



Centre for Learning and Teaching

focus

on university teaching and learning



Graduate Student Issue

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Note From the Interim Director

This issue of *Focus* explores different kinds of partnerships that can enhance the graduate's student learning experience. The authors in this issue also emphasize the positive impact they believe these experiences will have on their future career paths.



Suzanne Le-May Sheffield
Centre for Learning and Teaching

EDITOR

Abu Kamara

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Michael Cobden

Michelle Soucy

PUBLISHED BY

Centre for Learning and Teaching

Dalhousie University

PO Box 15000

Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

Ph: (902) 494-1622

Fx: (902) 494-3767

Email: CLT@Dal.Ca



**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

Inspiring Minds

Graduate Student Development: Creating the Future Together



Abu Kamara,
*Interdisciplinary
Studies, GTA 2011-12*

The rapid growth of the global knowledge economy has significantly increased the value of highly skilled human capital. Urban scholar Richard Florida identifies this phenomenon as the rise of the creative class. Florida (2002) defines the creative class as “people who are paid principally to do creative work for a living. These are the scientists, engineers, artists, musicians, designers and knowledge-based professionals” (pg. 8). According to Florida, the creative class is the main resource behind social and economic changes that have improved productivity and living standards across the globe.

Because of the social and economic impact of the creative class, nations across the globe have identified the development of highly skilled human capital as a social and economic development strategy. In Canada, a big part of this strategy has been national, regional and university commitments to graduate student development. As the knowledge economy's demand for highly-skilled human capital continues to increase, the development of graduate students in Canada, the cultivation of their research, teaching, and networking skills, will likely play a major role in Canada's ability to address this demand. It is imperative, therefore, that universities, with the help of regional and national partners, address challenges that may potentially inhibit graduate student development. In this edition of *Focus*, the authors offer comprehensive discussions of some of the most pressing issues facing graduate students today.

Currently, a major topic of importance for graduate students is opportunities for work experience before graduation. Today graduate students can improve their chances of finding a job after graduation by interning with potential employers before graduating. Author Sarah-Jane Payne (Civil and Resource Engineering), in her discussion of the potential benefits of internships for engineering students, identifies some academic, professional and personal rewards that are associated with internships. Overall, her article highlights some strong reasons why universities should be encouraging graduate students to pursue internship opportunities. With that said, it is worth noting that the likelihood of graduate students pursuing internship opportunities is sometimes determined by the encouragement they receive from their supervisors.

For author Kate Thompson (Psychology), the supervisor/graduate student relationship is the most important relationship in the academic careers of graduate students. Kate compares the relationship between supervisor and graduate students to the normal student-faculty relationship. She identifies research collaboration and mentorship as two components of graduate student/supervisor relationships that differentiate them from average undergraduate student/faculty relationships. For Kate, a strong relationship between supervisor and graduate student is crucial for the professional and personal development of graduate students.

According to author Janice Allen (Earth Sciences), a major challenge facing some graduate students today is the lack of resources for graduate students who are also in a parental role. At the heart of Janice's well-reasoned argument for more inclusive institutional and governmental policies for graduate student parents is the belief that graduate students' status as parents should not be a source of marginalization. In order to address this issue, she suggests that government and higher education institutions should implement more

inclusive policies. Additionally, she recommends that universities adopt more effective communication tools about available resources for graduate student parents.

Finally, author Shawn Robbins (School of Physiotherapy) draws from his personal experiences to highlight the value of Certificate in Teaching and Learning programs. Among other things, Shawn credits his exposure to teaching theories and his experiences with designing his own course for his development as a teacher. For Shawn, the multitudes of experiences that graduate students are exposed to in the certificate program are important not only for improving their teaching skills but also for providing them with the requisite skills for the job market.

The articles presented in this edition of *Focus* provide discussions of some of the most important issues facing graduate students today. These authors provide examples of how faculty members, and the university as a whole, can best support graduate students. They also emphasize the many ways in which graduate students can empower themselves and enhance their success after graduation.

Welcome!

Kate Thompson is the 2012 - 2013 Graduate Teaching Associate!



Kate Thompson joins CLT from the Department of Psychology and brings with her a strong interest in cognitive psychology. She has been a Teaching Assistant for courses in statistical methods and research methods and is a participant in the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning.

While at CLT she will be hosting the 10th Annual TA Days in September and facilitating teaching and learning discussion groups throughout the Fall and Winter terms. (Stay tuned to the CLT website for details.) She will also be editing the September 2013 graduate student edition of *Focus*.

Dalhousie University Writing Centre Writing Connections

GRADUATE STUDENTS and FACULTY

The Writing Connections at Dalhousie listserv offers a place to share information and resources, seek advice, post research queries, and post announcements relevant to writing for graduate students and faculty.

To join, send an email to listserv@lists.dal.ca containing the following in the body of the text: 'sub listname firstname lastname'.

For example, 'sub writing-connections-at-dalhousie Joe Smith'

For information about other writing related topics, please visit

<http://dal.ca.libguides.com/writingcentre>

Internships and Work Experience During Graduate School - Exploring the Real World Before You Get There

By Sarah Jane Payne, Civil and Resource Engineering

As any graduate student will tell you, a thesis can be all-consuming as you delve into the details of the subject matter and take the time to explore a topic freely. Research by its nature generates more questions than answers and in graduate school there are no tangible milestones except graduation. The intense focus required to complete a graduate degree often leaves the graduate student with a lingering sense of guilt when they spend any time away from their thesis. The work-life balance is as elusive in the graduate student world as it is in the 'real' world.

However, there are some activities that are well worth the time spent away from thesis duties. Specifically, during graduate school there may be internships or work placements that may be directly or indirectly related to your thesis work or program. This article chronicles the off-campus internship experiences of Yamuna Vadasarukkai, Meghan Woszczyński and myself. At the time of our internships, we were all graduate students in Civil & Resource Engineering at Dalhousie, working at the Centre for Water Resources Studies (CWRS).

Yamuna: The e-commute to Ottawa



Name: Yamuna S. Vadasarukkai

Organization: Clearford Industries

Location: Ottawa, Ontario

Project: Computational fluid dynamics modelling for a small bore system (septic system)

Funding: Joint funding from MITACS and Clearford Industries, Dalhousie (administration of funds)

Visa required: No, the student visa allowed Yamuna to work without a work permit as this was considered to be an internship.

Would you do it again? Yes! Yamuna only regrets that the internship was not longer. It took a while for Clearford and Yamuna to understand the potential and power of Yamuna's modelling approach. A longer collaboration would have been more fruitful!

PHOTO: Yamuna working on a mixing tank computer model in her Dalhousie office.

Yamuna is a newcomer to Canada. She came from India in 2007 to work on a Master's degree, and she has since stayed on to work on her Ph.D. During Yamuna's Master's degree she used computational fluid dynamics modelling, which models how fluids flow in a system. Imagine filling up your bathtub, dumping in some coloured bath oil and mixing it around, pulling the plug and turning the tap back on. Now imagine the coloured bath oil swirling around, dispersing, draining, and mixing. Now, try to write a mathematical equation to describe the flow in the bathtub and predict what the bathwater will look like five minutes in the future! Essentially, Yamuna is able to mathematically model water moving in a system to understand how a water system mixes.

In 2009, Yamuna was offered the opportunity to work with Clearford Industries in Ottawa, in an internship position through the MITACS internship programme. MITACS is a national not-for-profit organization that provides funding for graduate student internships,

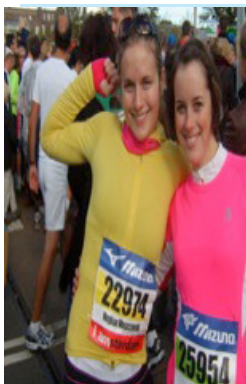
and Clearford Industries is a small bore sewer system company. At Clearford Industries, she was able to apply the computational fluid dynamics modelling skills she developed during her M.Sc. work to an entirely different application (septic tanks instead of drinking water tanks). Yamuna was able to work from the comfort of her cubicle in Halifax and e-commute to Ottawa. Initially, she felt overwhelmed by the funding she received for her modelling work. However, as she became exposed to the industry, she quickly realized that both she and the Clearford Industries were getting a "great deal". These types of partnerships between academia and small businesses are advantageous as they allow firms to explore new computational or modelling methods at a minimum expense.

Yamuna always thought about a career working in Research and Development (R&D), but she was only aware of a few larger R&D firms in Canada. Through the internship, she was exposed to a whole new world of possibilities with smaller R&D firms. The work

with Clearford Industries also helped Yamuna get to know Canada better. For this internship, she had to travel between Halifax and Ottawa for meetings. She found that the experience of taking the bus in Ottawa

between meeting venues helped her gain exposure and access to the history, culture and bustle of our capital city. She enjoyed the opportunity to explore a new city in Canada.

Meghan: DAAD sounds like a great idea!



Name: Meghan Woszczynski

Organization: Henkel AG & Co. KGaA, Germany

Project: Adhesion Technologies

Funding: Joint funding through DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst - German Academic Exchange service (RISE-pro) and the employer (Henkel)

Visa required: Yes, because she was there for more than 90 days.

Would you do it again? YES!!! Meghan only regrets not being more fearless in learning and using more German. DAAD Rise-pro actually provided additional funding for German classes, which were really helpful. In terms of the internship, Meghan would have asked more questions about the research and asked about how she could contribute more to her adhesion project and to other projects at Henkel.

PHOTO: A weekend in Amsterdam! Meghan (left) and a friend, Lena Faust (right), celebrating after a race in Amsterdam.

Meghan came to graduate school at Dalhousie University immediately after finishing her undergraduate degree in engineering at the University of Western Ontario. Two of Meghan's passions in life are engineering and travelling, and the DAAD-RISE-pro programme offered an opportunity to combine the two. The DAAD programme helps organize internships for Canadians wishing to work in Germany. You do not need to speak German to participate (although it helps). When Meghan applied to the programme in January, she assumed that by August she would be finished her thesis work. As the time for the internship drew nearer, she realized that the best-case scenario would have her submitting a first draft to her supervisor before leaving for a five-month internship. Meghan had to put her plans for her defence and graduation on hold.

Meghan started work with Henkel AG & Co KGaA in August 2010. Henkel is a major international

chemical firm that makes a wide variety of products (from shampoo to glue). Although she enjoyed the research at Henkel, she found that working in a trade-secret environment meant that a lot of toil went into products that would never be available to consumers. One particular bonus was the work-life balance that the generous minimum vacation time in Henkel offered. She was given 2.5 days of holidays per month of work. She took advantage of all of her holiday time to explore Germany and Europe. She also managed to complete a number of running competitions along the way.

The time away from her studies did take away some of the momentum of her thesis completion; however, it also contributed to her choice of career path. Meghan now knows that she does not want to work in a lab. She finished her thesis about six months after her return, and now works for an engineering consulting firm in Nova Scotia.

Sarah Jane: WHO knew?



Name: Sarah Jane Payne

Organization: World Health Organization

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Project: Leap frog technologies for drinking water treatment in small communities

Funding: Supervisor support for travel costs

Visa required: Yes! Even though I was volunteering, and I am a Canadian, I still needed a work visa. When I arrived in Switzerland, I was informed that I also needed a residence permit (that can only be obtained once you are in the country). It took a month for the paper work to go through, and I was not permitted to leave the country until I got the card. This complicated my weekend travel plans, and I also felt very nervous about losing my identity papers.

Would you do it again? Absolutely.

PHOTO: Sarah Jane at the entrance to the World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

I had always dreamed of working for the World Health Organization (WHO). In 2009, a few of my research group colleagues at CWRS and I started working on a small project on leapfrog technologies for small community drinking water for a client, the WHO. Leapfrog technologies help overcome a resource constraint. The cell phone is a classic example of leapfrog technology for telecommunications. Cell phones require little infrastructure and maintenance compared to a conventional land line. As part of the leapfrog project, the WHO required an intern to work at its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, to complete a literature review. The project manager at the WHO asked if any of us at the CWRS would be interested in applying for the internship position. I submitted my application, feeling that my chances of obtaining this internship were pretty slim since it was a global competition. The big surprise came when I found out I was selected, and I was off to Switzerland for a two-month internship in the summer of 2009. While working at the WHO headquarters, I researched novel and emerging technologies that fit the description of leapfrog technologies (making drinking water treatment cheaper, safer, sustainable and feasible by surmounting resource or geographical constraints of small communities).

During the course of my work, I met many fascinating and dedicated people, some of whom I'd previously only known by reputation (researchers and policy writers). I also met a number of other interns, and we quickly became travelling companions and

friends. I also experienced the power, intricacies (and frustrations) inherent in a global bureaucracy. Lunch-time was often the best part of the day, because I found myself engaged in conversation with professionals and graduate students from around the world, and we would discuss global health and water issues. The exchange of diverse and informed perspectives was enlightening.

The internship experience helped me reshape my vision for my career path. I am still interested in public health policy, but I now see my role in creating policy differently. I have a new understanding of the role of research in the creation of policy. Although this was an interruption in my laboratory work for my research, it also gave me a chance to consider the small piece of the puzzle to which my research will contribute. I experienced brilliant moments of clarity during my walks high in the Alps or while marvelling at photos of the WHO's smallpox eradication campaign. The internship at the WHO gave me a chance to pause and a place to consider a more global perspective that I would not have had the time to reflect upon during the day-to-day grind of my lab work. In lab work, one must remain focused on the details, to avoid errors and accidents. In this intense focus, the purpose and initial passion for the research can sometimes get lost. I returned to my thesis work with renewed drive and energy. Although I spent two months away from research and my family, I have never regretted the time I spent as an intern at the WHO.

Considering an internship?

From these three very different examples, I hope you can see that internships can be an enriching experience through which graduate students can consider career alternatives, network with potential future colleagues or collaborators and travel. Internships will allow you to gain perspective on your academic work, but they can also draw out that graduate school timeline. Your supervisor's support of this "real world" experience is essential to ensure that your academic work gets back on track once you return. However, the right opportunity will enrich your research and inform your future.

Check out these websites for information on the internships discussed in this article.

Internship Opportunities

<https://www.mitacs.ca/accelerate>

<http://daad.de/rise-pro/en/>

<http://who.int/employment/internship/en/>

Organization

MITACS

DAAD RISE-PRO

WHO

The Supervisor-Graduate Student Relationship: Embracing Complexity and Personal Connections



Kate Thompson,
Psychology

A graduate student's success in, and satisfaction with, their degree program can depend a great deal on the quality of the relationship with their supervisor. Research has shown that positive supervisor-graduate student relationships are associated with the student's greater satisfaction

with graduate school (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001), and are also associated with better performance on the part of the students (de Kleijn, et al., 2011). Students who feel comfortable and confident about talking to their supervisors will surely fare better than students who feel anxious and insecure. Thus, it is important to think about the unique characteristics of the supervisor-graduate student relationship, to understand its complexities and how to help it flourish.

A graduate degree is often seen as an apprenticeship. It is expected that a great deal of what the student learns will be taught by their supervisor. The way teaching is accomplished in a supervisory role is more complicated than a typical teaching role, and thus the relationship between supervisor and graduate student is also more complex than the typical instructor-student relationship. For example, the supervisor and graduate student might spend much more time together, if not through collaborative research, then in meetings discussing the student's progress and plans. Instruction is more likely to be one-on-one, and the learning tends to be more nuanced and experience driven than classroom learning. The increased level of interaction and collaboration that is typical of supervisor-graduate student relationships can either result in the development of a personal aspect to the relationship, or impede its development.

Another major difference between the supervisor-graduate student relationship and typical instructor-student relationship is the roles the supervisor and student are expected to play. In a typical instructor-student relationship, the professor is usually in the role of mentor, while the student is usually in the role of apprentice. The relationship between a graduate student and supervisor is one in which the student is growing from a novice to an expert, and

the roles of both the supervisor and the graduate student are multifaceted (Leder, 1995). The student is attempting to transition from apprentice to peer, and the supervisor must act as both a professional mentor and as a friend and colleague. This transition may be difficult, especially since the change from apprentice to peer is continuous. At times, the student will be part apprentice *and* peer. Supervisors and graduate students may sometimes have difficulty juggling these seemingly incompatible roles.

To avoid stress and disagreement between supervisor and graduate student, it is important to keep in mind some of the characteristics that make any social relationship a positive one. Open and honest communication between supervisor and graduate student is paramount, and is made easier when mutual trust and respect exist in the relationship (Leder, 1995). This is especially true when, inevitably, a disagreement occurs between graduate student and supervisor. Laying the groundwork for fairness and easy communication makes such socially tricky situations less stressful. But this is easier said than done. First of all, how does one go about transforming a purely professional relationship into a collegial partnership, or even a friendship? Then, how does one manage to balance these two separate roles – how does one maintain a relationship that is both professional and personal?

One way for supervisors and graduate students to develop personal relationships is to engage in non-academic social interactions. According to Latimer (2005), such activities can help foster a sense of friendship and collegiality between supervisor and student, and can also reduce the possibility of students feeling isolated. Providing opportunities for the supervisor and graduate student to learn about one another and find common ground in interests and hobbies allows for a personal connection to form between them, from which things like respect and trust can grow. For example, fun activities that can help balance graduate students' development may include going out to dinner, seeing a movie, or celebrating accomplishments with an outing.

Some supervisors and graduate students, however, may not be comfortable engaging in such informal

social activities with one another, and might prefer to keep their relationship professional. Respect, trust, and good communication can still be built between a supervisor and a graduate student in a more professional capacity. The supervisor should willingly engage in intellectual conversation about their work and the student's work, share advice and personal experience with challenges the student might face, and facilitate the student's social integration into the field by attending conferences together and introducing the student to peers in the field. It is also important to offer advice and assistance with such things as publication of work, creation of a CV, grant writing, and honest discussion of possible career paths – even those outside of academia. Such activities will show that the supervisor genuinely cares about the student.

The preceding examples suggest that balancing activities that are designed to develop students academically with fun and casual activities can help the overall development of graduate students. Developing this personal connection between supervisor and graduate student might seem superficial, and its importance is often understated (or even omitted) from departmental or institutional guidelines for supervisors and graduate students, but a comfortable and positive relationship between supervisor and graduate student is arguably the first stepping-stone on the path to a graduate degree. A solid supervisor-graduate student relationship can be instrumental in graduate students' success.

Supervisors and graduate students face many different challenges in their attempts to develop balanced relationships. One of the greatest challenges lies in being able to create a trusting personal relationship, while also being able to maintain the professional side of the relationship. As in most relationships, the simplest solution is transparency. At the beginning of a graduate degree, supervisors and graduate students should state their expectations to each other, just as explicitly as program requirements and other academic expectations. Understanding the complex nature of the roles the supervisor and graduate student will play, and setting up expectations for how these roles will be balanced, make things clear from the

As in most relationships, the simplest solution is transparency. At the beginning of a graduate degree, supervisors and graduate students should state their expectations to each other, just as explicitly as program requirements and other academic expectations.

start. Moreover, building the supervisor-graduate student relationship on a solid foundation of open and honest communication will not only help supervisors and graduate students strengthen their academic interactions but it will also ensure the growth of other aspects of their relationship.

The importance of a well-rounded positive relationship between supervisor and graduate student cannot be overstated. The complex nature of this learning environment almost demands the development of both a professional and personal relationship between supervisor and student. In such an educational setting, it is easy to become distracted and consumed by academic pursuits, but making time to develop a personal relationship will not only improve the quality of life for a student but will also propel the student forward academically. Striking a fair balance between the seemingly dichotomous professional and personal aspects of the relationship can be tricky, but with a little open communication and transparency it becomes easier for both the supervisor and student.

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On the Outside Looking in: Canadian Graduate Student Parents



Janice Allen,
Earth Sciences

In recent years there has been a growing discussion of the graduate student experience, including alignment (or lack thereof) of professional development opportunities with students' expected professional skill sets upon graduation. Discrepancies have been noted between priorities expressed by students and faculty (e.g. Marche, 2008). I believe this gap between the opinion of graduate students and faculty suggests a broader disconnect: the ambitions (both professional and personal) of graduate students are not sufficiently integrated into requirements for, and flexibility within, graduate programs in Canada. Accommodation for family life during graduate studies should be included in the discussion addressing how this gap can be closed.

Extending the Discussion

Canadian graduate students who have children face a unique set of challenges to completion of their studies. Having children should not represent a barrier to the pursuit of graduate studies, yet the particular needs of student parents are not often brought into the spotlight. In addition to financial and scheduling concerns, having a child while in graduate school can be a very isolating experience for students, if they perceive they do not fit the mould of the "typical" student in their department, school or university. It is time to expand our definition of the Canadian graduate student to genuinely include parents. This article explores the ramifications of this change in mindset, with particular focus on Dalhousie University.

Considerable attention has been directed towards the difficulties facing university faculty (particularly women) who attempt to balance their careers with raising children (e.g. Armenti, 2004; Mason and Goulden, 2002). Appreciably less information is available on the topic of graduate students (or postdoctoral fellows) who are or wish to be parents. Graduate students are an integral part of the academic community and as such I believe the discussion of accommodating family life in academia should be extended to include this group. This argument takes on particular urgency when we consider the demographics: the average age of Ph.D. graduates in

Canada is 36 years (Gluszynski and Peters, 2005) and the average age of Canadian women at the birth of their first child is 28 years (Milan, 2008).

Who Effects Change?

Improving the status of graduate student parents is not the purview of one particular group. Supervisors and students themselves have an enormous impact on individual experience. Enhanced services can and should also be provided at the institutional and governmental levels. In light of my personal experience, I will use Dalhousie University as an example to discuss the viability of raising a family while pursuing graduate studies.

First, I will consider the role of students and their supervisors. In many ways, raising children is facilitated by proximity to family and an existing social network. Choosing, as I did, to attend an institution removed from one's social support network introduces a potentially avoidable complication. Prospective student parents have a responsibility to assess their ability to support a family if they choose to pursue further studies. In my case I was able to share both financial and child care responsibilities with my husband. Upon commencing studies, student parents can reasonably be expected to seek out the availability of services that meet their needs. Supervisors have an opportunity and a responsibility to create an inclusive working environment, where reasonable family responsibilities are not seen as a detriment to one's scholastic performance.

Dalhousie University offers many family-friendly initiatives to university employees, while in contrast family support for Dalhousie graduate students varies. In a 2012 listing of Canada's Top 100 Employers (<http://www.canadastop100.com/national/>), Dalhousie was lauded for a support system, including salary top-up, for employees on parental leave, subsidized on-site childcare, and a flexible work schedule. While graduate students are entitled to up to 12 months of parental leave from their studies, there is no university policy allowing for a comparable extension of the timeline for degree completion. Students may apply for day-care to the on-campus University Children's Centre, supported in part by Dalhousie University; however, the waiting lists for day-care are long for everyone, including graduate students, and more

spaces are urgently needed. A limited number of government subsidies are available for eligible applicants but these are distributed by the Department of Community Services and are not facilitated by or assigned to a particular centre. Scholarships offered through the university, such as the Killam pre-doctoral award and Faculty of Graduate Studies funding, do not offer paid parental leave. How can the lessons learned from Dalhousie's effective support of employees who are parents be applied to facilitate family life for graduate students?

The status of graduate student parents is poorly defined when considering government run programs.

Certain awards funded by the federal government (NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR), do offer limited paid parental leave (4-6 months, depending on the award) and scholarship holders' awards are also extended for the length of the parental leave, so adding time to the end of the award. Conversely, many graduate students (including NSERC, SSHRC, and CIHR award holders) are funded through a non-taxable scholarship, and as such are neither required nor permitted to contribute employment insurance premiums. In some cases, a graduate student who is paid a stipend by an award holder (for example their thesis supervisor) can receive EI as an employee of that holder. (*continued on page 10...*)

University Childcare Growth/Expansion Project



University Children's Centre (UCC) – Providing Quality Early Learning and Care for Dalhousie Families

For over 40 years, UCC has partnered with Dalhousie to provide award-winning, affordable early learning and care on our campus. UCC strives to offer high quality programs that embrace the principles of inclusion and diversity in an environment that is welcoming and supportive to all. Caring, well-educated staff value lifelong learning and promote excellence in the field of Early Learning and Care, with permanent teachers holding degrees/diplomas in Early Childhood Education/Child and Youth Studies: many establish long-term commitments. To learn more about UCC and its programs for children ages infant to school age, visit ucc.dal.ca.

Demand for UCC Childcare Spots Far Outstrips Availability

All children at UCC are nurtured and encouraged to grow and develop to their fullest potential within their community. However, with over 300 families consistently on the wait-list, including more than 100 student families, the need for reliable early learning and care far out-strips supply: this has been true for decades and a new initiative aims to tackle this imbalance.

Planning to Expand

Within a five-year plan, and in partnership with Dalhousie, UCC aims to create 60 additional full-day spaces for children aged 4 months-5 years. UCC projects a non-profit cost-recovery operating program once the new facility is fully established: self-sustaining and financially stable.

Let's bring affordable, high-quality childcare to more families!

UCC is a non-profit organization, legally separate from Dalhousie. The UCC Expansion Plan estimates a \$500,000 start-up operational budget: these funds would allow the facility to begin operations, and are exclusive of construction costs, which must be completely externally financed – we can all help!


Adopt the University Childcare Growth/Expansion Project

- **Be** a childcare champion in your community, school or work-place – recruit your family and friends! Contact ucp@dal.ca for ideas
- **Host events** in support of the University Childcare Project
 - Bake sales, casual days, dinners for donations, book-swaps.....
- **Recycle** at Tanner's Transfer Enviro Depot (donate your returns to the "University Children's Centre" account; open 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, Bayne Street, Halifax, T 902-454-4888)
- **Donate** online via <https://alumniapps.dal.ca/giving/boldambitions.php> – **be sure to select the "specify" button and then type UNIVERSITY CHILDCARE PROJECT**

Celebrating our Supporters

The Dalhousie Student Pharmacy Society adopted the University Childcare Project when they committed their proceeds from Pharmacy Skit Night: "*We support a lot of national and international charities, but this was a chance to do something right here at Dalhousie. We have students in our program with children who this affects.*" Holly McDonald, co-host

Learn More

- uccgrowthandexpansion 
- ucp.externalrelations.dal.ca

But as scholarship holders themselves, graduate students do not qualify for EI benefits, including financially supported parental leave. Given the relative scarcity of NSERC, SSHRC, and CIHR awards, many graduate students must take unpaid leave if they wish to spend time with a new child. If graduate student grant recipients were permitted to participate in the EI system, they would be entitled to the same basic parental leave benefits as most members of the Canadian workforce.

The Importance of Communication

Support for graduate student parents does exist at Dalhousie University, but is not well advertised. I have personally made use of the Counselling Services Centre which, though not advertised on its website, offers expertise in the postpartum period and child rearing. I have also benefited from conversations with staff at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, who are interested in the issues concerning the impact on the student experience of starting a family. Unknown to me until recently, the Women's Centre coordinates a support group for student parents. (For more on the Centre's resources for students with children go to: http://dalwomenscentre.ca/?page_id=47). These avenues for support are difficult to find on the Dalhousie University website. My experience echoes the sentiment of a report issued by the Women's Centre (Fennel et al., 2007); the community of student parents at Dalhousie would benefit greatly from a coordinated outline of the existing support and services available to students with children. Failure to highlight existing services not only impedes the connection of student parents with the support available to them, but also leaves graduate student parents with the impression that this university does

not consider their needs a priority. The Faculty of Graduate Studies website (<http://dalgrad.dal.ca>) provides a good starting point for family resources.

Ensuring that raising a family does not impede the successful completion of graduate studies is a shared responsibility. Extending family support policies (both institutional and governmental) to include graduate students would represent a substantial advancement. Effectively advertising existing Dalhousie resources would foster an inclusive environment for graduate student parents.

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2012 Recipient of the President's Graduate Teaching Assistant Award



Kurt Stover, Department of Psychology

Graduate Teaching Assistants make an indispensable contribution to university education: teaching in the classroom, leading seminars and tutorials, demonstrating in the laboratory, coaching, and providing feedback to students through marking papers and grading tests, to name only the most common duties.

The Dalhousie President's Graduate Teaching Assistant Awards are open to all qualified graduate teaching assistants (Master's and Ph.D. candidates) who are registered graduate students. Up to three awards will be presented annually.

How the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning Helped Me Get a Job (and Become a Better Teacher)

By Shawn Robbins, School of Physiotherapy

I found that my graduate studies and post-doctoral fellowship were demanding due to the multitude of requirements placed upon me, including research, required course work and teaching. Thus, I was concerned about taking the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning, because it would be another distraction to my research. I am extremely thankful that I completed the certificate because it provided valuable experience during the course work and practical teaching sessions, thereby improving my teaching skills. Additionally, and more importantly to my student debt, it helped me get a job.

I wasn't sure what to expect from the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education course (CNLT 5000) that is part of the teaching certificate program because I was not interested in teaching theory. However, the discussions around teaching theory and other related issues were engaging and challenged me to reconsider some of my earlier beliefs. What I found most useful during CNLT 5000 was the final project, which involved developing a course. This process forced me to link my own teaching beliefs with practical examples to develop an integrated course. Additionally, I developed parts of my teaching dossier during CNLT 5000, which I later completed as a requirement for the certificate. CNLT 5000 provided the opportunity to receive feedback on my own course design and teaching dossier, which greatly improved their quality. These documents later assisted me in getting a job, an outcome I had not considered as a possible benefit when I registered for the certificate program.

I have been busy applying for jobs since completing my graduate studies. I was told by different faculty members that my research and how I present my

research is the primary driving force in obtaining an academic position. I feel this might be true for some positions, but many other positions will look at the

candidate from a wider angle. Job postings usually mention that teaching is a requirement of the position, but very few postings I encountered required evidence of teaching, such as a teaching dossier. I developed my own teaching dossier as part of the certificate program and I was advised by a former supervisor to keep it handy

during job interviews. This was helpful advice. During a job interview, I was asked if I would be comfortable teaching an undergraduate class in a particular topic. As it happened, this was the course I had developed during the certificate program and I had included it in my teaching dossier. I used this opportunity to pass around copies of my teaching dossier and demonstrate that I had partially developed a course on this topic. The interview committee was impressed with my course outline and teaching dossier. Furthermore, we spent some time discussing different aspects of course design and I was comfortable during this discussion because of my experience in CNLT 5000. I have no doubt that this interaction distinguished me from other candidates and I was offered this academic position, which I accepted.

Now that I have an academic position, I will have to teach (and find time for research). The Certificate in University Teaching and Learning has made me better prepared for my future teaching experiences through the CNLT 5000 course and also the practical teaching opportunities. I

highly recommend that all graduate students and post-doctoral fellows take time away from research and improve their teaching skills by completing the certificate. Besides improving your teaching skills, it might just help you get a job.

I am extremely thankful that I completed the certificate because it provided valuable experience during the course work and practical teaching sessions, thereby improving my teaching skills.

I highly recommend that all graduate students and post-doctoral fellows take time away from research and improve their teaching skill by completing the certificate.

Certificate in University Teaching and Learning 2012 Graduates



Back row L-R: Shawn Robbins; Associate Dean, Dieter Pelzer; Dominic Silvio; Robert Allan; Lara Gibson

First row L-R: Sean MacKinnon; Sarah Jane Payne; Saad Mohamed

Absent: Fahad Saad Abu-Mouti; Hesham Allam; Carol Fleishhaker; Camillo Ordóñez; Kelly Resmer; Marina Ritchie; Stephanie Boudreau; Alya Arabi

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- Opportunities to reflect on and synthesize learning about teaching
- Formal recognition of efforts to develop teaching

CLT also offers a range of professional development opportunities in which all graduate students may participate without being enrolled in the full Certificate.

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