



# Communiqué

Spring 2006

The Communication Co-op  
Newsletter

## Know What You Are Worth

### ► How I learned to overcome the fear of wage negotiation

By Jennifer Laidlaw

Have you ever wondered about the phrase “salary to be negotiated”? This vague statement is often found on job postings and can be worded in a number of different ways. How are you supposed to know what is reasonable? It is quite possible that the amount you want to earn and the amount the employer wants to pay you are not the same.

I never gave salary much thought, as I assumed I would either have lots of time to ponder over it when the time came, or I really wouldn’t have a choice. That is, until I was asked flat out what my salary expectations were during an interview.

I was in the office of the General Manager of the BC Alpine Ski Association. With the Director of Communications sitting beside me, I was being interviewed for a position that would oversee the development and production of a magazine insert to be distributed in a national ski magazine. After an hour and a half of questions and Starbucks lattes, I was offered the position. Then the big question was posed on me and I had no idea what to say. How much was reasonable? Could they fire me already if I asked for too much money? What if I asked for too little; would they laugh in my face?

A second question was asked that tied into the salary expectation and that was “how much time do you think it will take you to do this project?” Great, I thought, another



Jennifer Laidlaw in front of the BC Alpine Ski Wall of Fame. The first issue of *Ski Canada* magazine with Jennifer’s *FAST TRACK* insert can now be found in stores.

question I can’t answer. I stared at my new boss blankly and told him I would have to think about it over the weekend [it was Friday]. He thought that was a great idea, so we arranged for another meeting the following Monday.

I spent the weekend calculating and re-calculating how long I thought the 8-page magazine insert would take. I would be doing the interviewing, writing, designing and overseeing of the whole project. It would be just my computer and me; an enormous staff of two! I knew the interviewing and writing wouldn’t take long because that was where I had the most experience; however, I would have to teach myself a graphic design program in order to do the basic layout before the magazine was sent to a design company. My final decision

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# The More The Merrier!

## ► Five solid reasons why it's smart to complete multiple co-op work terms

By Jane Nunnikhoven

Background:



Jane Nunnikhoven, a Summit Scholar and IABC Student of the Year award winner was also named CAFCE's Co-op student of the year in 2003. This award recognizes job performance, academic performance, and

contributions to employers, co-operative education and the community at large. A Communication Co-op alumnus, Jane's past achievements include implementing a winning media strategy with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, organizing a large-scale United Way campaign and working for SFU Co-op's new job development team with the goal of creating more job opportunities for students. Below, she provides some advice.

Whether you're just starting out or full swing into your co-op career, you may be asking yourself the question — *how many work terms should I do?*

Three work terms will earn you a co-op certificate. Four will get you a co-op designation on your degree. And eight will tie you for the record of most work terms completed. So what's the magic number?

While there's no definitive answer, my advice as a co-op veteran is to do three to five terms (make it six if you're a keener like me). Here are five solid reasons why more is better when it comes to co-op terms.

### 1. *Enrich your academic experience*

Co-op adds depth and meaning to your education by connecting what you learn in the classroom to the working world. After each work term you will return to campus with a broader range of "real-world" experience to draw from, enabling you to relate to the issues

and concepts discussed in class at a more practical and personal level. It will enhance your learning and probably your grades too!

### 2. *Perfect those job-finding skills*

Although we often focus on the work experience, the co-op program also guides students through the process of finding jobs. That means writing résumés and cover letters and going to job interviews. It's easy to take these skills for granted, but—let's face it—if they aren't up to snuff, your chances of landing a job after graduation are pretty much slim to none. And in this case practice makes perfect, so more co-op work terms means more opportunities to hone your job-finding skills.

### 3. *Make some money*

This reason doesn't require much of an explanation. More work terms means more pay cheques, and anything you can do to shrink your student loans or boost your savings before graduation will be a huge benefit down the road.

### 4. *Explore your options*

If you're still in limbo as to what you want to do when you grow up (don't worry, you're not alone), co-op is the perfect opportunity to "test drive" different career options. Think about it — you can try different sectors, industries and roles with no commitment beyond your co-op term. If you don't like the job, you leave at the end of the term. No hard feelings, no questions asked. Chalk it up as a lesson learned. Finding out what you don't like can be just as valuable as discovering what you *do* like. And if you love the job, you can potentially negotiate a longer work term or re-connect with that employer after graduation.

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was 60 hours per issue.

For each page I gave myself five hours; three hours for interviewing and writing articles and two hours for chasing people down and doing the preliminary layout. For the eight pages of the magazine insert, this totaled 40 hours. Because this was my first time doing a project like this, I wanted to give myself extra time so I added on another 20 hours, for a grand total of 60 hours. I did not use any special formula or trick in order to estimate the time. Instead I used what I hoped was a logical deduction, based on my skills and weaknesses.

As for the salary estimate, I had a feeling that my new employers would be flexible. Over the course of my interview, the Director of Communications had mentioned anywhere from ten to twelve dollars per hour, while the General Manager had mentioned fifteen dollars. In the end I decided to ask for the highest amount mentioned because I assumed that it must be within their expectations. Plus, I figured if they decided that was too much and offered twelve, I would be okay with that too.

Monday morning I arrived at the office, confident and armed with a letter outlining and justifying my expectations. Everyone seemed to agree with my proposal and in the end, I finished the first project in just under 60 hours - and even received a bonus! I don't know if fifteen dollars an hour is comparable for other starting positions like the one I had, but I enjoyed the experience and gained the confidence in my ability to negotiate on my own behalf. ◀

► **The More The Merrier...**Continued from Page 2

5. *Get a head start in the working world*

With three to five work terms under your belt, you will enter the workforce with both a stellar résumé and the confidence that you have a decent set of skills and experiences to offer employers. In addition, you will have made contacts in the working world that, quite possibly, will lead to jobs following graduation. It is your work experience and contacts that will set you apart from the thousands of other graduates who have the exact same piece of paper as you.

So next time you ask yourself – *how many work terms should I do?* – consider these five reasons and remember my motto: when it comes to co-op terms, the more the merrier. ◀

“ ...practice makes perfect, so more co-op work terms means more opportunities to hone your job-finding skills. ”

# Top Co-op Employer: Rotary Club of Lions Gate

► Local service group gives co-op students the chance to make an impact

By Stephanie Liboiron

The Rotary Club of Lions Gate is a service group made of volunteers dedicated to strengthening their community. One of their most ambitious projects is organizing North Vancouver Canada Day, a huge festival attracting residents from all over the North Shore. Because one of the organization's biggest mandates is to provide opportunities for youth, every summer the Rotary Club offers a co-op position to one lucky student. That student has the privilege to become involved in the planning and production in all facets of the Canada Day event.

Being a community-oriented resident of North Vancouver, I was already familiar with some of the Rotary's work on Canada Day and other initiatives such as the Youth Safe House, Operation Red Nose, and the Gala Wine Festival. As you can probably imagine, the competition for this challenging job was tough, but I managed to secure the position and in no time was ready to start working in my hometown!

The Rotary Club has now been hiring SFU co-op students as far back as 12 years to help manage the Canada Day project. The successful student works closely with the Rotary Club and also with North Vancouver Park Events. Given the large size of the project and the short time-frame given to plan the event, there are definitely challenges faced by both the co-op student and the employers. My supervisor and Community Events Programmer, Janice Bailey, believes in the benefits of hiring a co-op student. "This is a large project, and the student's learning curve in the initial days of the posting can be quite steep. However, while this posting is challenging, every student has found it to be a rewarding experience, and most have come away with access to new employment opportunities and a clearer sense of their career goals."



Volunteer members of the Rotary Club staffing their table at the North Vancouver Canada Day celebrations.

I spent the first part of my work term busily planning and organizing the Canada Day event. I was involved with all aspects of the event; from recruiting performers, managing equipment inventories, designing the website and promotional items, handling the budget, and finally, overseeing the day of the event. Through my work term, Rotary provided me with excellent support and the chance to make decisions which impacted the outcome of the event, as well as the North Vancouver community. I even got a chance to meet with both mayors of North Vancouver to get their feedback and help involve them with the festivities!

Looking back on my experience, I was very impressed with the dedication of the Rotarians planning the event. Even though organizing this mammoth project was stressful at times, each Rotarian devoted himself/herself to creating an event that showcased the best of North Vancouver to its residents and outside guests. Rotary taught me about the benefits of volunteering and community involvement, and has inspired me to continue to be a more proactive person. The Rotary Club provides a great opportunity for youth involvement, and of course for SFU co-op students as well. ◀

# Meet the Faculty: Dr. Gary McCarron

## ► Classroom theory comes in handy when learning on the job

By Mandeep Sidhu

If you have spent any time around the Communication department, you have likely bumped into Dr. McCarron. Perhaps he was your professor for CMNS 110 or you have noticed his name beside the “Communication Undergraduate Advisor” title and have spoken to him about your upcoming Communication honours thesis. Dr. McCarron is involved with SFU in numerous ways!



Dr. Gary McCarron is the School of Communication Undergraduate Advisor, as well as an instructor for several CMNS classes.

After receiving a BA in English and Communication from SFU, Dr. McCarron proceeded to Toronto, where at York University he obtained a Master’s degree and PhD. His PhD in continental moral philosophy highlighted one of his research interests: why does the United States, regarded as one of the most scientifically advanced countries in the world, still hold at its core a biblical explanation of human creation as opposed to the theory of evolution? After teaching both as a TA and lecturer at York University, Dr. McCarron returned to SFU in 1988 as an instructor.

Over the years, Dr. McCarron has taught many different courses including CMNS 110, 210, 304 and 323. He has recently spent time developing his “vanity course,” CMNS 410, which analyses Alfred Hitchcock’s films. The fall semester had him delivering public lectures on the “political economy of drugs” – essentially envisioning the citizen’s struggle with

the medical industry and has considered the question: are drugs for health or for profit? He is also looking at how health is portrayed via mass media; are individuals simply regarded as consumers by the health industry?

So what does Dr. McCarron say in response to disillusioned communication students who think they need less theory and more applied classes to get “real world” skills? He offers this anecdote:

“I had a student a few years back who was coasting along in my class and I knew that he could perform significantly better than he was. When he approached me and asked what he could do to improve his academic performance, I told him to ‘Go out there and do something.’ He got angry and promptly left my classroom.

After his mother confirmed to him that yes, he was wasting time and not applying himself, he enrolled in co-op. His first work term led to his second and his third, which eventually saw him travel to Shanghai, China on business.

At the business meeting, my student was seated next to a woman who, when realizing he was from Vancouver, asked if he knew me. The student hurriedly replied ‘yes, I do know Gary McCarron; he was my honours project supervisor.’ The woman offered him a position later that evening. And all because of co-op!”

“I always find that those students who make that comment have never done co-op, and that if they do complete a few work terms, are more apt to actually *learn* something from all that theory lectured about in the classroom!”

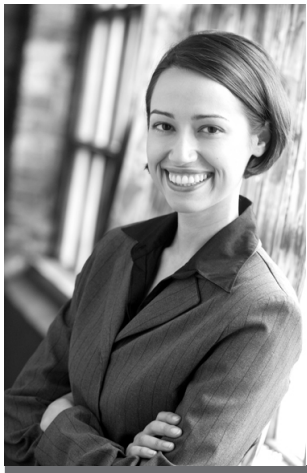
So take Dr. McCarron’s advice: join co-op and find out how all that classroom theory can actually be put into good use on the job! ◀

# Where Are They Now?

► **Angela Koulyras utilized her co-op opportunities to the fullest**

By Ashli Gavreau

Angela Koulyras is the model co-op graduate. In just five short years since graduation, she has taken her degree in Communication and four co-op work terms and has become an Account Manager at a successful Vancouver-based PR agency, Contemporary Communications. She represents a success story that many co-op students hope to emulate.



Communication Co-op alumnus Angela Koulyras is thrilled with her new position as Account Manager at Vancouver PR agency, Contemporary Communications.

Angela made a conscious decision from the start of her co-op career in 1997 to utilize every opportunity to its fullest. Her first 8-month co-op work term was with Industry Canada in Ottawa. Some of her duties included writing and editing for internal newsletters, communications strategy, community relations and media analysis.

When it came time to choose her next position, she again looked for something that would expand and diversify her portfolio, which she found with the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). During her second 8-month term, she helped with media relations, events, social marketing and developing communications plans. “My co-op with the GVRD exposed me to the diversity of the communication field,” Angela said. “I realized through the experience just what an exciting, diverse and dynamic industry public relations is.”

Upon graduation, her first job outside of

co-op was also obtained with the government – this time with a provincial agency called the Science Council of BC. She was there for a year and a half before she decided that she would again further expand her horizons and try her hand in the private sector. It was at that time, in 2002, she joined Contemporary Communications - a public relations agency where she still works today. Starting as an Account Executive, she was promoted last summer to Account Manager and is thriving in her new position.

Much of Angela’s current success is due to her past work experience. On any given day, she could be working on media relations, event management, sponsorship management, crisis communication, editorial services, community relations or anything else that is thrown her way. She also enjoys being able to work with an eclectic variety of industries and people.

In addition to Angela’s exciting and diverse career, she has also chosen to give something back to SFU. Serving as a director on the Alumni Association Board, she is chair of the association’s Marketing Committee. “When I graduated, I felt like a part of me was missing. I felt such a connection with SFU that I wanted to give back somehow,” Angela said. As a director, Angela works on behalf of approximately 85,000 SFU grads to promote and support the university.

For current co-op students, Angela recommends that you “use every opportunity to learn as much as you possibly can. The experience you will gain is invaluable.” She adds, “try to expose yourself to as many aspects of communications as possible. It is important for you to find your strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes.” If she had not taken co-op and been able to find her own niche, Angela may have become the journalist that she had originally aspired to be and not in the self-fulfilling public relations career that she is presently in. ◀

# The Self-Directed Work Search

## ► Gain important job-hunting skills by finding your own co-op job

By Laurie Jung

A self-directed work search (SDWS) is when one uses their co-op resources to proactively search for their own co-op job. It helps students enhance their job searching skills which are necessary for today's competitive employment market.

In my free time, I often browse job boards and compare the types of jobs that are currently available, which is how I first decided to do a SDWS. One day while looking through postings, I noticed that there was a poster advertising the position of Summer Employment Officer (SEO) at the Human Resources Skills Development Centre of Canada (HRSDC). Before I applied, I made sure that this job met the co-op criteria for a SDWS, then filled out an online application form for the Federal Student Work Experience Program. I was soon on my way!

My first co-op work term was self-directed and I ended up being offered the job with the HRSDC. After wanting to know what it was like to work for the federal government, I was happy to be placed as a SEO which helped me gain valuable work experience in the field of human resources.

Working as a SEO was a wonderful experience because I learned so much in such a short amount of time. I now have the confidence to apply for jobs on my own. In addition, I was able to utilize all the practical skills that I had learned through the resources and workshops that co-op provides, including resume and cover letter writing and practicing interview skills. I would highly recommend this job to all students interested in special event planning, marketing and media relations, employer relations and casual labour programs.

If you're thinking about finding your own co-op job, here are some helpful hints:



Laurie Jung (far left) with other members of North Shore Human Resource Centre for Students, which is part of the HRSDC.

### Tips for a SDWS:

1. **Take initiative:** Be on the lookout for job fairs to attend and possible employers who you may want to work with. Take the initiative to inquire about jobs.
2. **Network:** Talk to everyone! Tell people that you're job searching and what kind of work you're looking for. Who knows, they might know someone who is hiring!
3. **Set creative goals:** Know what you want and brainstorm ideas of possible places where you might be able to find them. Don't settle for less, try to strive for more and always reach higher.

### Benefits of doing a SDWS:

1. **Exposure:** There are employers out there who don't know about SFU's Co-op program. By doing a SDWS with them, one can expose them to the quality and high work ethics that co-op students have.
2. **Accessibility:** There are certain jobs in which Co-op coordinators cannot access. Thus, SDWS is a way of bypassing these barriers.

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**Editors:**

Amanda Brkich  
Marcia Shimizu

**Design & Layout:**

Jane Nunnikhoven  
Keiko Cooper  
Amanda Brkich

**Contacts:**

Avry Janes  
Student Advisor  
K 9657  
604-291-4089  
avryj@sfu.ca

Sangita Mudaliar  
Co-op Coordinator  
K 9661  
604-291-5542  
sangitam@sfu.ca

Marcia Shimizu  
Co-op Coordinator  
K 9669  
604-291-3862  
mshimizu@sfu.ca

## Post Your Profile

► **An easy way to use the Co-op Online Community as a networking tool**

By Amanda Brkich

Are you interested in learning more about jobs in special event planning or marketing? What about media relations? These are just a few of the sectors listed in the Community Profiles section of Co-op's Online Learning Community. It's a valuable resource available to anyone who has access to the Internet! Simply visit [www.coopcommunity.sfu.ca](http://www.coopcommunity.sfu.ca) and browse the profiles of fellow students, employers, co-op staff and SFU alumni, or better yet, post your own.

The collection of profiles on the Community is an archive of information at your finger tips. Research potential co-op employers and read company descriptions, as written by students who have already worked for them. Students also usually include a personal reflection on their work experience and if you still have unanswered questions, you can often email the student directly to find out more - an easy way to make a contact!

There are currently hundreds of member profiles posted in the Community, not only in the Communication discipline, but within Education, Arts & Social Sciences and Computing Science, to name a few. With the number of registered Community members topping almost 3,000 people to date, you would be missing out by *not* having your profile featured for others to see. After all, what a great way to introduce yourself to employers in a job interview: direct them to your Community profile for a complete work history (and writing sample)!

Take a bit of time out of your day to publish your profile on the Community, whether you are a co-op student, staff member, SFU alumnus or employer. Remember, the more profiles that are posted means increased access to prospective contacts and resources for researching jobs. Who knows, your profile may be just the inspiration someone is looking for! ◀

## Statistics Corner

<b>Who we are:</b>	<b>05-3</b>	<b>04-3</b>
New admits	28	38
Returning students	73	38
Total students enrolled	101	76

<b>Who's doing what:</b>		
Eight-month term	18	30
First co-op	27	21
Second co-op	19	17
Third co-op	13	17
Fourth co-op	11	16
Fifth co-op	2	1
Part-time co-op	-	-
Self-directed co-op	8	9
Total Placements	72	72

<b>Where we're working:</b>		
Greater Vancouver	65	59
Out-of-town	4	9
Overseas	3	4

<b>Who we're working for:</b>		
Federal government	15	14
Provincial government	6	6
Municipal government	-	2
Government agencies	11	17
Not-for-profit	14	9
Private	26	24

<b>Where else we're placed:</b>		
Arts Co-op	8	3
Business Co-op	14	4
Computing Science	2	-
Science / Kinesiology	2	-

► **Self-Directed Work Search...Continued from Page 7**

3. Rewards: In doing a SDWS, students are entitled to a one hundred dollar gift certificate to the SFU Bookstore. Also, students on a SDWS will still be eligible for the student U-Pass, which allows unlimited access to all BC public transit during the work term.

For more information about student jobs with the federal government, visit: [http://www.jobs-emploi.gc.ca/fsweb-pfete/student/index\\_e.htm](http://www.jobs-emploi.gc.ca/fsweb-pfete/student/index_e.htm) ◀