that, I attended a focus group, where I learned a little bit more about the

resources that are available for students who are interested in completing an international co-op work term. I also learned about this fabulous website called Going Global (visit <http://www.sfu.ca/coop/international/source.html>) that SFU pays a pretty

“There is something very fascinating about a new culture...”

penny for each year. It is a website that helps students find their own self-directed international co-op work term or learn more about the culture of the country you are interested in going to. I also had a one-on-one meeting with Amy Lee, the International Co-op Coordinator at SFU, who was very helpful with getting that ball rolling for me. I also understand that if I want an international placement THAT badly, it is necessary for me to do the work to find something that suits my needs best, because who knows me better than myself?

Of course, I do have several concerns regarding living on another continent for half a year; my primary concern would be accommodation. How is that going to work? Cost is another major concern. As many of us starving students are fully aware, tuition is enough of a pain, but if you add in travel expenses, living costs, bills, food, etc., you end up footing a pretty hefty bill. Mind you, I learned at the focus group that there are scholarships available such as the International Co-op student award that students can apply for. It funds up to \$1000 dollars per student and there is no specific



limit on how many students can receive the award (so, theoretically, if 5 students apply for this award, there is the potential that all 5 may receive it for any given semester). Awards like this can help with half of a plane ticket at least (YAY!). There is also the option of budgeting and applying for other bursaries and scholarships. There is an abundance of information out there, if we only knew where to look.

But you know what? Despite my concerns, I still want to do this. I still want to live in Europe for half a year, gain some communications-related experience to bulk up my resume, and come back with some amazing life experiences under my belt.

I'm writing this article pre-planning, so at this point, my quest for my dream international co-op work term is only beginning. Wish me luck!

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you are interested in more information on how you can start planning your own international co-op, check out their website at <http://www.sfu.ca/coop/international>. You can also read profiles of other students and their work experiences on the Online Learning Community at www.coopcommunity.sfu.ca

SFU

MEET THE FACULTY: STUART POYNTZ

► Bringing Communication into classrooms across the Lower Mainland

By Heather Gerrits, Arts Co-op Student

Thinking back to my last year of high school, I can remember looking at all the different programs that SFU has to offer and trying to decide what courses I should take, what university path I should follow. Departments like Mathematics, Chemistry and English were very straightforward - you knew what you would be signing up for. Communication, on the other hand, was a program that I had never really heard about and it wasn't something I had been exposed to in high school. For these reasons, I regrettably did not pursue any courses in Communication and am only finding out now, in my final semesters of my undergraduate, what I have been missing! Thankfully, Communication's newest faculty member, Dr. Stuart Poyntz, is doing something to make sure this doesn't happen to the next generation of students making their way to SFU.

After graduating from Queens University with a B.A. in Political and Social Theory, Dr. Poyntz completed a Master's degree in Communication at SFU and a PhD at UBC. It was during these studies that he first began to think about the importance of media education and how "film might have the ability to do more than just entertain us and be a space of pleasure." Before coming to SFU, Dr. Poyntz worked as the Director of Education Programs at the Pacific Cinémathèque, developing and implementing a number of different media education programs throughout the public school system.

Within the last year and a half at SFU, Dr. Poyntz has been able to build upon his initiatives from the Pacific Cinémathèque with Communication co-op student Adam Brayford. Under Stuart's guidance, they have

worked together to develop a series of workshops that introduce SFU's School of Communication to high school students throughout the Lower Mainland in a meaningful way. Each workshop is 80 minutes long, and throughout the Spring 2009 semester



Stuart Poyntz (right) with co-op student Adam Brayford

approximately 45-50 workshops were delivered to over 900 high school students. These workshops are not only filling a gap in the school system, but they are providing the opportunity for SFU to get some real face time with students and show them what the study of Communication is all about.

When asked what his long term goals for this project were, Dr. Poyntz replied that "the ideal scenario is that those workshops become a long term piece of the School of Communication's interaction with the schooling system more broadly. It's a role that we're well positioned to play and one that's really necessary." For the sake of future students who are like me, I hope they do continue so that others don't miss out on all that a degree in Communication has to offer. If you are looking for an opportunity to learn from this exemplary prof, Dr. Poyntz will be teaching CMNS 221 and 387 in the spring.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW: BRITT BURNHAM

► How a Communication alumnus found her passion and landed her dream job in PR

By Britt Burnham, Communication Alumnus

I have always been inspired by the power of communications to create positive social change. What I did not know during my time at SFU was how I would become one of those people creating campaigns for things that I believed in. I did not know where those people worked and did not have a clue about public relations.

Jump ahead a couple of years and I am starting to figure it out.

After leaving SFU and returning home to Victoria in 2006, I began working as the Communications Coordinator for the Royal BC Museum. I loved my job, but every time I saw a great social marketing campaign, I knew I wanted to do something that was more meaningful to me. Then, I saw a posting for a PR Specialist at a small communications agency in Victoria that has a strong focus on social justice.

I'll skip over the nail-biting interview experience and just say this: do not sell yourself short because you are young or do not feel like you know "everything." When I saw the other interviewees, I as much as gave up on myself and my lack of confidence is what almost blew it for me. Youth is a great asset – particularly in light of social media. Nobody knows it all, and the people who think they do are often annoying.

Thankfully, I got the job, and since starting at Artemis PR & Design in 2007, I have worked with a number of great organizations. I have written communications plans for social service agencies (thank you CMNS 200), counselled a high-profile non-profit organization through a major issue and – the highlight, so far – worked with the Mary Manning Centre on a public relations campaign to increase funding for Sexual

Abuse Intervention Programs (provincial funding had been frozen for 17 years!). One of my colleagues Leah Lockhart, also an SFU Communication and co-op alumnus, laid the groundwork for me – counselling the centre on its communications strategy and establishing powerful relationships with local reporters. When Leah left Artemis, I took over the account and in



Artemis President and PR Director Maggie Kerr-Southin (left) and Britt Burnham discussing a campaign

March 2008, our work paid off when the Ministry of Children and Family Development announced they were increasing funding to Vancouver Island service agencies delivering intervention programs by more than 50 per cent. The Mary Manning Centre received an increase of \$160,000 in annualized funding, which allowed the centre to avoid employee layoffs and ensured children seeking sexual abuse counselling services did not have to wait for treatment.

I have learned the ins and outs of PR on the job. I may have been armed with a communication degree when I walked into Artemis but, looking back, I didn't understand public relations. It is not just media relations and it is not pushing information out to the public. At its best, it's two-way communication

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between an organization and its audience. It's the job of the PR practitioner to identify the best strategies, tools and practices for the various parties to communicate. Sometimes the most informal means, like a dinnertime discussion with a small group of audience influencers, are the most effective.

I credit SFU with helping to shape my ability for independent thinking and giving me a critical eye. The School of Communication taught me to think strategically and see the big picture. Also, those painful-at-the-time research papers and presentations polished my writing and public speaking skills. In addition to having a degree from a highly respected university, what got me in the door at the museum and Artemis was the co-op experiences on my resume. My terms at the Heart and Stroke Foundation and BC Lions enabled me to jump into great jobs when I was fresh out of school. ■ SFU

STATISTICS CORNER

Who we are:	Spring 09	Fall 08
New admits	30	29
Total participating	72	90
Total placements	52	74

Who's doing what

Eight-month term	24	14
First co-op	13	20
Second co-op	12	23
Third co-op	15	18
Fourth co-op	6	10
Fifth co-op	6	3
Self-directed co-op	2	8

Where we're working

Greater Vancouver	46	67
Out-of-town	4	5
Overseas	2	2

Who we're working for

Federal government	10	11
Provincial government	2	6
Municipal government	1	1
Government agencies	10	20
Not-for-profit	13	16
Private	16	20

Where else we're placed

Arts	3	12
Business	1	2
Computing Science	2	1
Science	0	1
Kinesiology	1	1

