

# AGRICOLA

FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF DALHOUSIE'S FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE

SPRING 2025

**Introducing  
Dr. Heather Bruce,  
Dean and Campus  
Principal**





**New to Dal** is our flagship welcome event for new AC students held over Labour Day weekend each fall. The AC welcomes students from across Canada and beyond each fall, as they start their academic journey. Help Student Affairs and the Faculty of Agriculture make a lasting impact on the student experience, starting on day one!

Reach out to **Gillian Hatch (Class '13)**, [gillian.hatch@dal.ca](mailto:gillian.hatch@dal.ca) to learn about sponsorship options for the September 2025 New to Dal program.



### How do you want your AGRICOLA?

In an effort to be more fiscally and environmentally responsible, we wish to only mail print copies of the AGRICOLA to those who would like it.

Please send an email to [ag alumni@dal.ca](mailto:ag alumni@dal.ca) to let us know whether you would like to receive the magazine in the mail or via email.

**LEFT:** Barley accessories, the iconic AC wool blankets, winter accessories and more are now available to purchase online at the new **Barley Boutique**. Visit [dal.ca/agalumni](http://dal.ca/agalumni) or simply search "Barley Boutique" in your browser to learn more.

## AGRICOLA

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**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF  
AGRICULTURE**

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Nick Pearce, Dalhousie University

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Message from the editor	2
Alumni Association	3
In memory	22
Donor spotlight	33
Research	34
In the news	35
Look who's talking	36

## ATHLETICS FEATURE

Langille Athletic Centre renovated	16
Rams Athletics 2024-25 achievements	18
Support for student-athletes	20

## EVENTS

Blue & Gold Awards 2024	24
Reunions	26
Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame	28

## AROUND & ABOUT

Ronda Bellefontaine (Class of '85)	10
Janelle Frail (Class of '03)	12
Jon Raymond Dykstra (Class of '09)	14

## COVER STORY

### 4 Introducing Dr. Heather Bruce

Dr. Heather Bruce joined Dalhousie as Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Principal of the Agricultural Campus on September 16, 2024. Learn more about her and her first few months on the job in this issue.





## Colette Wyllie

Editor, AGRICOLA

Alumni Engagement Manager, Faculty of Agriculture

Class of 2010

Greetings, Aggies!

Spring – a time for new beginnings, optimism, and growth. These are all things we are seeing and feeling on campus, and I hope this edition of the AGRICOLA conveys that.

We were very excited to welcome Dr. Heather Bruce as the new dean and campus principal in September 2024. Dr. Bruce has a strong background in agriculture and is settling in well. She has spent much of her time since arriving on a “listening tour” – meeting with various stakeholders to gather their feedback about the Faculty of Agriculture – which will help to formulate our next strategic plan. Later in 2025 and 2026, we hope to get back to our typical schedule of Dean’s Receptions, giving alumni in key markets an opportunity to meet Dr. Bruce. In the meantime, you can get to know more about her in this edition’s cover story, starting on page 4.

I hope you’ll also take the time to get to know some of the alumni featured in this edition, including Around & About subjects Ronda Bellefontaine, Janelle Frail, and Jon Raymond Dykstra, as well as Look Who’s Talking subject Dr. Jolene Vermeulen. All are making use of their AC education and contributing to the industry in diverse and interesting ways.

Also in this issue is a spotlight on athletics at the Agricultural Campus. As many readers know, athletics play a vital role in shaping the student experience, and that is especially true at Dal AC. There has been much investment in athletics and recreation on campus of late. Between long-overdue updates to the Langille Athletic Centre, strong performances by our varsity and club sports teams, and financial support for student-athletes, it’s a great time to be a Ram. Read more starting on page 16.

We’ve had a successful lineup of events since the last issue, including a few new offerings such as Innovation in the Field, an event at the Nova Scotia Stampede, and a Women in STEM networking event. Regular events including Community Day, Community Dinners, the Blue & Gold Awards, class reunions and Homecoming were part of the schedule as well. See photos and details about all of these and more starting on page 24.

Keep an eye on our website, [dal.ca/agalumni](https://dal.ca/agalumni), for an updated listing of alumni events, and look for us at industry-related events near you.

I hope you enjoy this edition – as always, if you have any comments, please send them along. We love to hear from you!

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## Alumni Association Board of Directors

The Alumni Association's Board of Directors is made up of nine keen individuals with varied experiences at the Faculty of Agriculture and in the agriculture industry. Get to know them below.



**BRIAN CROUSE, Chair**  
**Class of '75**

Now retired, Brian Crouse is serving his second term on the board of directors, and currently serves as chair. Following 10 years with the NS Department of Agriculture, AC grads from 1986 and later will remember his varied career with Student Services. Brian enjoys serving on the

Alumni Association's board as it provides the opportunity to keep connected with campus, alumni, and the students and families he worked with over the years.



**MARK ROSE, Vice Chair**  
**Class of '06 and '09**

Mark grew up in Northeastern Newfoundland and graduated from NSAC with an animal science degree in 2006. In 2009 he graduated with an MSc (Agr) focused on ruminant nutrition. Mark works with Lely North America as Regional Development Manager for English-

Canada. He and his wife Beth (Class of '07) live in East Hants, NS.



**BREAGH ROSS, Secretary**  
**Class of '15**

Bre graduated from Dal AC in 2015 with a BSc (Agr) in environmental sciences. Throughout her studies, she was actively involved in campus life, including being captain of the Woodsmen team, social coordinator of Chapman House, and Off Campus president. Since 2015 she has

been working with Farm Credit Canada and is currently located in Kentville, NS.



**ROBYN MCCALLUM, Past Chair**  
**Class of '13 and '17**

Robyn graduated from Dal AC in 2013 with a BSc (Agr) in animal science and obtained her PhD (biology) through Dalhousie University. Throughout her studies, she was actively involved in student government, including serving as president of the Dalhousie Agricultural Students'

Association for three years. Robyn is based in northeastern New Brunswick and grows crops and exhibits Belgian horses with her family. Robyn currently works with the Government of New Brunswick.



**SHELLY JUURLINK, Board Member**  
**Class of '01 and '04**

Shelly graduated from NSAC in 2001 with a BSc (Agr), in 2004 with an MSc (Agr) in animal science and in 2010 with a Co-op Management Certificate (CMC) from the Schulich School of Business at York University. Over the years, she has held a variety of agricultural related

positions working with farmers in various places across Canada and in other parts of the world. Currently, Shelly and her husband, Perry, live in Fall River, NS with their two children.



**ROBERT LARSEN, Board Member**  
**Class of '21**

Robert graduated from Dal AC in 2021 with a BSc (Agr) in agricultural business. Throughout his studies, he was actively involved in many different aspects of campus life; most notably on the judging team and serving three terms as vice president finance and operations, including

a semester as interim president, of the Dalhousie Agricultural Students' Association. He farms alongside his family on their beef cattle feedlot and agri-services operation in PEI. Robert currently volunteers with five boards of directors, in addition to serving as president of the PEI Young Farmers Association and as vice chair of 4-H Canada.



**DALE MCISAAC, Board Member**  
**Class of '73**

Dale was raised on a potato and beef farm in Florenceville, New Brunswick. He graduated from NSAC in 1973 and from Macdonald College of McGill University in 1975. In his career, Dale has worked for government and private industry in Atlantic Canada as seed

potato specialist, horticulturist, and maple and wild blueberry extension specialist. Dale is now retired and lives in Truro, NS.



**GRANT MCMILLAN, Board Member**  
**Class of '02**

Grant graduated from NSAC in 2002 with a BSc (Agr) in plant science. Originally from PEI, Grant now calls Abbotsford, BC home. Following graduation, Grant began work with Integrated Crop Management Services Inc (ICMS), where he has been employed since,

taking over as regional manager at the Abbotsford research station in 2008. Grant has also been a member of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants since 2008 and was elected to the executive board in 2017, after which he served terms as president-elect and president.



**GENEVE (GARDNER) NEWCOMBE, Board Member**  
**Class of '86**

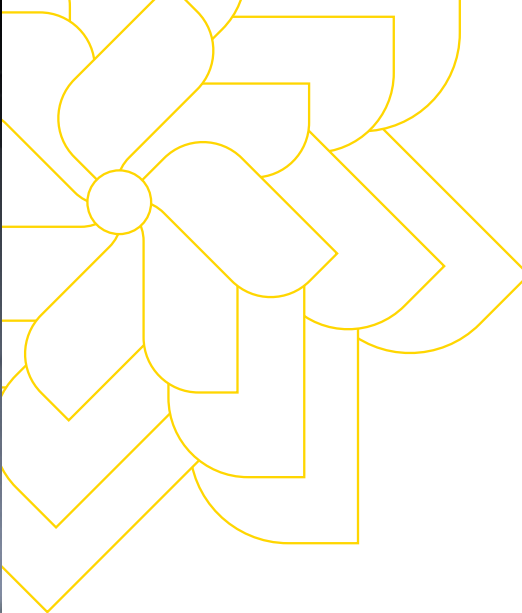
Geneve graduated from NSAC in 1986 with a BSc (Agr) in animal science. Geneve and her husband Craig (Class of '86) reside in Port Williams, NS where they operate Cornwallis Farms Ltd along with Craig's brother Brian and wife, Edna, both NSAC graduates. Geneve and Craig have three

adult children, one of which is also an NSAC graduate.



# Introducing Dr. Heather Bruce Dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Principal, Agricultural Campus





**Dr. Heather Bruce joined Dalhousie as the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Principal of the Agricultural Campus on September 16, 2024. She brings with her a strong background in agriculture and academia, a calm and thoughtful disposition, and a hunger to learn as much as possible about her new workplace, region and community.**

Dr. Bruce came to the Faculty of Agriculture from the University of Alberta, where she was chair of the Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science and professor of Carcass and Meat Science. She taught courses on livestock growth, meat science, and communication in science, and was the scientific lead for the Agri-Food Discovery Place, a multipurpose research facility on the university's south campus. Her research focused on investigating how animal production and postmortem carcass factors affect meat quality and how objective measurement technology can be used to assess carcass and meat quality. During her tenure at the U of A, she held over \$8 million in research funding, including an NSERC CREATE, published over 80 scientific manuscripts, and supervised over 20 graduate students.

Prior to joining the University of Alberta, Dr. Bruce was the External Research Manager at Maple Leaf Foods Agresearch farm in Burford, Ontario, and before that was Senior Scientist and Muscle Food Quality Section Leader at CSIRO Australia.

Dr. Bruce received her PhD from the University of Alberta and her MSc and BSc (Honours Agriculture) from the University of Guelph. She grew up on a 400-acre beef farm in Smith Falls, Ontario, down the road from her grandparents' dairy farm. A 4-H kid growing up, Dr. Bruce values her rural roots and upbringing.

As the first semester of her appointment came to a close, we sat down with Dr. Bruce to talk about her leadership style, what brought her to Nova Scotia, and her vision for the Faculty of Agriculture.



**AGRICOLA:** What was it that attracted you to the opportunity to lead the Faculty of Agriculture/Agricultural Campus as the dean and principal?

**HB:** This is a question I've been asked a lot, starting with my interview! I was attracted to the Agricultural Campus in large part because of the on-campus farm, which told me that students get the opportunity to truly live what they study here. I think Dalhousie has the ideal agricultural faculty. Along with the farm we have both new and established faculty members, and overall just great instructors that cover the breadth of agriculture in Atlantic Canada. I'm excited to be part of that.

I also felt comfortable with the dual-focus nature of the position. This isn't a typical dean position, where the focus is solely academic leadership, but a combination of dean and campus principal, where there is an additional focus on infrastructure and surrounding community. My role at the University of Alberta had many similarities – my department had four divisions and roughly 900 students, and I was responsible for the building that housed us. I felt I would be a good fit for this unique role and that's what led me to pursue the opportunity.

I was also excited by the idea of working in a small town with a strong sense of community and rural values.

**AGRICOLA:** What is it that excites you most about the Faculty of Agriculture?

**HB:** The future excites me about the Faculty of Agriculture. We have so much opportunity here. I know we can amplify what we do here and and share our excitement about agriculture with the next generation(s). A lot of our future students are going to be from urban environments, students who haven't grown up in agricultural settings, and I'm excited about engaging them in what makes agriculture so exciting.

We know people want to have opportunities to be involved in meaningful ways. We know that they want to grow things, we know they want to engage with animals, we know they want to experience the outdoors through land stewardship. And I think if we let these students know that we're here, and that there are careers for them, and that they're welcome here on our campus, I think the future is going to be very bright for us.

## The First Months

Wondering how Dr. Bruce spent her first few months getting acquainted? Check out some photo highlights!

**JULY**



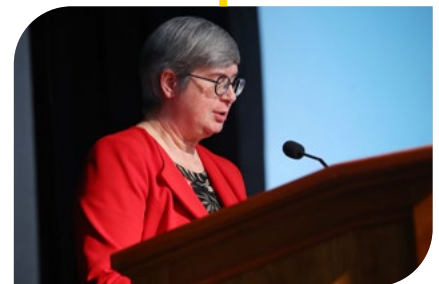
Experiencing the full package during Community Day at the Agricultural Campus during a house-hunting trip to Truro from Edmonton.

**SEPTEMBER**



Participating in Innovation in the Field, a first-time event held as part of Dal's inaugural Innovation Week during her first week of work.

**OCTOBER**



Celebrating the contributions made by the 2024 Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame inductees.



Showing a cow during College Royal festivities. Dr. Bruce is no stranger to agricultural showmanship, having gone through the 4-H program.



**AGRICOLA:** Agriculture impacts everyone, but those who aren't directly connected to the industry often don't realize this. How do we make agriculture more relevant?

**HB:** I think we have to remind people that they need a farmer three times a day. I think we have to remind them what agriculture is, and I think we can do that by connecting people to agriculture through food. I would like to explore the possibility of a food science program for our campus.

**AGRICOLA:** Do you feel we have a responsibility to help the wider community understand the importance of agriculture? How do you see us accomplishing this?

**HB:** I do think we have a responsibility to keep agriculture at the forefront for the region. And how are we going to accomplish that? By being present whenever and wherever we can and by engaging with the wider community both in person and online. We need to be visible at community events and maintain a strong social media presence. It may mean that we have to do a lot of things for a lot of

people, but I think having a strong brand will help us with that, and that's something that we're working on right now.

I also think that working with schools is vital. We need to engage young people early so that they get a chance to understand the breadth of agriculture and the wide array of careers that are available to them in the ag sector.

**AGRICOLA:** What do you see as priorities for the Faculty of Agriculture and Agricultural Campus in the months and years ahead?

**HB:** Right now, and I suspect for the next few years, one of our major priorities will be supporting recruitment by getting our brand out there and getting people to think about Dalhousie as an agricultural institution. I think lots of people know we exist, but they don't know how good we are. That comes back to messaging and marketing, which is actively underway now, all the way from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

Another priority will be to review and assess our program offerings. We may find it's time to shed some programs that haven't been successful, and time to bring on programs that we



Celebrating the achievements of three deserving AC alumni at the annual Blue & Gold Awards.



Celebrating the holiday season alongside DASA at the annual campus tree lighting event.



Meeting with alumni, including Alumni Association vice chair Mark Rose, at the Atlantic Farm Mechanization Show.

## NOVEMBER



Speaking with alumni attending Homecoming festivities, including Class of 1974 member Anne Forbes.



Addressing Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture members during the 129<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting.

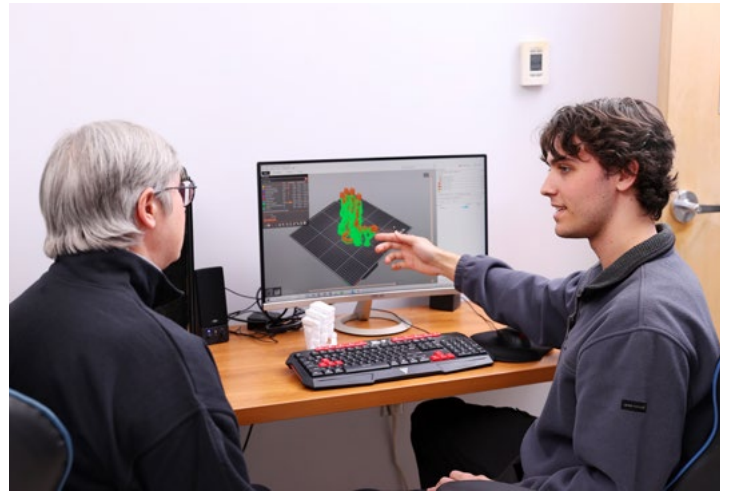
## JANUARY



Meeting with local elected officials, including MLA for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook- Salmon River Dave Ritcey.

## Five fun facts about Dr. Heather Bruce

- 1** She is the oldest of four children, with three younger brothers.
- 2** She lived in Brisbane, Australia for nearly 10 years, and holds Australian citizenship.
- 3** She, her mother, and her grandfather were all members of the same 4-H club at different times: the Leeds County Calf Club in Ontario.
- 4** She maintains a working lab at the University of Alberta, which currently has two graduate students and a research associate.
- 5** She is a voracious reader, and chooses to make use of her frequent travel time reading as much as she can.







know will prepare students for viable and desired career paths, that would help us attract new students and increase our population on campus. Increasing enrollment is a huge priority.

And of course, we will also continue to engage actively with our alumni and our industry community. One of our major strengths is our support from industry and alumni, and I want to see that continue. I think recognizing the history of this campus is important, and we'll look for ways to do that as we move forward.

**AGRICOLA:** The Faculty of Agriculture is one of the only Dalhousie faculties to provide diploma programming. What are your views on this?

**HB:** I'm very supportive of diploma programming. Diplomas are really impactful to both industry and the local community, and I think that's a really important part of providing continuing education. Degree programs aren't for everyone, but I do think there's a place for everyone in post-secondary education, and I think it's important that we continue to make these types of programs available for that reason. That being said, diplomas can also offer a gateway to further post-secondary education for those who wish to continue.

I think there is also room for additional diploma programs that can serve the agricultural community.

**AGRICOLA:** What guiding principles do you bring to your work?

**HB:** My number one guiding principle is to never say no to an opportunity. I also want to be humane, I want to be kind, and I want

to be understanding. I want to develop people. This isn't about me, it's about everyone else.

**AGRICOLA:** What is one piece of wisdom you try to bring to your work every day?

**HB:** For me, wisdom means understanding the implications of your actions. That's something that I try to bring to the role – to be aware of the implications of my decisions and my actions on people. I try to be as purposeful and intentional as possible.

**AGRICOLA:** What is your favourite way to unwind?

**HB:** I like to kayak and canoe and so I'm looking forward to having more ready access to water in Nova Scotia. I like to go to nice restaurants. I like to just be at home relaxing, watching tv with a cat on my lap, or working in the yard.

**AGRICOLA:** What are your first impressions of living in NS?

**HB:** Nova Scotia is a lovely province. The people are really community-minded. Life doesn't seem to have that frenetic pace you sometimes encounter in other places. It doesn't mean things don't get done – it just means that everyone's not quite so worried about it, which I have to say is quite nice. At the same time, I see the hard work that goes into supporting Nova Scotian communities, including here at the Faculty of Agriculture. My transition here has certainly been made much simpler by the excellent team in place here on campus.



Technology has played an important role in Ronda's career. Although difficult to sum up how much has changed with computers over the last 30 years, the image below, displaying a series of storage devices including floppy disks, CDs, memory sticks, external hard drives and the cloud, represents the growth in storage capacity (and technology overall) required to contain all the information we have created over that time.



## Ronda Bellefontaine

*Class of '85*

When Ronda Bellefontaine found herself tackling house chores instead of barn chores as a teenager on her family's dairy farm in Middle Musquodoboit, NS, she knew that becoming a farmer herself wasn't her calling. What she didn't realize was that this was actually an early indicator of the role she would go on to play in agriculture over the course of her career: providing much-needed business management support to farmers.

"There are some very good farm business managers out there," she said. "Intuitively, farmers know what their financial situation is. However, in my experience, the focus tends to be more on production and production technology, and less on the financial management side. I think farmers can underestimate the value that lies in good record keeping and analysis of their information – financial, production or other."

Ronda did set out on a different path following high school, starting her post-secondary studies in business administration. However, it wasn't long before she felt a pull back to agriculture, and as a result, drawn to agricultural business and economics at NSAC.



"It's interesting to look back now, because I was never someone who had a grand vision of what I wanted to be in my life," she said. "I just followed my nose, and that's how I ended up at NSAC."

Ronda is a member of a special class in AC history – the class of 1985, which was the first cohort to complete the full degree program offered on campus. She recalls completing an intake interview after applying, and at the end of the program, she was one of the first women to cross the stage with a full NSAC degree during Convocation.

She credits the wide range of learning opportunities provided during her studies for setting her on a path to success in her career.

"When I look back, what really stands out for me was the breadth of the program," she explained. "I think I took a course in every discipline: animal science, plant science, engineering, humanities, and of course the core courses. I was interested in everything, so I took as many electives as possible. It wasn't really intentional, it just happened organically."

Ronda's interest in everything would serve her well in the years following. A self-proclaimed generalist, she has worked in most areas of the agriculture industry. Whether in government or industry positions in the early years of her career first in Nova Scotia and then in Prince Edward Island, or when she launched her own business in 2007, being able to speak to all facets of the industry gave her more credibility.

Following graduation, Ronda spent time working with 4-H, the beef industry, in marketing, and in farm business management, which covered a wide range of projects, including supporting farmers in adopting computer and internet-based practices. This is where she found her niche.

In 2007, Ronda took a two-year leave of absence from her position with the PEI Department of Agriculture. Seeing the need for support for financial management on farms, especially in the rapidly changing era of the computer, Ronda launched her own venture to help address this challenge. Like Nobody's Business was born.

"I started out with major project contracts," she explained. "But then I started training people in computerized accounting, and it became clear that lots of farmers didn't have knowledge in accounting. I built up a clientele fairly quickly, and what happened was that many of those clients would just stay with me and I would go back two or three times a year to help them iron out kinks, deal with CRA, or whatever their question was."

As Ronda puts it, she works in a space between bookkeeping and accounting. Like Nobody's Business educates and guides owner-managed, owner-operated businesses in subjects related to the financial management of their operation. This can include setting up computerized record-keeping, helping to understand financial statements, prepping year-end documents for accountants, and more. Ronda takes on the bookkeeping for a few clients as well.

"It's supporting farm owners and managers on the financial side of things," she said. "I don't help them make their decisions, but I help them get the best information about their finances to make good decisions for themselves. I ask lots of probing questions."

Technology has played a huge role in her work.

"I think I was lucky to come through university during the time when computers were being developed," she explained. "Thanks to my professors, who brought in the first computers on campus, I got the opportunity to understand how things worked behind the scenes. If we wanted it to do something for us, we had to write the program. I think that really set me up for success in using computer technology and has allowed me to adapt as the technology has progressed over the years."

Ronda loves her job, but couldn't have predicted it's where she would end up at the start of her career.

"The word entrepreneur wasn't even in my vocabulary," she said. "When I look back now, I can see that I was leaning towards it in the opportunities I took. But I didn't have the confidence, or the network required."

For this reason, Ronda is a big believer in women supporting women.

"I didn't see many examples of women business owners when I began my career," she explained. "The support system and the network weren't there. I think it was definitely more common for men to go into business because the support system had long been there. That's why it's so important for women and men alike to support women in business, and especially startups, so that we can keep growing that network and support future generations of women entrepreneurs."

As Ronda starts to think about retirement, she hopes to find someone to take ownership of her business. As farms continue to grow and new small farms appear, the need for farm financial support is growing, even with the advent of artificial intelligence as an aid.

"Technology is great, but it's just a tool. It's people that make technology work. Artificial intelligence may partially remove the human element, but we cannot let it remove our ability to think and to communicate with each other. It's the people that matter."







# Janelle Frail

*Class of '03*

**Janelle Frail's educational journey at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College more than 20 years ago began her on a path of international environmental advocacy.**

"I've always enjoyed school and was always excited to meet people and learn new things," she explained. "NSAC really opened a lot of doors. There will always be more than one path and sometimes it leads somewhere you never thought of. Just be open to the options."

Janelle grew up in Upper Rawdon and was always interested in nature and the environment.

"It was probably the influence of my dad telling me to turn out the lights to save money but then, you know, the evolution of that to say we're also saving the environment."

Janelle studied environmental sciences while also playing soccer and volleyball.

"There was a lot of science but there was also environmental ethics. That was one course that I really enjoyed, she said. "It was still an evolving sector back then, we didn't even use the words climate change."

Upon graduating, Janelle worked for a year in Dr. Glenn Stratton's lab on campus, then landing at Oland Brewery in Halifax doing laboratory work before earnestly starting her career in the non-profit sector.

After working with several different environmental NGO's, Janelle decided to go back to school to study public relations.

"I enjoyed the science part and then, as I learned more and more, I realized I wanted to promote what was going on with the solutions," she explained.

But it was an international travel opportunity to Guatemala with her partner John (Class of '04) that really changed her world view.

"I was always a big tree-hugger environmentalist. And then I realized what about human rights? I know, sadly, I never really thought about that and the combination with environmental justice," she explained. "So yes, we should save that last tree in the forest but if people do not have wood to heat their home, to build a fire to cook their meal, well maybe we should cut that tree down. That stirred something in my brain and shaped me."

That internship was with the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network – a voluntary network of people in the Maritimes who began to organize in 1988 to support the efforts of Guatemalans struggling for political, social and economic justice.

After another decade involved with international cooperation, Janelle began to crave a return to the environmental sector and landed with CLIMAtlantic about four years ago.

CLIMAtlantic facilitates access to data and information that supports adaptation to climate change in Atlantic Canada through collaboration, networking and partnerships.

"Even if we stop all greenhouse gas emissions today, we're still going to suffer the effects of climate change now," explained Janelle. "We need to adapt on individual, municipal and provincial levels while also thinking about the infrastructure required for the future," she added.

What began with five employees has now expanded to 18 who focus on supporting and encouraging people, municipalities, non-profits and governments to adapt to climate change. In some ways, adaptation is quite new in Canada and Atlantic Canada.

"My degree definitely helped me land this position as well as having that science background and then the variety of experiences and skills that I have built along the way," she noted. "It wasn't a linear path necessarily, but a very interesting one."

After travelling internationally, Janelle realized there was work to be done at home as well and volunteers with her community food bank and local garden club. She is also still involved in Breaking the Silence Network, aiding in fundraising.

"As much as possible, try different opportunities, go different places, see different things," she explained. "There are so many ways to be in this world, to figure out solutions, to find out more about the issues and solutions. And that can be locally or internationally, even other parts of Canada. There's a lot to learn that way."

# Jon Raymond Dykstra

*Class of '09*

A love for cows brought Jon Raymond Dykstra (Class of '09) to NSAC for his post-secondary education. Although his career path may not have progressed exactly the way he envisioned it would when he first began his studies in 2006, his passion for agriculture has taken him on a journey from his native New Brunswick through Nova Scotia, Ontario, and finally to Prince Edward Island, which he now calls home.

"Agriculture is such an intricate, essential industry to be a part of," he shared. "There are a lot of things we can do without, but agriculture is certainly not one of them. Food sovereignty has never been as important as it is in 2025, so being in agriculture feels like you're doing something important."

Originally returning to his family's dairy farm in Havelock, NB, Jon Raymond then spent a few years as a classifier with Holstein Canada in Ontario. Wanting to get back to the East Coast, he made the move to PEI in 2015 after being offered a position as a territory manager with Trouw Nutrition, specializing in dairy and ruminants. And in 2024, he took the next step in his journey, joining the team at the Smart Energy Company as the consultant for PEI.

Founded in New Brunswick in 2016, the Smart Energy Company is a family-owned renewable energy business that "proudly offers solar and battery packages designed, tested, and built for harsh climates" with a focus on the agriculture sector. According to Jon Raymond, the company very quickly found a gap in the market that they wanted to address: solar energy systems that could withstand Atlantic Canadian weather. Once a racking system was developed that they were confident in, the company turned it into an even more appealing product by making it a solar kit-in-a-box that farmers can build themselves.

"We provide the only commercially available micro-solar farm that you can buy in a box and build yourself in Canada," said Jon Raymond. "We still handle the permits and do the electrical work, but farmers are able to put together the system themselves. It means the best system on the market is very competitively priced because it allows farmers to save on labour costs."

As a smart energy consultant, Jon Raymond's role is to work closely with farmers to determine what their energy needs are and what solutions will work for them, to design the initial layout of



the system and establish pricing, and to support them throughout the buying and installation processes. The relationships don't end after installation, though – a warranty and service package is also included with the purchase, which sees Jon Raymond and his fellow consultants visit farms to check on energy production levels and assess maintenance needs.

"It's very interesting," he said. "This is a very different sales role compared to what I'd done previously, which was mostly consulting and the sales came along with it. With energy you're trying to match the right product, the right solution to the energy need. This is a lifetime investment for most people, that will have a huge impact on the environmental and financial sustainability of their farms."

Jon Raymond is well-equipped to work with other island farmers as a part-time farmer himself. His transition to energy sales doesn't mean he has left his love for cows behind – quite the





opposite, in fact. Not only does he milk three mornings a week for Red Oak Farms, he also owns Radiant Holsteins and Jerseys, which specializes in breeding and raising show cattle.

"I have a small acreage, and I like to work in genetics. It's nothing fancy, but I do take it very seriously," he said. "I've had pretty good success over the years. I've had all Canadian nominations and I've run two successful online sales with consignments, as well as a live auction in partnership with Cobequid Holsteins that we hosted here on the farm in 2024."

Jon Raymond has also lent his expertise to community cattle organizations, including the PEI Holstein branch, of which he is the past president, as well as the Atlantic Holstein Promotions board of directors. He is an official judge with Holstein Canada and has judged in all three Maritime Provinces and Ontario. He is a regular volunteer judge with 4-H, and has served as a judge at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

"It's a nice way to stay connected to the industry," he explained. "It's an industry I've been involved in my whole life. I've always wanted to have cattle in my life, and I was hooked on showing right from the start, from my first show in 4-H."

And although he knew he wanted to be in agriculture his whole life, he wasn't always sure that agriculture wanted him. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Jon Raymond didn't see many people like him in the industry while growing up.

"When I was younger, I thought I would either have to hide who I was for my entire life, or that I would have to give up agriculture," he said. "Being myself in agriculture didn't feel like an option."

However, as he got older, he realized that he could play an important role for youth coming after him.

"I think over the years that we have lost a lot of really valuable people that were passionate about the industry but maybe didn't feel that they were welcome or accepted," he explained. "I think it's important to be a bit of a role model for LGBTQ+ youth coming up, to show them that there is space for them in agriculture. Had I had that growing up, I probably would have lived a much happier life at a much younger age."

Jon Raymond is an active member of the LGBTQ+ community outside of agriculture as well. He is co-founder and chair of the Island Pride Curling League, PEI's first ever organized queer sports league, which is in its second year of operation. The league hosted its first bonspiel in February, with teams from across Atlantic Canada and Ontario.

Jon Raymond's journey has allowed him to develop new passions, like curling, and maintain longstanding ones, including agriculture.

"We're all passionate about something. My life hasn't gone the way I thought it would, but there's one common theme, and that is agriculture. It may not always be easy, but I think that if there's something you're really passionate about, you make it work."

## It's a Ram's World

Athletics and recreation continue to be a fundamental part of the student experience and the overall community at the Agricultural Campus



## Langille Athletic Centre renovated

Built in 1977, the Langille Athletic Centre was one of several buildings erected during a period of significant growth at the Agricultural Campus. Since that time, the facility has seen thousands of students, athletes, faculty, staff, alumni and community members come through its doors for a variety of purposes. It is a vital part of campus life, providing space and resources for varsity athletics, recreation, community events, and more. However, it hadn't seen many major updates over the years – until now.

From 2022 to 2024, the facility underwent the largest renovation in its history. Several upgrades – some visible and some not – were installed in the facility, all with the goal of making it more accessible, more comfortable and overall, more appealing to its users.

"These new improvements enhance the profile of our facility and our impact on our community – both campus and the great Truro/Bible Hill area," said Jonathan Wang, Coordinator of Operations, Marketing and Facilities at the Langille Athletic Centre. "We're excited to be able to continue providing excellent service with modern amenities and equipment. Upgraded facilities allow us to be more focused on creating memorable experiences for the

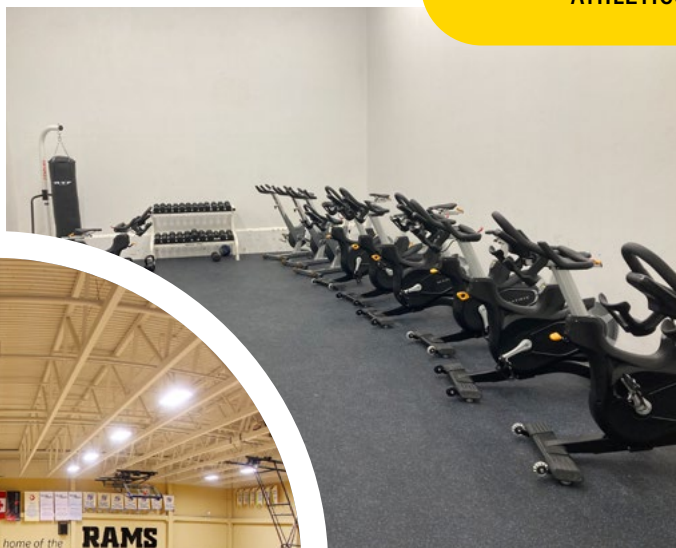
students at our campus as well as the wider community through things such as summer camps and unique events."

One of the most noticeable changes is the relocation of the entrance to the facility. Regular users will remember that entry was at the Cumming Drive lower level of the building which forced members to navigate a steep set of stairs through all types of weather. Now, users access the building at the Cumming Drive ground level entrance which is level to the sidewalk and creates a welcoming, and more importantly accessible, entry point to the facility. Wider doors and a vestibule were added to the facility as well to create easier to navigate entrances and increased accessibility.

The gymnasium floor, which was the original hardwood floor installed when the building first opened, was quickly nearing the end of its life. Regular maintenance of hardwood gym floors involves screening a layer of wood off the top at set intervals. As the floor approached 50 years of age, the remaining thickness did not allow for any further screening.

"The previous administration took such good care of the facility that the floor lasted well beyond it's expected lifespan," said





Jonathan. “However, as with all good things, it had reached its end of life and there wasn’t enough wood to screen anymore. This created an opportunity to provide a refreshed and modern floor for our varsity athletes, the campus and community.”

The facility is now home to a brand-new suspended hardwood floor that helps absorb the impact of activity, which in turn reduces the impact on the body, leading to increased comfort and fewer stress-related injuries.

Other very noticeable upgrades occurred in the fitness and weight rooms, which have received a full refresh of equipment over the past few years. Space optimization occurred as well as the weight and fitness areas were expanded into areas of the facility that were not being frequented as they had been in the past. To this end, additional functionality and capacity was achieved with the addition of a spin room and the ability to support the growing number of users at the facility.

However, some of the most impactful upgrades may be the ones you can’t see.

The building has had a full electrical upgrade, including

installation of a new transformer and modernization of the electrical delivery system. It has also had other mechanical systems updated, including new hot water systems and heating and cooling air systems. And perhaps most importantly was the installation of air conditioning in the fitness areas of the building – an update that has made things much more comfortable for members during the summer months.

“Before the renovations, the fitness room in particular was almost unbearable in the middle of summer,” said Kelly Marshall, Dalhousie research accountant and Langille Athletic Centre member. “The addition of air conditioning has made summer workouts much more enjoyable.”

It’s not all about functionality, however – the facility also received aesthetic upgrades. Fresh paint, new windows offering improved insulation and natural light, and wider doors and vestibules all contribute to the enhanced ambience of the Langille Athletic Centre.

For more information about membership fees, summer camps, varsity teams and more, visit [dal.ca/rams](http://dal.ca/rams)



## Rams Athletics 2024-25 achievements

The 2024-25 season saw growth, adaptation, and much success for the Rams!



Runners Jenna Bevacqua, Tess Morin and Sarah Masalmeh compete at home in Victoria Park.

### Cross Country

Runner Zachary Comber finished first in the ACAA Championships and attended the CCAA national championships, placing 22<sup>nd</sup> in the country.



Daniel Pettipas competes in the water boil event during the final competition.

### Loggersports

The Dalhousie Rams Loggersports team had a fantastic season and managed a Women's A and Men's A victory at the 39th Annual Rick Russell Loggersports Competition. Eric Nelson of the Men's A team snagged the male Echo Challenge Victory as well on competition day. The Rams Women's A team placed third in the league overall while the Men's A team placed first!



Elizabeth Doiron carries against UKC.

### Women's Rugby

The Rams Rugby squad transitioned to the 7's format this year along with a number of Atlantic schools. The smaller size and quicker game format was a hit at the Olympics, and it has found a similar popularity with the collegiate teams. 2024 was a transitional season but we expect to see exciting results in 2025!





Mikel Côté serves in action at the ACAA championships.

### Badminton

The badminton team placed third overall at the ACAA championships while rookie twins Joel and Mikel Côté earned their ticket to nationals as part of the ACAA 2 contingent. They placed fifth nationally in men's doubles at the CCAA tournament!



Captain Carmen Oulton receives the ball during play against STU.

### Women's Soccer

It was a year of renewal for the women's soccer team with lots of fresh faces still adapting to the collegiate competition. A few standout players include Clare Glover (first team all-conference) as well as captain Carmen Oulton (second team all-conference).



Braeden Hay beats a UNBSJ Seawolf to the ball.

### Men's Soccer

A tough season with some standout performances from keeper Cam Schurman (ACAA Rookie of the Year) and veterans Adrian Bent (first team all-conference) and Eric Verschoor (second team all-conference).



Allison White in competition at Owl's Ridge.

### Equestrian

The Equestrian team is currently sitting in second position with one show remaining. Throughout the year, they have frequently been in the top three positions in novice, entry and green divisions. Geena Hickey also received the Sportsmanship Award for her efforts throughout the year.



Callie Immerkar attacks against MSVU.

### Women's Volleyball

The Rams were semi-finalists at the ACAA Championships with third-year athlete Callie Immerkar earning first team all-conference honours.



Orson Di Rosa attacks against UNBSJ.

### Men's Volleyball

The Rams made their return to ACAA men's volleyball with a fantastic first season. Lots of excited rookies and a few more seasoned faces donned the black and gold and represented their school with passion and dedication. It may not have been a Cinderella story, but the Rams were a strong presence and caught the attention of many of their ACAA opponents. Next season promises to be even more exciting with a bevy of new recruits and many returning players.

**CCAA Academic All Canadians** are individuals who are recognized by the CCAA as achieving an honours standing in academics combined with an elite athletic achievement. This year the CCAA recognized Zachary Comber (cross country), Clare Glover (soccer), Carmen Oulton (soccer), Callie Immerkar (volleyball), and Joel and Mikel Côté (badminton).

## Support for student-athletes



L to R: Women's soccer players Natalie Mitchell, Ella Bryson, Avery MacDonald and Abigail Higdon

Central to the success of our student-athletes is financial support. Donors have long been creating opportunities for talented Rams athletes to pursue their athletic and academic goals, relieving some of the pressure faced in their pursuit of excellence. Balancing the demands of academics, high-level competition and financial burden is no small feat, and is made much less challenging thanks to donor support.

Get to know two of the existing athletic scholarships available to Dal AC athletes below.

### RICK RUSSELL MEMORIAL AWARD

After graduating from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Rick Russell (Class of '79) coached the NSAC Woodsmen team (now the Loggersports team) for 24 years and was well respected by both

his peers and the athletes he coached. He was always giving of himself and was recognized for his unselfish devotion to the college community with the Student Appreciation Award in 1995. In honour of Rick's commitment to the NSAC Woodsmen Team, an award was created in his memory in 2005 after his passing in 2004.

Since its establishment, the Rick Russell Memorial Award has awarded a total of \$12,500 to 25 student athletes.

Daniel Pettipas, agricultural business student and 2023 recipient of the Rick Russell Memorial Award, says "Not only does this award help me academically, but it also gives me a sense of pride and joy. This award allows me to be the best teammate that I can be and has given me the determination to work as hard as I can and set a good example for incoming athletes."





Left: Megan McCoombs; Right: Daniel Pettipas

## Want to help? Adopt a Ram!

There are many ways to support student-athletes on campus, and one of the most accessible and flexible methods is the newly-launched Adopt a Ram program. Adopt a Ram helps to fund exhibition travel, equipment upgrades and team apparel, and support the health and wellness of our athletes. Varsity student-athletes must navigate the competing priorities of representing Dalhousie and preparing for a future beyond graduation. Your support enables them to give their all in everything that they do.

The priority for the Adopt a Ram program for the 2025-26 season is exhibition travel, which will allow our teams to better prepare for the regular season. Your gift will go towards bus transportation and accommodations.

To support the Adopt a Ram program, visit [giving.dal.ca/adoptaram](https://giving.dal.ca/adoptaram) and follow these steps:

1. Select your chosen gift type.
2. Select your chosen gift amount.
3. Under "Select a designation", choose the team you would like to support.

## JACK JOHNSON AGRICULTURAL ATHLETICS AWARD

Jack Johnson (Class of '50) established this award in 2016 to support the recruitment of top athletes to the Faculty of Agriculture. Jack fondly remembers his time playing hockey for the NSAC Rams, and he feels that competitive athletics are an important part of the post-secondary experience. He wants to see more athletes encouraged to choose the Faculty of Agriculture for their education knowing they will be able to continue their athletic pursuits.

Since its establishment, the Jack Johnson Agricultural Athletics Award has awarded a total of \$16,000 to nine student athletes.

Megan McCoombs, engineering student and 2023 recipient of the Jack Johnson Agricultural Athletics Award, says "As a student-athlete representing the Agricultural Campus's volleyball team, balancing rigorous coursework with sports has been challenging. Receiving this award has made me much more financially independent, alleviating the burden of worrying about tuition fees and allowing me to focus more on excelling in my classes and in competition."

**THE 28TH  
ANNUAL  
AGRI-GOLF  
CLASSIC**

The 28th Annual Agri-Golf Classic will be held July 11th at the Amherst Golf Club.

Registration for the event will start April 1st, 2025.

This event has been a great success, raising over \$15000 for student athletic scholarships.

Your support is crucial to our programming and, most importantly, the student-athlete experience.

We look forward to seeing you on the course!

**July 11, 2025  
Amherst Golf Course  
Amherst, NS**

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

**The Faculty of Agriculture mourns the loss of two alumni and former NSAC instructors, both who remained connected and engaged with the Faculty of Agriculture right until their passing.**

## **Dr. Alfred (Dale) Ells**

### *Class of '59*

Born and raised in Sheffield Mills, Nova Scotia, Dale Ells completed his degree diploma at NSAC in 1959, following which he attended Macdonald College to complete his BSc (Agr). He began his professional career with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Marketing in 1961 as a marketing specialist while earning his MA in economics from Acadia University.

In 1966, Dale returned to NSAC, this time as an instructor and administrator. For the next 28 years, he played a vital role in shaping education, infrastructure, internationalization, and much more on campus.

As dean of vocational and technical education, he was instrumental in the development and management of the technician and technology diploma programs as well as a wide variety of certificate and short courses. Dale's commitment to agricultural training was extended to the Atlantic Provinces via his leadership in and commitment to the Atlantic Provinces Agricultural Vocational and Technical Training Agreement. The vocational courses, many of which were continuing education opportunities designed to meet the needs of rural and farming communities, brought both reputation and diversity for learners to the campus. Dale seemed to know in his heart the essence of industry-relevant, student-focused education and he led NSAC to adopt many aspects of competency-based education before this became the norm in post-secondary education.

Dale played a lead role in the growth of physical facilities that took place on the campus during his tenure. The quality, standards and capacity of Cox Institute, Banting Building, Langille Athletic Centre, Jenkins Hall, MacRae Library and Haley Institute reflect Dale's vision and tenacity in seeking the best for NSAC.

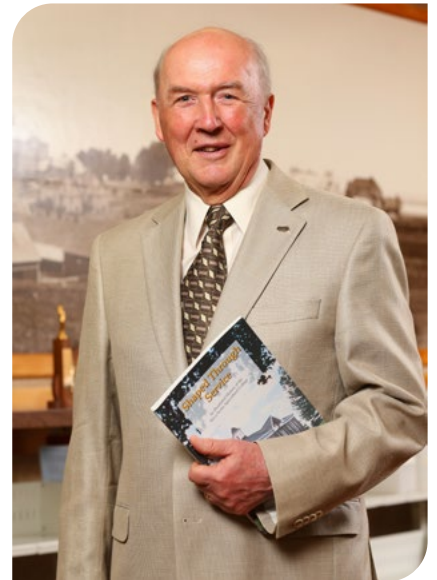
Dale was also the founder of internationalization on campus. By happenstance he was invited to travel with other Canadian college colleagues to visit the School of Agriculture at the Gambia College. Dale saw the opportunity for NSAC staff to contribute globally through international development projects. Thus was started what was then called the NSAC Centre for International Development, of which Dale was the director until his retirement in 1994. While the focus was initially on international development projects in The Gambia, Jamaica and elsewhere, it quickly expanded to

include insitutional linkages and exchange programs and traditional as well as customized education for international students. The influence of his early work is still felt today by staff, faculty and the student body.

Dale was also a highly engaged alumnus. He was the person behind the original Agricola Newsletter, which he edited for 18 years, and spearheaded the development of the NSAC logo. His enthusiasm and meticulous attention to detail made him a passionate supporter of the Agricola (Archives) Collection and his interest in preserving the past led him to write a comprehensive illustrated history of NSAC. The 279-page book, *Shaped through Service*, remains an invaluable resource to staff, students, and alumni.

As secretary for the Class of '59, Dale kept his classmates in touch and was heavily involved in class reunion planning. He was also instrumental in establishing the Class of '59 Teaching Development Fund, which serves to improve student learning experiences by providing training tools that would otherwise be difficult to access.

Dale was recognized for his contributions many times over the years. NSAC appointed him Dean Emeritus in 1998, and the Nova Scotia Institute of Agrologists made him a Distinguished Life Member in 1999. NSAC named him the inaugural recipient of the Alumni Volunteer of the Year award in 2005, and the Dalhousie Alumni Association presented him with the A. Gordon Archibald Award in recognition of outstanding accomplishments in his career and dedication to community service in 2014. In 2011, he became Dr. Ells when he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, conferred jointly from NSAC and Dalhousie University.





## Reverend Michael (Glen) Sampson

*Class of '77*



Professor Glen Sampson was a member of the NSAC Class of 1977. He completed his BSc (Agr) as well as an MSc in agronomy at Macdonald College, and also held a BSc from Dalhousie University.

He began his working career as weed science professor at NSAC in 1983. For the next 28 years, he taught courses in weed science to both degree and diploma students, along with courses in pest management, mycology, pesticides in

agriculture, and plant pathology. Glen was a natural teacher and also shared his expertise with industry stakeholders over his career, with whom he maintained strong relationships. He was a regular instructor of continuing education courses in weed science, integrated pest management, pesticide safety, application and certification, and worked with organizations including Landscape Atlantic, Wild Blueberry Producers of Nova Scotia, Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia, and more.

Glen maintained an active research program during his tenure, examining weed issues in many different crops. A significant part of his research involved biological control of weeds and led to the introduction of over 30 biological control agents for 18 weed species.

Glen officially retired from NSAC in 2009, but continued to teach with the Faculty of Agriculture's Extended Learning unit, and had recently come out of retirement to deliver the weed science course on campus once more.

Also in his retirement, Glen served within the Northern New Brunswick Regional Ministry (Tabusintac Pastoral Charge), having become ordained with the Presbyterian church in 2011.

## In Memory

The Faculty of Agriculture and the Alumni Association acknowledge the passing of the following alumni. We extend our deepest sympathy to family, friends and classmates.

**Dr. Charles (Lewis) Ricketson** - 1951  
**Dr. Joseph (Ray) Long** - 1957  
**Dr. Alfred (Dale) Ells** - 1959  
**Douglas Lousley** - 1966  
**Caye Harris-Allum** - 1976  
**Reverend Michael (Glen) Sampson** - 1977  
**Bernadette Alain** - 1979  
**Bruce Withrow** - 1982  
**Katherine Roach Zabell** - 1985  
**James (Jimmy) Slipp** - 1986  
**Joyce Goodwin** - 1989  
**Ardith MacKay** - 1990

### Make a memorial gift

Honour a classmate or a friend with a memorial gift to the AC. Your thoughtful gift will be used to support student scholarships or bursaries, to improve campus, or to support an area that is of importance to you or your honouree. An acknowledgement of your gift will be sent to the family of the deceased. For additional information on memorial gifts, please contact Donor Relations at 902.893.6721. Make a gift online at [dal.ca/giving](http://dal.ca/giving).

# Blue and Gold Awards

*The Blue and Gold Awards program honours alumni who have distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the Faculty of Agriculture, their communities, Atlantic Canada and beyond. Three very deserving alumni were honoured during the annual Blue & Gold awards dinner in October 2024.*



Carolyn Van Den Heuvel

## YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD **Carolyn Van Den Heuvel** (Class of '10)

Carolyn Van Den Heuvel grew up on a farm in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and graduated from NSAC with a degree in animal science in 2010. While she was a student she knew one thing – she wanted to work in the agriculture industry, at the producer level, in

a capacity that helped the industry progress.

For most of the time since graduating, Carolyn has worked for the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, and in 2021, she became its first female Executive Director and quite possibly, its youngest. In this role, Carolyn supports producers in the way she always hoped she would – and her focus on collaboration is leading the industry through the challenges of our current time.



Tracy Kittilsen

## ALUMNI VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR **Tracy Kittilsen** (Class of '96)

Tracy Kittilsen knows how important it is to give back to your community. Provincial boards, community development associations, community health boards and her local community hall have all benefited from her time and expertise, but no

organization has been quite as fortunate to have her support as the 4-H program. In 1998, not long after graduating from NSAC, Tracy, with no previous 4-H experience, and a few friends from the Tatamagouche area started the North Shore 4-H Club from scratch. Since then, Tracy has served as a general leader for two clubs, as a project leader for several projects, and has organized public speaking rallies, judged public speaking, chaperoned tours and more.

Tracy is passionate about rural communities, and it's clear that she plays a vital role in supporting her own.



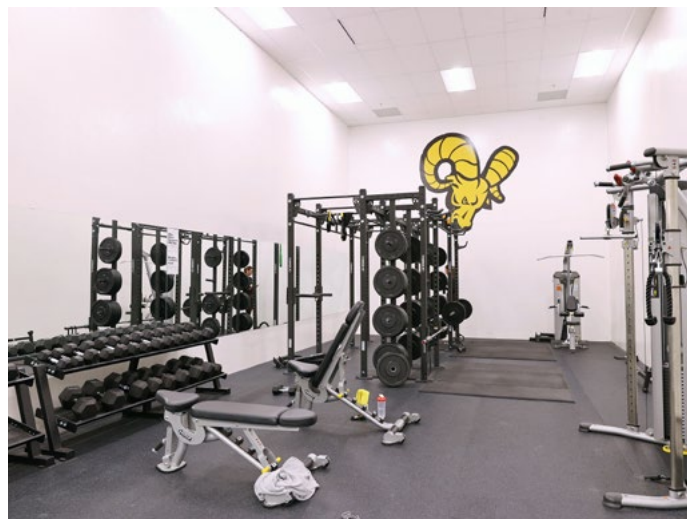
Carl Duivenvoorden

## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS **Carl Duivenvoorden** (Class of '83 and '86)

Carl Duivenvoorden was raised on a dairy farm in northern New Brunswick. He graduated from NSAC with a diploma in farming technology in 1983, followed by a degree in plant science in 1986. His diverse agricultural career, which spanned two decades and

took him to over 25 countries, eventually led him towards his true calling: environmental advocacy.

In 2007, Carl took a leap of faith. He attended a training session led by former US Vice President Al Gore, then left his government job to pursue what he considered to be the most important work he could ever do: raising awareness of environmental challenges, particularly climate change. Since that time, he has dedicated himself to this cause, working as a speaker, writer and consultant. He has presented localized versions of Mr. Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" slideshow to over 400 audiences across the region, and wrote a column for NB newspapers for 10 years. Between his passion for the environment and the changes he's made in his own life, Carl provides inspiration and hope for the future of our planet.



Brian Crouse and Dr. Bruce chat with Distinguished Alumnus Carl Duivenvoorden.

To view full video citations visit [dal.ca/agalumni](https://dal.ca/agalumni)





Clockwise from top left: DASA executive members Taylar Austin and Abby Moir assisting with registration; Doug Byers and Danny and Shirley Stewart, members of the Class of '56 celebrating their annual reunion, chat before the awards presentation; Young Alumni Achievement recipient Carolyn Van Den Heuvel with dad Peter, mom Elizabeth, and brother Dave; Alumni Volunteer of the Year Tracy Kittilsen with son Lucas, daughter Emily and husband Michael (Class of '96); Distinguished Alumnus Carl Duivenvoorden with son Paul and wife Karen; centrepieces were provided by the Sustain by Cultiv8 student-run farm.



# Reunions

## Class of 1953



Members of the Class of 1953 gathered at the Agricultural Campus in July 2024 to celebrate their 71<sup>st</sup> reunion.

## Class of 1959



Members of the Class of 1959 gathered at the Inn on Prince in July 2024 to celebrate their milestone 65<sup>th</sup> reunion.



## Class of 1964

Members of the Class of 1964 gathered at the Agricultural Campus during Homecoming Weekend in October 2024 to celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> reunion.



**Class of 1974**

Members of the Class of 1974 gathered at the Agricultural Campus during Homecoming Weekend in October 2024 to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion.

**Class of 2014**

Members of the Class of 2014 celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> reunion with a fun day and night on campus in November 2024, coinciding with Alumni Pub.

## Upcoming Reunions

*Don't miss out on these reunions planned for 2025!*

### **2025 OAC '79 reunion coming to Nova Scotia**

The 46<sup>th</sup> annual reunion of the class of OAC '79 is being held in the Maritimes for the first time. Reunion activities will be taking place over three days, starting Thursday July 24<sup>th</sup> at the Agricultural Campus and finishing up in the Annapolis Valley on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup>. Plans include a meet and greet, some time at Dal AC during Community Day, a visit to Hillendale Perennials, a bus tour of agri-tourism venues, and dinners at the Truro Farmers Market, Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards, and Luckett Vineyards. For more information reach out to Lauranne Sandeson at [hillendale@outlook.com](mailto:hillendale@outlook.com).

### **Classes of '92/'93**

A joint reunion is being planned for the classes of 1992 and 1993. Mark your calendar for August 22-23, 2025 and expect more details to come. Send an email to [ag alumni@dal.ca](mailto:ag alumni@dal.ca) to update your contact information to ensure you don't miss out on the plans.

### **Attention NSAC Class of 1975!**

Circle the dates October 17-18 and make plans to come back to campus for our 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion this fall. Update your email address with Carol Versteeg ([carol.versteeg@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:carol.versteeg@ns.sympatico.ca)) to be sure you receive all the reunion plans. Let us know that you're planning to attend - and encourage others from the class to connect (we are missing email addresses of many of our classmates).

### **Plans underway for NSAC Class of '85 40<sup>th</sup> reunion**

Stay tuned for further details including dates and location for the 40<sup>th</sup> reunion of the first full degree class from NSAC! Send an email to [ag alumni@dal.ca](mailto:ag alumni@dal.ca) to update your contact information to ensure you don't miss out on the plans.



2025 inductees L to R: Jacques Laforge, Glenn Ells, and Ken Mellish

## Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame

*The Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame annually celebrates the contributions of four individuals to the agriculture industry in Atlantic Canada. Honoured at a ceremony in October, two of the 2024 inductees were NSAC alumni.*

### **Glenn Ells (Class of '53) – NS**

Born in 1934, Glenn Ells knew early on that he would follow the family tradition of farming in Sheffield Mills, NS. Glenn graduated from NSAC in 1953 and went on to complete a degree in Animal Husbandry at Macdonald College at McGill University in 1955. Glenn returned to the farm, where he worked alongside his father and grandfather at Ells Bros Ltd. until 1986, when the farm divided and incorporated as Ellslea Farms Ltd. In 2011, Glenn's son Stephen and wife Karen took over operation of the farm, and in 2022 the Nova Scotia Institute of Agrologists honoured Ellslea Farms with a Distinguished Farm Award in recognition of significant contributions to the industry.

Glenn provided leadership to a wide range of industry organizations, including Sheep Producers of Nova Scotia, NS 4-H Council, national and provincial Cattleman's Associations, Potato Growers Association, and Nova Scotia and Kings County Federations of Agriculture. Glenn also represented his community's interests in the political sphere. From 1974 to 1978 he was the MLA for Kings North and chair of the Agriculture Committee. In 1978 he served as Minister of Environment and Status of Women, with the Human Rights and Emergency Measures portfolios as well.



Beyond the farm, Glenn's agricultural business interests were varied. Farm Feed Supply operations began in 1980, selling railcars of barley from Manitoba to local farmers milling their own feed. In 1994, he participated in a Cuban Trade Mission, and was serving as company president during the incorporation of AgroKings Canada Ltd in 1995.

For 29 years, Glenn recounted stories from his own land and community through his newspaper column, On the Farm. Glenn has also shared stories of his ancestors and the history of Nova Scotia in two published novels, and was a regular contributor to the community paper, The Millstone.

Glenn's appreciation for agriculture is shared by his wife Leta and four children, who are actively involved in the industry in their own ways. The Ells' land continues to be operated, now in its 8<sup>th</sup> generation of farming.

#### **Kenneth Mellish (Class of '65) – PE**

A passion for dairy production and community has led Ken Mellish to provincial and national organizations and volunteer commitments across the globe. Born in 1945, Ken grew up on a Montague farm. Ken graduated from NSAC in 1965 and went on to Macdonald College, completing a BSc in 1967 and an MSc in 1969.

Together with his wife Teresa, they established New Perth Farms in 1981, a dairy farm that produced forages, grains, and breeding stock. They milked 40 head of Holstein and achieved a high level of production using home grown forages.

From 1983 to 1988, Ken served as secretary/treasurer and then chair of the PEI Milk Marketing Board. This was a critical period for PEI's dairy industry, and Ken's leadership was instrumental in transitioning farmers to a new milk quota system. The board implemented a quota exchange that allocated quota to new and expanding producers and was the basis of a program that continues in the industry today.

After investigating new technology to address hay spoilage from excessive rain, Ken formed New Perth Agritech to introduce and distribute tube line bale wrappers to the North American market. It was quickly adopted across Canada and into the US. Through his

## **Call for nominations**

Recognize a deserving candidate with induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame! To learn more about submitting a nomination, visit [dal.ca/aahf](http://dal.ca/aahf)

on-farm experiences, he was able to demonstrate the value of the bale wrappers in preserving better silage for cattle in dairy and beef sectors.

In 1980, Farmers Helping Farmers was established by a passionate group of Island farmers, including Ken and Teresa. Formed to help East African communities increase food security and agricultural sustainability, the group has secured over \$10 million in funding for hundreds of development projects and supported more than 100,000 Kenyan farm families. Ken began serving as Chair in 2002 and continues this significant volunteer work today.

Ken has given generously of his time and talent to many organizations, including Dairy Bureau of Canada, PEI Veterinarian Licensing Board, PEI Marketing Council, and Dressage PEI. After Ken's retirement in 2002, his dairy quota was sold, and the farm was redefined as a world-class horse breeding program. Quality sport horses are being imported from Europe to form a breeding operation, with horses in demand across the country and the US.

Also honoured were:

**New Brunswick – Jacques M. Laforge**, for his tireless advocacy for the dairy industry and its producers

**Newfoundland & Labrador – the late Stewart King**, for his innovation and resilience, and commitment to agriculture on and off the farm.

## Agri-Golf Classic

The 27<sup>th</sup> annual Agri-Golf Classic was held in July at Amherst Golf Club. 36 teams participated, raising \$15,000 in support of athletics at the Agricultural Campus.

Alumni Association board members Brian Crouse and Mark Rose joined Colette at hole 13 to greet players and sample alumni product.



## Community Day

Cynthia Mitchell (Class of '88) visits the alumni booth during Community Day 2024. Held every year in July, Community Day welcomes guests to campus for a day of fun and exploration and to celebrate all things agriculture.



## Innovation in the Field

First-time event Innovation in the Field was held in the Demonstration and Sustain by Cultiv8 gardens in September, offering guests an opportunity to learn about innovation on campus and tour through the beautiful space. Pictured here, Gregg Dill (Class of '70) chats with Chloe Toombs (Class of '21 and current MSc student) about her research.



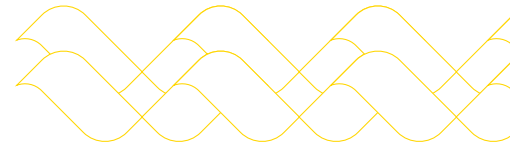


## Nova Scotia Stampede

Aggies from near and far braved torrential rain to gather at a sold-out reception during the Nova Scotia Stampede in September, hosted in the newly refurbished Dr. Richard (Dick) Huggard Grandstand.

## Tasty Taters

The popular Aggies in the Community dinners continued with Tasty Taters in February 2025. Bringing together over 100 alumni, students, staff, faculty and community members, this educational, chef-curated event celebrated the humble potato and featured speakers including campus researchers as well as alum Greg Donald (Class of '89), general manager of the PEI Potato Board.



## AggieWIL Fair

Students and employers, many of whom were AC alumni, converged at the Agricultural Campus for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual AggieWIL Internship and Career Fair in February. Close to 50 exhibitors were visited by nearly 400 students, roughly half of which were AC students. The other half were high school students from Nova Scotia schools.



## Women in STEM

The Faculty of Agriculture partnered with the faculties of Engineering and Computer Science for the annual Women in STEM event held in Halifax in February, during which alum Doris Grant (Class of '94/'97) was one of three guest speakers. Doris encouraged attendees to embrace curiosity, remain open to new opportunities, and strive for tangible outcomes that have real impact.





## Hossain Farid Prize for Graduate Studies in Animal Genetics or Physiology

Staci-Ann Morgan has a passion for working with and leading research that improves the health and welfare of the animals that sustain our communities. It is this passion that saw her receive the first Hossain Farid Prize for Graduate Studies in Animal Genetics or Physiology this past fall.

Dr. Hossain Farid was an accomplished geneticist and world-renowned researcher in Aleutian mink disease. He taught hundreds of students over three decades and was dedicated not only to his own research but to that of his students.

"Hossain was a brilliant scientist who was deeply passionate about his research," explained his wife, Flora Riyahi. "He dedicated his life to advancing knowledge in his field and was working on his research until the very end. He truly believed in supporting and inspiring the next generation of researchers, so knowing this prize is helping students in animal genetics or physiology would have meant a great deal to him."

Originally from Goose Bay, Labrador, Staci-Ann has always been interested in the sciences and passionate about working with animals. When she discovered the Animal Science department at the Faculty of Agriculture, she knew it was the place for her.

"During my undergraduate studies, I had many amazing

experiences with animals that I had not previously been exposed to," she explained. "I quickly became very drawn to working with large animals. I completed various research projects with dairy cattle during this time and just a few months into my time on campus, I knew I wanted to pursue further research and higher education in the field."

Staci-Ann is currently pursuing a Master of Animal Science and is happy to return to her work with beef and dairy cattle.

"I have been so fortunate to receive so many opportunities at Dalhousie which have allowed me to discover my interests, learn the areas of work I can pursue as an animal scientist and figure out where I fit in this field," she added. "Ultimately, I would love to pursue a career in large animal clinical work/research and bring together my love of academics, research and veterinary sciences to contribute to improved health of food animals."

Staci-Ann hopes to one day obtain a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine.

"This generous scholarship has allowed me to continue my graduate studies without financial burden; this has enabled me to continue to excel in the final stages of my graduate degree and even look to the future."



## Alumni Family Bursary

Attending the AC is often a family affair. In celebration of the generations of families who have attended the Faculty of Agriculture, the Alumni Association established the Alumni Family Bursary in 2008. Faculty of Agriculture students with alumni family ties are considered for financial support as they continue in their relatives' footsteps on the Agricultural Campus.

To date, the Alumni Family Bursary has provided a total of **\$193,265 to 213 students.**

Pictured are Alumni Association board members Breagh Ross, Mark Rose, Brian Crouse and Dale McIsaac with 2024 Alumni Family Bursary recipients at the scholarship banquet in November. First row, L to R: Alexander Versloot, Breagh Ross, Mark Rose, Brian Crouse, Dale McIsaac, Zachary Sherman. Second row, L to R: Jill Lockerby, Hope Dingle, Sage Yuill, Leah Newcombe, Emma Bishop, Mackenzie Thorne, Alexander Grant, Carmen Oulton. Third row, L to R: Brianna Hiltz, Jonah Rathgeber, Anthony Boyd, Brayden Carruthers, Jessica Larsen. Not pictured: Lance Hiltz, Hannah Howe, Katie Hughes

## Dr. Phoebe Stephens

### Assistant Professor, Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture

Political economy, financialization and science and technology studies are the focus of Dr. Phoebe Stephens' interdisciplinary research which considers how market dynamics influence sustainability transitions in food systems.

A member of the Department of Business and Social Sciences at the Faculty of Agriculture, Dr. Stephens is the first researcher from Dalhousie University to receive the prestigious Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council Open Research Area (ORA) 8 grant as principal investigator.

The project, *Capitalizing on Food System Transformation*, is valued at \$1.6M and represents a highly competitive international funding opportunity supporting innovative research in the social sciences.

The project involves collaboration with leading institutions in France, the UK and Germany.

Launching in Fall 2025, the research focuses on how capital markets can drive sustainable practices among publicly listed food and agriculture businesses. Over three years, it will support one master's and one PhD student at Dalhousie, one postdoctoral fellow in the UK, five master's students in France and one PhD student in Germany, with student exchanges enhancing international learning and collaboration.

The project aims to foster international collaboration and knowledge exchange, equipping the next generation of researchers to address critical challenges in sustainable food and agriculture systems.

Dr. Stephens has secured other external grants as PI that are helping support her research. Since starting at Dalhousie, she has received an SSHRC Insight Development Grant, an SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant, an SSHRC Connections Grant and a Social Finance Grant from the McCall McBain Foundation.

"Food is a fascinating entry point for exploring ways that we can operate in a more socially and ecologically friendly way," explained Dr. Stephens, who is cross appointed to the School of Environment and Resource Studies as well as the College of Sustainability.

"A cross appointment allows me to work with students on both campuses who are interested in the social science aspects of sustainable food systems," she said. "My research is inherently interdisciplinary so it's very beneficial to be able to supervise



students and collaborate with other researchers in these units."

As an interdisciplinary social scientist interested in identifying intervention points for supporting more sustainable food systems, Dr. Stephens draws primarily from the fields of political economy and sustainability transitions to inform her work. Her main area of focus to date has been on the role of finance in sustainable food systems.

"To operate in a more sustainable way, our food systems need to innovate, and innovation requires finance," she explained. "However, finance is not neutral and influences the directionality of sustainability pathways," she added. "This is what I'm interested in exploring – the ways in which finance can be reoriented to support more sustainable outcomes."

Food brings together her interests in social and ecological sustainability. With a BA in international development studies and an MA in global environmental governance, Dr. Stephens was introduced to the concept of financialization through Jennifer Clapp, her master's and PhD supervisor at the University of Waterloo.

"Innovation could mean reorienting our food systems to become more self-sufficient, less concentrated, more diverse," she explained. "We can innovate to support more equity along the food value chain, reward alternative business models, and grow food in a more environmentally sound way."





# Landscape programs receive curriculum and name updates

Students studying landscapes at Dalhousie's Faculty of Agriculture can now complete either a four-year Bachelor of Landscape Architecture or a two-year Diploma in Landscape Horticulture.

These programs build upon longstanding strengths in horticulture, environment, and construction at the Faculty of Agriculture.

"The curricula of both programs have been updated to further emphasize sustainable design, construction and digital design practice, preparing students to resolve real world challenges," said Ed Versteeg, Senior Instructor Landscape Architecture.

## Degree program

The demand for undergraduate studies in landscape architecture in Canada is strong.

Curriculum changes provide greater emphasis on design and a tighter focus on the fundamental skills expected in a first professional degree, including theory and professional practice.

The degree program, previously a Bachelor of Technology in Landscape Architecture, is a candidate for accreditation by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects. The Atlantic Provinces Association of Landscape Architects provides a path to full professional membership for Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program graduates.

## Diploma program

The diploma program, previously a Diploma in Technology in Managed Landscapes, is nearly identical to the first two years of the degree program, with a focus on the creative and practical skills needed to design, realize and care for landscapes.

Curriculum changes differentiate the program from competing offerings at community colleges. Students who complete the diploma program may continue to complete the degree with two more years of study. Graduates of the diploma program may continue through job experience and training to achieve red seal trade certification.

The revised curricula will replace the existing curricula over a four-year transition period which began in the fall of 2024.







# Dr. Jolene Vermeulen

Class of '10

Veterinarian, dairy farmer, and instructor, Department of Animal Science and Aquaculture

Jolene graduated from NSAC with a BSc (Agr) in 2010, after which she completed an MSc in animal behaviour and welfare at the University of Guelph. She graduated from the Atlantic Veterinary College in 2019 with her diploma in veterinary medicine.

She and her husband Alphonse own a dairy farm in Urbania, NS, where they milk Jerseys and Holsteins with a Delaval V300 robot. They raise their own replacement heifers and do their own breeding.

Jolene started working at the Faculty of Agriculture in 2021, where she teaches in the animal science and biovet programs, as well as the diploma in business management and veterinary technology programs. She also serves as the academic advisor to pre-vet students and as the faculty advisor for the pre-vet club on campus.

## What is a typical workday like for you?

*My workday in general is usually very animal focused. It starts with a wake-up call from my two dogs quickly followed by a coffee. I then head out to the barn to check all the cows and make sure there are no new calves or other surprises. Then it's time to feed and care for my cats and after that, get ready to head into Dal AC. Every day at Dal can look a little different – some days start with lectures in the classroom, others with laboratory exercises at the Ruminant Animal Centre (RAC). I usually finish off the day with a final barn check and prepare for the next day!*

## What do you love most about teaching?

*I love that my students motivate me, and I learn and grow through my interactions with them. I feel privileged that I get to share my experience with them and help them meet their goals the way my teachers did for me. It's a great feeling when my students become my colleagues in the dairy industry/veterinary medicine.*

## What are some of the biggest challenges facing the world of veterinary medicine today?

*That is certainly a tough one to answer! Veterinary medicine is a challenging and rewarding career. It can have highs and lows. Labour shortages and compassion fatigue are some of the things that need to be top of mind when training the next generation.*

*Mental health and self-care are topics that are more front and centre in the veterinary curriculum, particularly in recent years. It's becoming increasingly important for veterinarians to define themselves outside the profession and identify what brings them joy. This can allow for greater resilience in a career that can present daily challenges.*

## What motivates you to give your time to Carma Cat Rescue?

*I have just started to volunteer with Carma Cat Rescue and although I have only helped with a few small events it is a cause I am proud to be a part of. For as long as I can remember I have always loved cats, and I have a particular soft spot for the ones that need a little TLC. Carma does a great job with their trap, neuter, return program in addition to finding homes for the adoptable cats that come through their doors. Dalhousie works directly with Carma in our veterinary technology program as well, so this gives our students experience working with a unique demographic of cats.*

## How do you balance teaching, farming, and volunteering?

*To be honest, sometimes it's difficult to balance all three. I think that's a lesson in itself; that life is sometimes hard to keep in balance. It's all about waking up and putting your best foot forward each day.*

*The importance of volunteering in the community was something I was exposed to at a young age. Fortunately, Dalhousie has many volunteer initiatives that can fit into my schedule.*

*The farm can keep things very busy, but it's a great benefit as it helps me bring a real-world perspective to the classroom. I love using true stories in my lectures! My husband and I host students at the farm frequently and are proud it can be a place where we can grow ourselves and have an environment that fosters learning for students. I take great pride in teaching the future farmers and veterinarians of the world so that helps me get through the tough days!*

## The Agricultural Campus is a special and unique place, as we hear over and over. What's your favourite part about the AC?

*My favourite part of the AC is the community you belong to. When I came back to teach at the AC after vet school it felt like coming home!*

## What advice would you give to a student pursuing their dreams of becoming a vet?

*We have so many vet school hopefuls at Dal AC and I would tell them all the same thing: think long and hard about why you want to be a vet and stay grounded in that. Know your "why". This shouldn't be the stereotypical answer of "I love animals"; it should involve a real reflection on your goals, ideals and vision of your life's work.*

*Everyone's journey can look a little different. Embrace that and how it shapes you as a person.*

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