



From left: Elise Barber, Jennifer Skanes and Katie Fuller are gaining some real-world experience.

A newsletter for graduates of CSAHS • CSS • FACS • WELL • MAC
FALL 2009

Classroom without walls

What does a university-level learning environment look like in the 21st century? For CSAHS, it can be anything from a traditional classroom setting to working with seniors, participating in scenario-based competitions and field courses, taking part in internships and externships or heading out of the country to spend a semester abroad.

“Today, the entire world is our new expanding classroom,” says Prof. Clare MacMartin, CSAHS’s associate dean (academic).

According to a recent study of fourth-year students in CSAHS, 69 per cent said they volunteered or completed some form of community service while at U of G, whereas less than 34 per cent were involved in curriculum-embedded experiential learning. Forty-six per cent of the group said they had wanted to study abroad during their undergraduate degree, but by graduation, only 11.5 per cent had actually had the opportunity.

“We know the interest is there,” says MacMartin. “We just need to strengthen our ability to financially support it.”

Guelph-Humber team wins international CSI contest



From left: Jeffery McLean, Savita Sharma, Brittany Medeiros, Dino Doria and Maxwell Bourdeau.

A TEAM OF University of Guelph-Humber undergraduate students won the 2009 U.S. “CSI Challenge,” helping to propel the school’s justice studies program into the international arena. It was the first time Guelph-Humber had entered the event. Bringing home the trophy to Canada shows Guelph-Humber has achieved an international level in crime scene inves-

tigation, says Dino Doria, head of the justice studies program and a 30-year veteran of the Toronto Police Service. “I was very proud of the students,” he says. “I think it’s a great program, and we can compete with anybody.” Doria accompanied the team of four students to the event, held at Mount St. Mary’s University in Maryland. Now in its fourth year, the competition attracted 24 teams from university programs.

Jeffery McLean, Maxwell Bourdeau, Savita Sharma and Brittany Medeiros earned almost 43 points out of a possible 45. The judges were all veterans in crime scene investigation from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

“We went there to win,” says McLean.

Now in its seventh year, Guelph-Humber’s justice studies program has some 400 students enrolled. About 140 have graduated over the past two years.

Co-op grads a step ahead of competition

CO-OP PROGRAMS offer a great opportunity for experiential learning, and post-secondary students looking for a leg up in today’s uncertain job market should consider enrolling in one, says U of G sociology professor David Walters.

In a study conducted with David Zarifa of Statistics Canada, Walters found that graduates of co-op programs that combine on-the-job training with classroom education are more likely to find full-time work and earn more money than their counterparts in conventional programs.



“Co-op programs work,” says Walters.

The study found that students have the most to gain from enrolling in a university co-op program. Graduates earned \$8,000 a year more than graduates of conventional university programs, after controlling for field of study and other important predictors of earnings.

Co-op programs have expanded significantly in recent years, with three times as many graduates in 2000 as there were in 1990. Although they are still concentrated in applied fields such as engineering, mathematics and computer science, their popularity has spread to the liberal arts and social sciences.

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Lending a hand

People often say we can learn a lot from our elders, but fourth-year gerontology student Nikki Guzzo didn't realize how true that is until she did a placement with St. Joseph's Health Centre of Guelph.

Guzzo worked at its day-out program in Fergus, where her responsibilities included assisting patients — many of whom had Alzheimer's — running small group programs and helping her colleagues when needed. It was a chance to discover if she was cut out for this field.

"There's a lot to learn before you can work with seniors, and St. Joe's has given me this opportunity," says Guzzo, who was required to complete eight hours of work each week, but who regularly volunteered to be there outside of those hours.

"Before I set foot in the St. Joe's day-out program, I had no idea what to expect when working one-on-one with older adults."

Although textbooks provide valuable clinical information, they can't capture what living with Alzheimer's is really like, she says.

"By working in the field, I was able to see up close how Alzheimer's can affect a person and the people around them. I now feel more comfortable with older adults. Experiential learning has made me realize that I do want to work with older adults and that I am in the right program."



Tristan Pearce

Grad lands scholarship

PHD STUDENT Tristan Pearce, MA '06, has received an inaugural Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, the most prestigious doctoral award in Canada. Worth \$50,000 a year for up to three years, the scholarships are awarded to leading students from Canada and abroad.

Working with geography professor and Canada Research Chair Barry Smit, Pearce is studying the transmission of environmental knowledge and land skills among Inuit in adaptation to climate change.

As an associate researcher with U of G's Global Environmental Change Group, he has been conducting research in Ulukhaktok, a small coastal Inuit community on the west coast of Victoria Island, analyzing the vulnerabilities of the people and their livelihoods to climate change.

During his undergraduate studies at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), Pearce had a number of experiential learning opportunities, including fieldwork for courses in biology and environmental science. He was also exposed to First Nations culture, language and history through the First Nations Centre at UNBC.

"I continue to build on these learning experiences in my current research with Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic," he says.

Pearce also went on an exchange to Sweden, where he studied international affairs from a Scandinavian perspective and the Swedish language.

"I believe a productive learning environment should include a balance of classroom teaching and hands-on location-based teaching," he says. "Sometimes being in the natural, political, social or economic environment you're studying can make a profound difference in how you interpret and understand the material you're learning."

NEW VIDEO LAUNCHED

CSAHS recently sponsored the 2009 Teaching and Learning Innovations Conference, bringing together instructors and teaching assistants to network and share their insights on experiential learning. Among other things, the event featured a video celebrating the many types of curriculum-embedded experiential learning available to undergraduate students in CSAHS. To view the video, go to www.csahs.uoguelph.ca/video.

FALL REUNION

The Mac-FACS-FRAN Alumni Association is hosting a fall gourmet reunion in Stratford, Ont. All alumni and friends of alumni are welcome to attend.

For more information, go to <http://www.csahs.uoguelph.ca/alumni/associations>.

CSAHS INSIGHT

Fall 2009

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Tom Affleck

Promoting education at home and abroad

As children in Canada return to the classroom this fall, more than 3,500 children in Nicaragua will be doing the same, thanks to international development graduate Tom Affleck, BA '02. He is the founding president of SchoolBox, a grassroots-driven Ontario charity that supports the right of every child in Central America to a basic education.

"We're the little organization that could," says Affleck, who launched SchoolBox in 2006 after completing a contract with the Canadian International Development Agency in Nicaragua. "I've been most surprised by how far we've been able to come."

He was inspired to start SchoolBox after witnessing a father's response to his daughter receiving a pencil and notebook. Like many families in the region, the girl and her family survive on less than \$1 a day, and basic needs outweigh the luxury of education. "Education often falls off the radar," says Affleck.

But by giving school supplies to the girl, he helped change her future.

"Her father came around the corner and said: 'Now that you have a notebook and a pencil, you can go to school this year.' It's so simple, and that's what makes SchoolBox so special."

Since its launch, SchoolBox has grown from an organization supported by a small group of friends and family in Affleck's hometown of Almonte, Ont., to one that secured more than \$125,000 in donations in 2008.

The charity provides educational kits, which cost \$2 each to assemble. They contain pencils, erasers, notebooks and rulers. SchoolBox also funds construction of schools and libraries.

He says creating schools lessens the strain on the region's teachers, who are commonly forced to relocate when the rent can't be paid on the buildings they're running classes in.

"If you have a place to teach, you can concentrate on teaching," he says. "But you can imagine how difficult it is to teach and deal with the pressures of moving locations all the time."

Last year, Affleck hired two student interns from U of G to oversee the school-build project in Nicaragua and raise funds.

"They were involved in project management, and it was a great experience for them. They lived in the communities, and I think they left with a pretty good understanding of the complexities of these types of cross-cultural projects."