



#### **Acknowledgment**

MSVU is located in Kjipuktuk (Halifax), part of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded ancestral territory which remains the homeland of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

This territory is covered by the Covenant Chain of Treaties of Peace and Friendship signed between 1725 and 1779. These treaties are affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada and recognize Aboriginal Title (which is embedded in both the 1763 Royal Proclamation and in section 35(1) of the 1982 Constitution Act). The treaties are living agreements that establish the rules for an ongoing Treaty relationship between nations.

We pay respect to the knowledge embedded in the Mi'kmaw custodians of the lands and waters and to the Elders, past, present, and future.



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### **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Mount Saint Vincent University Co-operative Education

Office is to be a leader in fostering and advancing work-integrated learning by:

- Developing skilled professionals who will strengthen the workforce in new and innovative ways;
- Leveraging community and alumni relationships to MSVU through strong employer partnerships;
- · Providing students with the support and experiences for career exploration; and
- Promoting an environment where diversity is celebrated and valued in the workplace.

### **GREETINGS FROM THE TEAM**

The year 2023 was a particularly exciting one for not only for the Co-op Office, but for the whole MSVU community: we got the opportunity to celebrate 150 years of Mount Saint Vincent University. As we celebrated this exciting milestone over the past year, we were reminded that since day one, the vision for the institution was focused on making education accessible by providing opportunities for women and girls when few other post-secondary institutions did. One hundred and fifty years later, MSVU's dedication to be an accessible university continues to be of high importance with equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility being a pillar of the current strategic plan.

This initiative is one that the Co-op Office takes to heart. We have always prioritized getting to know our students and meeting their individual needs in a way that demonstrates respect and care. We know that our office is better for having worked with students and employers from all avenues of life, and we continue to seek opportunities to understand how we can better serve our students in this shifting global atmosphere.

One hundred and fifty years of academic excellence is a feat, and we couldn't be prouder to be part of an institution that has consistently centred social responsibility. As we look toward the next 150 years, we are reminded that our legacy of advancing women, delivering academic excellence, pursuing knowledge and promoting accessibility must continue on.



Scott Daniels, Manager

Scott Daniels is the manager of the Co-op Office. As manager, Scott is responsible for the overall management of the Co-op Office and all work-integrated learning (WIL) programs within the department. He should be a familiar face, as he's been working to promote MSVU co-op to employers, students and the community for 20 years.

"As an MSVU graduate and an employee for the past 20 years, I'm proud of how MSVU strives to be a safe and welcoming place for all and is committed to removing barriers. This commitment transcends into multiple areas across the university, including cooperative education. In recent years, the Co-op Office has expanded work-integrated learning (WIL) programs that it administers to include not only co-op, but work experience and internship programs as well. This allows students from various academic backgrounds. those studying full-time or part-time, and students living anywhere in the world to participate in WIL programs so they can gain relevant work experiences prior to graduation. So much has been accomplished already, but it's exciting to imagine where we will be in another 150 years."



Courtney Green, Coordinator

As co-op coordinator, Courtney prepares and advises students for work terms by hosting professional development workshops, resume and cover letter reviews, and interview preparation meetings. Once students are on work terms, Courtney monitors their progress and provides assistance as necessary. Courtney is also a familiar face to many who have worked with the MSVU Co-op Office – throughout her 10 years working here, she's been known to be friendly, knowledgeable and organized.

"Approximately one year after completing the MSVU Bachelor of Business Administration co-op program in 2012, I had the privilege of rejoining the Co-op Office as a staff member. I admire MSVU's dedication to inclusivity and unwavering focus on enhancing the overall student experience. I look forward to contributing to MSVU's ongoing advancement in the coming years. What particularly excites me about the future of the co-op program is our proactive approach to collaboration with students, employers, and faculty. We are committed to seeking feedback and implementing constructive changes that will enhance the co-op experience. While our team may be small, I consider myself fortunate to collaborate with a group that is dedicated to student success, receptive to feedback, and enthusiastic about continually refining the student experience."



Raina DeBrouwer, Coordinator

Raina is a fellow co-op coordinator who also works to prepare and advise students for work terms through professional development workshops, resume and cover letter reviews, and interview preparation. Like Courtney, Raina works with students and employers during work terms to ensure things are going smoothly. Raina was a MSVU co-op student herself and is excited to see the progress the field has undergone already since her own incredible co-op experience.

"One hundred and fifty years is an incredible legacy, and it was so great to celebrate the school that has brought so much happiness and opportunity to my life. I'm excited to see what MSVU does next. One thing that's always impressed me about MSVU is the commitment to making curriculum extremely practical, in a way that mirrors industry practices. I've seen that good work in action, and I hope MSVU remains committed to that in the next 150 years. In terms of co-op, I'm excited about the uptake we've seen in our work experience programs. These programs are specific to transfer, part-time or distance students. Our office's willingness to working with these students and tailor their pathways is exciting. I think that's what the future of education will be all about - personalizing experiences so students can get exactly what they need out of a post-secondary degree."



Shari Arsenault, Employer Liaison

Shari works to provide helpful, cheery administrative and organizational support to MSVU co-op employers. Whether you're interested in hiring a student down the road, or trying to figure out how to hire them in our online job portal immediately, Shari is your go-to contact. She's also responsible for facilitating all co-op interviews – an everchanging jigsaw puzzle that Shari manages to complete each semester with a smile.

"I graduated from MSVU in 2009. As a big fan of lifelong learning, this past year I started taking classes part-time again while working as the Employer Liaison in the Co-op Office. I love being able to compare the classroom experience over the course of those 15 years. MSVU has done a great job of keeping course content fresh and relevant, increasing inclusivity, and accommodating diverse learning styles and schedules. What excites me most about co-op is seeing employers return to post jobs with us again and again because of the great reputation our students have. I hope to see that reputation keep us top of mind in the ever-changing job market."



Jasmine Ho, Student Liaison

As the co-op student liaison, Jasmine is the main contact for all students passing through the MSVU Co-op Office. From the time students inquire about our various program offerings, to the time that they sign their learning agreements once they secure a position, Jasmine is there every step of the way to help students. Jasmine is also responsible for sending out the majority of email and social media communication to students from the Co-op Office, so even if they haven't met face-to-face, students are very familiar with Jasmine!

"Joining the Co-op Office as Student Liaison was my first introduction to MSVU. Working in a new environment is always an adjustment, but it didn't take long for me to find a sense of belonging here. I started working at MSVU during its 150th year and it has been incredible to experience the legacy this university holds. This is truly an amazing place with so much diversity. I'm excited to see how MSVU continues to grow and adapt to the future. What excites me even more is witnessing these changes within the Co-op Office. Every semester, we always have diverse groups of students come through and I would love to see that diversity grow even more! I've gotten to meet and work with so many amazing students so far, and I look forward to the many more to come."



Kerri Scheuermann, Bachelor of Public Relations (Co-operative Education), 2022





### **MSVU INSTITUTIONAL STATISTICS**

5,293

**STUDENTS IN 2023** 

(undergraduate and graduate, full-time and part-time)

### **PROGRAMS OFFERED:**

- 23 undergraduate bachelor degrees offered Within these degrees, 65 programs are offered
- 13 graduate degrees offered
   Within these degrees, 24 programs are offered

# FOUNDED in 1873

**CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO** 

**MORE THAN** 

35,000 ALUMNI

**AROUND THE WORLD** 

**600** 

**FACULTY AND STAFF** 

1:20

FACULTY-TO-STUDENT RATIO

**STUDENTS FROM** 

**CLOSE TO 70 COUNTRIES** 

**8 CERTIFICATE AND DIPLOMA PROGRAMS** 



FIRST UNIVERSITY IN THE MARITIMES TO OFFER A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

FIRST ENGLISH SPEAKING BACHELOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE IN CANADA

EVERY MSVU UNDERGRADUATE BACHELOR DEGREE PROGRAM HAS A CO-OP, INTERNSHIP, WORK EXPERIENCE OR PRACTICUM OPPORTUNITY ATTACHED

RESEARCH CENTRES RELATED TO FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHY AGING, ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE, LITERACY AND CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

A LEADER IN DISTANCE EDUCATION, WITH 190 COURSES (UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE), 10 COMPLETE PROGRAMS AND FOUR GRADUATE PROGRAMS OFFERED ONLINE AND AT A DISTANCE

OVER \$2.08 MILLION EARNED BY STUDENTS IN RESEARCH POSITIONS OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS

EACH YEAR, HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM MORE THAN \$3 MILLION IN MSVU SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

AVERAGE CLASS SIZE OF 23 -NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AS BEING AMONGST THE LOWEST IN CANADA



### **MSVU CO-OP IN ACTION**

#### **Co-op Process Loop**

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a partnership between the employer, the student, and the university. This partnership has benefits for everyone: the employer receives the latest theories and fresh ideas from the university, who in turn gets practical input from the workplace, and the student has the opportunity to experience the two as an integrated whole.

Curious to know what that looks like in action? This is how MSVU's WIL programs typically work:



# **Students Start WIL Component of their Programs**

Students begin the process of securing a work term. For public relations and tourism & hospitality management students, co-op is mandatory. For business administration students, co-op is optional. Students in arts and science programs have the option to do one paid internship.



#### **Employers Post WIL Opportunities**

Employers contact the MSVU Co-op Office to post work term positions. The MSVU co-op program has students working year-round, so employers can post jobs for January – April, May – August and September – December. Jobs must be related to MSVU fields of study, full-time, paid and a minimum of 13 consecutive weeks.



# **Students Apply to Jobs in an Open Competition**

All the WIL jobs we receive are posted in our online job portal, Career Connects. Summer job postings start in January, fall job postings start in May and winter job postings start in September. Students apply to jobs that interest them with a cover letter, resume and reference list.



#### **Employers Interview Students**

Employers select the students they want to interview and conduct interviews on campus, virtually or at the employer's location. Employers then rank students that they would like to hire. Employers are not required to rank students who wouldn't be a fit for the position.



## Work Term Concludes and Return to Study

The work term ends with the student returning to full-time studies to apply their practical learning to their studies. For internship students, this marks the end of their WIL experience. Co-op students will embark on the WIL process until they complete all three co-op work terms.

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#### **Evaluations**

Halfway through the work term, a Co-op Coordinator meets with the student and employer to assess the progress of the student. At the end of the work term, the employer receives an online final evaluation to complete. While these are formal touchpoints with the Co-op Office, we are regularly in contact with employers and students and always available to meet throughout the term.



#### **Work Term Commences**

The student begins their four-month work term with the employer. Over the course of the work term, students benefit from learning in a constructive, practical mentorship environment. Employers benefit from getting a fresh perspective and the opportunity to mentor an emerging professional.



#### **Students Receive Offers**

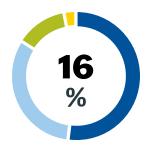
Students receive offers from the organizations that ranked them and can accept or decline offers. Once a student accepts a position, a work term hiring confirmation is sent to the employer and student, and the employer completes all standard paperwork they would complete for routine hiring.

# **OUR PROGRAM IN 2023**

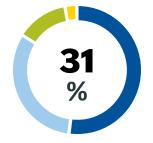
### 157 STUDENTS COMPLETED WORK TERMS IN 2023



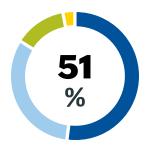
Arts & Science (2% of WIL at MSVU)



**Business Administration** (16% of WIL at MSVU)



Public Relations (31% of WIL at MSVU)



Tourism & Hospitality Management (51% of WIL at MSVU)

Where they worked:

#### Where they worked:





Non-profit 1 (33%)



**Provincial** Government **Agency** 1 (33%)

#### Where they worked:



**Energy** 

3 (11%)

Non-profit 3 (11%)









Technology 1 (4%)

표



2 (8%)





#### Where they worked:











































### **SALARIES AND GEOGRAPHY**

Average salaries for Public Relations, Business Administration, and Tourism & Hospitality Management programs (for work terms completed in 2023)

#### **Business Administration**

Average hourly: \$18.75 Range hourly: \$15.00 - \$25.50

#### **Public Relations**

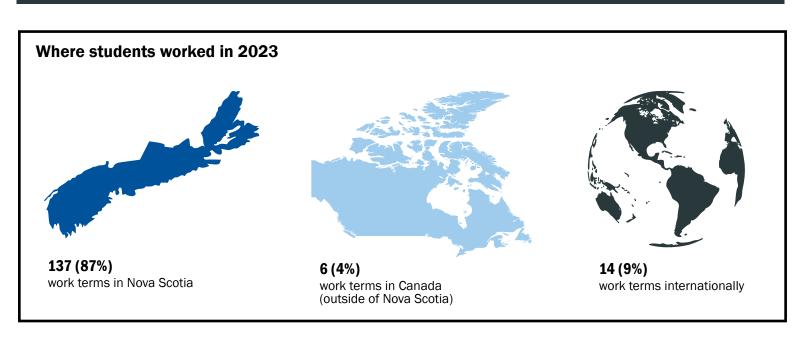
Average hourly: \$19.20 Range hourly: \$15.00 - \$23.85

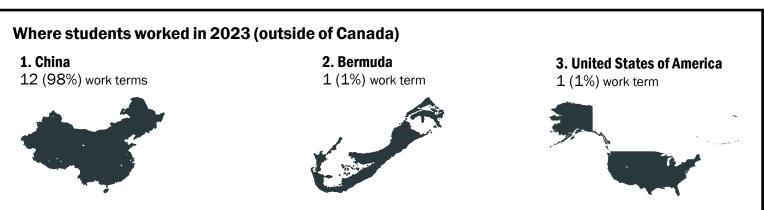
#### **Tourism & Hospitality Management**

Average hourly: \$15.85 Range hourly: \$14.50 - \$18.00

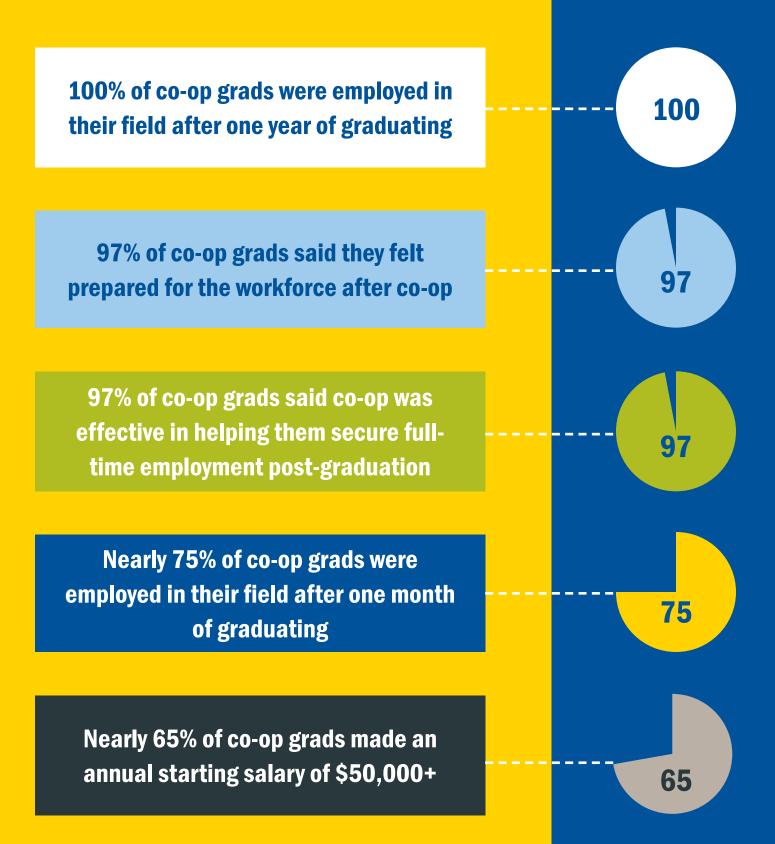
### \$1.53 million

earned by co-op, work experience and internship students in 2023 (based on 16 week work terms; 35 hours per week)





## **CO-OP GRADUATE STATISTICS**



In November 2023, the Department of Communication Studies and the Co-op Office celebrated the installation of a new history wall that illustrates significant communication studies and co-op milestones.

The COMM Studies & Co-op History Wall is a legacy piece to celebrate MSVU's 150th anniversary.

# **COMM Studies** & Co-op **History Wall**

#### 1977—Bachelor of Public Relations **Program Introduced**

MSVU became the first Canadian university to establish a professional degree in public relations. For decades, the MSVU BPR was the only Bachelor of Public Relations degree in Canada and today remains a leader in university-level public relations education.



#### 1979—Co-operative Education Begins at MSVU

The first co-op program launched at MSVU for business administration students. The program became the first nationally accredited co-op program in the Maritime Provinces.



In recognition of the 20th anniversary of the MSVU co-op program, the MSVU Co-op Student of the Year Award was launched. The award recognizes students' academic achievements, community involvement, contributions to co-op employers and the impact co-op has had on personal and professional development.



#### 2002—Co-op Becomes Mandatory for all Bachelor of Public Relations **Students**

Co-op became a mandatory component for the public relations program. All PR students gain relevant work experience, develop job search skills, build their professional confidence and gain a competitive edge when looking for a full-time job following graduation.



#### 1980—Co-op Offered to Public Relations **Students**

The co-op program expanded to include a co-op option for Bachelor of Public Relations students. Students applied public relations theory and skills taught in the classroom to practical work environments. Students also gained one year of relevant work experience prior to graduation with companies across Canada



#### **1981**— First Graduating Class in the Bachelor of Public **Relations Program**

The first graduating class of the Bachelor of Public Relations degree convocated in May 1981.



#### 2006—Master of Public Relations and Master of Arts Public Relations (later Master of Arts Communication) Graduate Programs Introduced

Building on the strong foundation of the Bachelor of Public Relations program, graduate level studies in public relations were developed to address a gap in professional education for Canadian public relations scholars, researchers, teachers and leaders.



### 2009—MSVU Co-op Employer of the Year Award Introduced

In recognition of the 30th anniversary of the MSVU co-op program, the MSVU Co-op Employer of the Year Award was established. The selection criteria includes consideration of the work environment, leadership and mentorship, and the supervisor's demonstrated support of student learning.



#### **2010**—Department Name Changes to Communication Studies

The change in department name from Department of Public Relations to Department of Communication Studies signified a move to broaden the department's definition of communication and offer both graduate and undergraduate programs in professional communication as well as communication studies.



#### 2012–CPRS Recognition through Pathways Program

The Bachelor of Public Relations program and the Master of Public Relations degree programs received recognition through the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) Pathways to the Profession program. The Pathways program is the first Canadian recognition program for post-secondary level education in public relations.



The Major in Communication in the Bachelor of Arts degree introduced a multi-disciplinary approach to communication studies at MSVU. The program was designed to meet the needs of students interested in communication, grounded in a foundation of communication and media theory, research and ethics.





#### 2015—McCain Centre Opens

May 29, 2015 marked the opening of the new Margaret Norrie McCain Centre for Teaching, Learning and Research. The McCain Centre was the first building on a Canadian university campus dedicated to the accomplishments of women. The Department of Communication Studies and Co-operative Education relocated to the McCain Centre. Previously, the departments were located in Marywood until the mid 1990's and then the Seton Annex building until 2015.

### 2018—Oakley Endowment Funds CPRS Memberships for all Public Relations Students and the Digital Media Consulting Agency Project

The Ivy and Neil Oakley endowment allowed the Department of Communication Studies to provide CPRS student memberships to all Bachelor of Public Relations students throughout the duration of their program at MSVU. The gift ensures that BPR students have access to important networking, mentorship and educational opportunities as members of this professional association. The endowment also provides funding for special projects like the Digital Media Consulting Agency (DMCA).

DMCA is a student-run project aimed at giving back to the community through provision of digital media services to non-profit organizations. In 2018, the inaugural non-profit client for this project was Hope Blooms, a local social enterprise that engages youth to become change agents through innovative agricultural and culinary programs.

### 2023–First Indigenous Communication Course Offered

In June 2023, the first Indigenous communication course was offered. The course, Indigenous Media Literacy, was taught by Trina Roache, an award-winning journalist, assistant professor in the School of Journalism, Writing and Publishing at the University of King's College, and a member of Glooscap First Nation. The course allowed students to critically analyze the representations of Indigenous peoples in the media and explore ways to reimagine a decolonized media landscape.

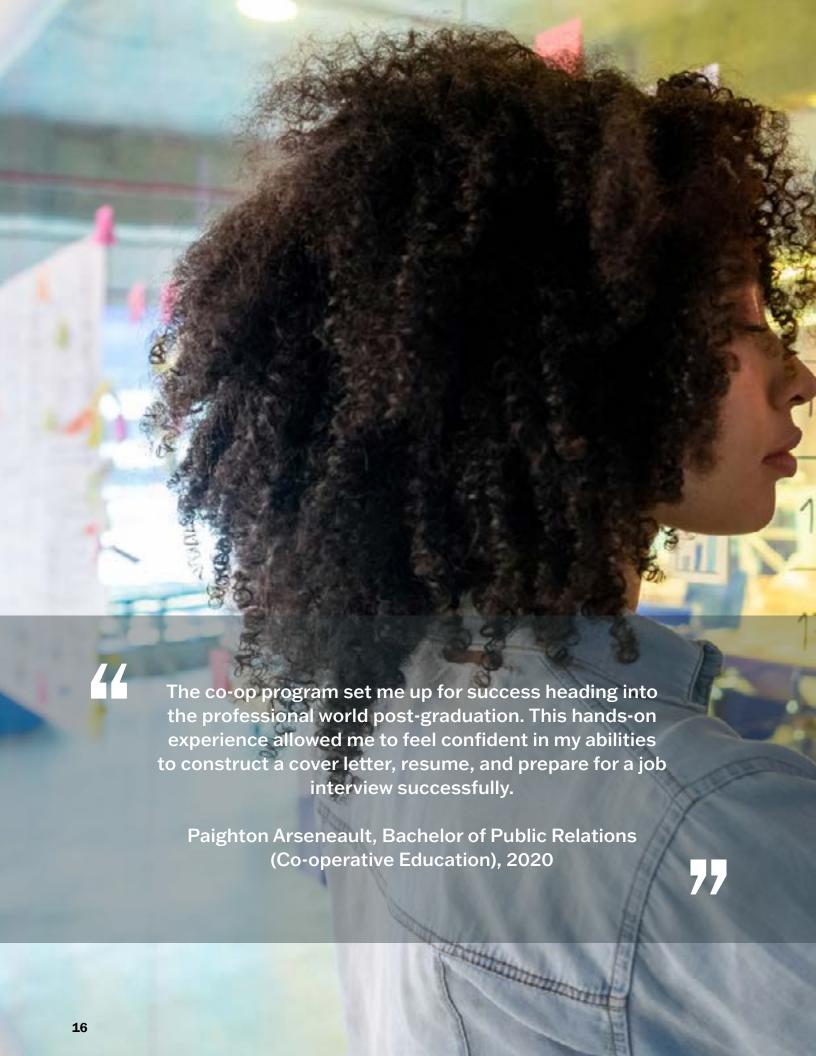




#### 2023—MSVU 150th Anniversary

The COMM Studies & Co-op History Wall is a legacy piece to celebrate MSVU's 150th anniversary. Since 1873, MSVU has been challenging the status quo, offering innovative programs and preparing students to be global citizens. We are proud to be a part of this work.







## **CO-OP STUDENTS OF THE YEAR**

The MSVU Co-op Student of the Year Award was instituted in 1999 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the MSVU Co-op Program. The selection criteria includes academic achievement, community involvement, contribution to the employer, and the impact co-operative education has had on personal and professional development.

### **Business Administration**



#### **Matthew Lantz**

Nominated by: Moira Nordqvist, Master Promotions

"Matthew was the ultimate team player, and multi-tasker with not only our company, Master Promotions, but with our sister company, Global Conventions Services. He did many research projects that helped our bottom line. He also completely revolutionized our marketing tool kit for exhibitors to use and modernized our website. Matthew created and sent hundreds of emails to lists upwards of 20,000 people with accuracy for our 30+ events, always using different layouts to ensure our look was clean and updated. This led directly to the success of the events and to the goal of bringing visitors to our events. He brought his experience with our sister company to the Master Promotions realm with increased branding opportunities, which led to increased sponsorship revenue!"

### **Tourism & Hospitality Management**



### Thuy Bao Tran (Ivy) Pham

Nominated by: Cullen Johnson, Best Western Plus Chocolate Lake Hotel

"Ivy has raised the bar for our customer service standards and expectations. She has brought forward suggestions, asked questions and is consistently referenced in guest's positive feedback. We frequently hear from our guests that Ivy is kind, positive, a smiling face and excellent in her role as Guest Services Agent. She has improved our customer service model and masters all tasks assigned to her. She goes above and beyond in ensuring that her fellow teammates are confident in their daily tasks and is always willing to lend a hand. Her progression from learning to teaching others was fast. Her ability to quickly learn and then turn around and teach the same process is an incredible asset to our business. She handles complex guest situations with ease and is a reliable and dependable member of our team in any situation, from a guest complaint to a medical emergency."



### **CO-OP EMPLOYERS OF THE YEAR**

The MSVU Co-op Employer of the Year Award was established in 2009 to recognize the important contributions of our co-op employer partners and mark the 30th anniversary of co-operative education at Mount Saint Vincent University. We are pleased to acknowledge co-op employers each year who have supported co-operative education at MSVU by demonstrating commitment to the program and providing excellent work term opportunities for students. These partnerships are critical for the success of our program.

The selection criteria included consideration of the work environment, leadership and mentorship, the supervisor's demonstrated support of student learning, and the employer's longstanding commitment to co-op.



# **Business Administration Employer of the Year – BDO Canada LLP**

**Lori MacMillan, Manager, Financial Reporting & Insights, BDO Canada LLP**Nominated by: Brenna MacDonald

"Through our bi-weekly check-in meetings, Lori demonstrated effective leadership and served as a mentor, aiding in my personal and professional growth. During times of stress, she helped keep my calm by guiding me to take a step back and start from square one to pinpoint the problem together. This approach not only addressed immediate challenges, but also contributed significantly to my overall development at BDO.

Extending beyond the co-op program experience, Lori played a special role in my professional journey. She guided me through the prerequisite requirements for the CPA program, addressing specific needs and fostering a commitment to long-term success beyond our immediate work scope. With Lori as my manager, I can honestly say that I received a great experience. I now work for BDO full-time as a Junior Accountant, where I attribute much of my positive experience to Lori's mentorship. I observe how she supports each and every student she takes on and I am confident they are receiving the same level of care and guidance. I am genuinely grateful to have Lori as a continuing source for support through my future endeavours."



### Public Relations Employer of the Year – Communications Nova Scotia

Sara Newman, Manager, Marketing, Communications Nova Scotia Skana Gee, Communication Advisor, Media Services, Communications Nova Scotia Nominated by: Tien Pham

"Leadership manifests in various forms, and in Skana's case, it was evident in her unwavering calmness in every situation. The media environment, known for its fast pace and meticulous attention to detail, can become particularly demanding, especially during high-workload periods like the House of Assembly meetings. Skana's exceptional leadership in the Media Service team shone through during such times. She navigated challenges with composure, professionalism, ensuring that everything remained on track. I gained valuable insights into leadership from her patience and ability to handle pressure. On the other hand, Sara exhibited a different but equally effective leadership style—strong and direct. While this may seem contrasting to Skana's approach, both were adept at achieving perfection in every detail while keeping sight of the bigger picture. Sara's bold leadership was particularly essential in the rigorous environment of marketing for the provincial government.

Working with both Skana and Sara taught me the importance of knowing when to be fast and when to be deliberate, and how to take the lead in the long-term. This experience significantly contributed to my professional growth."

#### HOTEL HALIFAX

# **Tourism & Hospitality Management Employer of the Year – Hotel Halifax**

**Tanja Hupfer, Housekeeping Supervisor, Hotel Halifax** Nominated by: Trang Nguyen

"Hotel Halifax is a very friendly workplace. All departments have well-built connections with the others. People respect and support each other, and we all together work hard in order to provide superb services to our valued guests.

Tanja was the new housekeeping supervisor in the hotel, but she did a good job in managing a team of housekeeping staff. She was an active listener. When anyone experienced difficulties, she was willing to listen and give advice. She always checked on the new staff and supported them when they needed her help. When she talked to the staff, she showed that she really cared for us. She always asked me how my studies were going and even wished me luck when she knew I was close to graduation. She always encouraged me to do a great job in my studies as well as at work. It made me feel very comfortable when working with her."



### **CO-OP SPOTLIGHT**

# From student to supervisor: one student's upward journey at Future Inns Hotel By: Raina DeBrouwer

The first thing Fei Xie noticed when his plane landed in Halifax from Yinchuan, China was that it was cold. The temperature in Yinchuan never falls below zero degrees Celsius, so Halifax's cool fall evenings surprised him.

Fei hadn't known much about Canada before he came, but the opportunity to study here came up through his university's articulation agreement with Canadian universities. The Bachelor of Tourism & Hospitality program at Xi'an International University offers a 2+2 route – meaning Fei could finish his studies at a qualifying university in Canada. Fei's choices were the University of Prince Edward Island or Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). Fei's only connection to Canada was an instructor he studied with at an English language school who had lived in Halifax.



Fei Xie, Bachelor of Tourism & Hospitality Management, MSVU, 2023

"He told me about Halifax, how it was a small, clean city with very friendly people. I decided that that's where I would go," said Fei.

That was all Fei knew when he decided to embark on his first adventure outside of China. Luckily, his first impression of Halifax – and of the Tourism & Hospitality Management program at MSVU – were good ones. While Fei had studied many elements of tourism at Xi'an, he was most excited to explore the management components of the MSVU curriculum.

"One of my goals is to start a business in the future, and this degree feels like a blend of both tourism and management. I was pleased with the course content," Fei said.

While the coursework came naturally to Fei, he knew that studying wasn't the only new experience he'd be embarking on in Canada. As part of the MSVU Tourism & Hospitality Management program, Fei was required to complete two co-op work terms. Although he had worked part-time in China as a waiter, this would be Fei's first foray into a Canadian workplace. He decided that applying to be a room attendant at Future Inns would be a good start – a position that he purposefully selected because of the introductory nature of it.

"I knew I needed both work and life experience in Canada. I didn't want to overwhelm myself with a job that would be extremely difficult, because I was already facing the normal challenges with acclimatizing to Canada. My priorities were learning the Canadian culture, familiarizing myself with a Canadian workplace, and improving my English. I knew this job would let me focus on those things."

While Fei might have selected this job to learn the basics, it was apparent very quickly to the Future Inns Housekeeping Manager, Marie Aucoin, that he had potential to do more. She had worked with many students over the years, but none rose to prominence in her mind quite as quickly as Fei.

"It was clear very quickly on the job that Fei was an exceptional employee. His rooms were excellent and he showed a real passion for the industry, so we soon gave him other responsibilities. Before his co-op ended, Fei was a shift lead and was opening the housekeeping department in the mornings. This never happens. I went to the owner of company saying we needed to keep this young man," said Marie.

Fei proved himself to the extent that Future Inns offered him a Housekeeping Supervisor role for his second co-op. Returning to the Future Inns wasn't a hard decision for Fei to make – he loved the environment there. Marie and his other two supervisors were committed to mentoring him, not just supervising. Fei also realized that the exposure he was getting at the Future Inns wasn't likely to be replicated if he moved to another hotel.

Not to say that the transition from Room Attendant to Housekeeping Supervisor was an easy one. Fei hadn't had any practical experience in managing people. He also felt that his English-speaking skills weren't sufficient to lead a team and coordinate with other departments. It was then that Fei decided to prioritize speaking English by reading English articles and watching all media with English subtitles. He also approached his supervisors to ask about management tips. Fei ultimately decided to approach any management challenges from the perspective of someone who wants to one day run a business.

"I've always thought: if this were my business that was having this problem, how would I solve it? I'm always trying to think of ways to move the business forward and fix problems."

Luckily, Fei's former coworkers-turned-subordinates took his new position in stride. "It's very easy to manage the room attendants in this role. They are friendly and hardworking, and they understand that my motivations are to serve the hotel. They trust me."

Marie echoed this sentiment about the team atmosphere under Fei's leadership.

"Fei was able to navigate things well. It's his quiet demeanor. He keeps busy. The room attendants know that he's working alongside them and working hard. It would be different if he was giving orders from behind a desk, but Fei's always been hands on."

Now that Fei has completed his two co-op work terms and recently graduated from MSVU, he's working as a full-time housekeeping supervisor at Future Inns while cross training in other departments and keeping his eye on the future.

"In the short term, I want to get my permanent residency," said Fei. "Staying in Canada wasn't always my plan, but I decided to do it after my first co-op. I like it here. The Canadian culture, the closeness with nature and the social element."

Fei can see the tourism industry flourishing in Atlantic Canada, and feels excited about the opportunities available to him. Marie is similarly excited about what's coming up in tourism.

"COVID hit everyone differently, but it was particularly scary for the tourism industry, with lots of unknowns. Luckily, the industry has rebounded. People are happy to be travelling and things are moving towards normality. One thing that's definitely changed is that staffing isn't taken for granted anymore. When you get someone like Fei, you want to make sure they'll stay."

When Fei is asked for advice for students starting their first co-op jobs, he advises them to be committed: "Whatever you do for school or work, be committed. Improvement takes time so be patient as well. Just make sure you commit fully."

Marie has high hopes for Fei. "His career will go anywhere he wants it to go, and we will support him in whatever he wants to do. He absolutely has the ability to start his business. Whatever he sets his mind to, he will make it happen. There is no ego with him, there is positivity. He wants to do the work and do it well."

Marie Aucoin and Future Inns were awarded New Tourism & Hospitality Management Co-op Employer of the Year in 2022 by MSVU. The selection criteria included consideration of the work environment, leadership and mentorship, the supervisor's demonstrated support of student learning, and the employer's commitment to co-op. Over the last five years of hiring MSVU co-op students, Future Inns has demonstrated their exceptional commitment to student growth and learning.

Fei's experience at Future Inns, while unique in certain aspects, shows just how far one can take their co-op journey with a high degree of dedication and excellent mentorship around them. Fei was voted MSVU Tourism and Hospitality Management Co-op Student of the Year in 2022, and we're excited to see where his career takes him going forward.



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