Portrait of the Artist as an Entrepreneur

Leanne Cadden, BCom '05
Occasionally I’m asked where UVic Business places in business school rankings. UVic Business is number one at many things — our international, entrepreneurship and service management programs among others have repeatedly achieved national and international awards of recognition. Canadian Business Magazine has ranked our MBA program No. 1 for Return on Investment and No. 1 by Alumni for Entrepreneurship, International Business and Alumni Satisfaction. In truth though, we as well as many other innovative business schools have a dilemma: in order to fit the criteria for rankings, we need to give up our uniqueness and become like others! In short, we don’t fit very well into the standard ranking measures because we don’t conform to the standard business school model. Conformity is all well and good when turning out widgets, but not very good when educating leaders and managers about the dynamic and ever-changing world of business.

What concerns me more than rankings is that we are again hearing employers express some of the same criticisms about business schools that we heard in the 1980s — that our graduates are not as able at leading people and leading change as they are in analytical matters. I’d have to say to some degree we are our own worst enemies and appear to be more concerned with filling seats, particularly in the MBA programs, than with educating leader-managers. I don’t believe the solution lies in encouraging BCom or BBA graduates to fast track into a slate of specialized MBA courses in “one” particular functional specialty. What we get then are well educated individuals with a specialized master’s degree in HRM, Marketing or Finance to name some, but not an MBA. If the goal, however, is to develop leaders and managers with perspective and the ability to run projects, implement change, develop new companies, provide services and deal with global challenges, then we have to do things differently. And that is what we focus on at UVic Business. (Read more about how we do this on pages 4 and 5.)

I am not the only one beating this drum. Many of our prominent colleagues have spoken convincingly and eloquently about whether we are doing the right things in business schools. I’m also not suggesting everyone should be the same; on the contrary, I think we should provide the basic body of knowledge, and then concentrate on what we do that is different and unique both in research and in our teaching programs. The result would be thriving business/management schools exploring and generating relevant knowledge and preparing our learners for their challenging role as leader-managers of tomorrow.

Ali Dastmalchian, Professor and Dean
Book Reviews

For those of you who haven’t had time to pursue the latest non-fiction best sellers, Business Class asked UVic English grad Stephanie Bowen to do the reading for you. She delved into three titles — Blink, Character is Destiny and Freakonomics — and offers readers her frank and definitely non-mainstream opinion.

Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything
Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner
HarperCollins Publishers, 2005 • Hardcover, 242 pages

The words “unique” and “economics” rarely fall into the same sentence — except perhaps among economists — yet in the recent media they have appeared inseparable in conjunction with Steven Levitt’s Freakonomics. The non-fiction work, co-written by New Yorker journalist Stephen Dubner, is a completely unique, completely — prepare yourself for another shock — entertaining examination of the far reaches of microeconomics.

Switching without warning from the trivial (what school teachers and sumo wrestlers have in common) to the traumatic (the workings of an inner-city crack gang), Levitt systematically introduces and deconstructs the myths of common beliefs. To do so, he employs a wide array of statistical evidence and logic so sound you may wonder how his explanations never occurred to you before.

But sensitive reader be warned: as the author himself concedes, “Freakonomics-style thinking simply does not traffic in morality.” Perhaps because he is dealing in cold, hard numbers, Levitt has the tendency to sound a little, well, cold and hard. He does not rely on PC language or passivity: his prose is as direct as his calculations.

What you will find is a great deal of self-awareness. Levitt is chiefly concerned with the often-erroneous manufacture of conventional wisdom — how what we think of as common knowledge becomes just that. With a wink and a nod, the economist and the journalist write, “Working together, journalists and experts are the architects of much conventional wisdom.”

Of course, the saving grace of this duo is that they do not present Levitt’s findings as a basis for judgment: they are not interested in providing solutions to problems, but rather in changing the way we think about problems in the first place.

So whether you are concerned with society’s ills, a statistics-enthusiast, or you’ve just always wanted to know how the Ku Klux Klan is like a group of real-estate agents (Chapter 2), Freakonomics is guaranteed to at least get you thinking differently.

Character is Destiny
John McCain, with Mark Salter
Random House, 2005 • Hardcover, 336 pages

Perhaps surprise at the predictability of U.S. Senator John McCain’s latest offering, Character is Destiny, is unwarranted. In his defense, he warns us on the very cover that the information contained within is old news: the tagline reads, “Inspiring stories every young person should know and every adult should remember.”

A major concern with the non-fiction work is that McCain seems to have a strategically selective memory. The book is comprised of a series of mini-biographies of people harboring those qualities McCain feels a great leader — and human being — should exude. And while he does profile some fascinating, wholly inspirational individuals (think Mahatma Ghandi, Romeo Dallaire and Elizabeth I), he tends to tidy up their lives into neat little packages that reinforce his over-simplified themes.

Consider Winston Churchill. While few would deny Churchill as one of the great men of the 20th century, McCain overlooks the man’s battle with alcohol, and stubborn mean streak, painting him as a model of perseverance and nothing more.
Or take for example Pat Tillman, the professional football player who left the National Football League to enlist in the army following 9-11. McCain reveres Tillman as a great patriot — which, by all accounts, he certainly was — but leaves out Tillman’s highly critical feelings towards the war in Iraq. One would think that the inclusion of these objections would only further evidence of his dedication to the U.S. (fighting for his country though he questions some of the cause), and yet the information is curiously omitted. The oversight becomes less curious when McCain’s lengthy Republican roots are exposed.

While there lies no fault in wanting to focus on the positive rather than the negative, as is done in the case of Churchill, or even in wanting to protect your vested interests, as is the case with his Tillman account, McCain fails to acknowledge that humans are human. Every great personality he chooses to profile is chiseled down to a one-dimensional image, making for a tedious rendering of what constitutes good character, and an even more tedious read.

**BLINK: THE POWER OF THINKING WITHOUT THINKING**
Malcolm Gladwell
*Little, Brown, 2005* Hardcover, 288 pages

For a book about first impressions, Malcolm Gladwell’s *Blink* makes a rather poor one.

The *New Yorker* staff writer credits the genesis of his new book — which explores the hidden workings of our unconscious that lead to first impressions — to his decision to lengthen his locks after a life-time of conservative, short hair. The overwhelming negative attention he received as a result got him to thinking — what is it about first impressions that inform so many of our actions? Where do they come from? Most importantly, and the focus of *Blink*, how reliable are they?

While the question is straightforward, the answer is anything but. Gladwell delves fairly deep into the human unconscious, and, as such, structures his response as simply as possible. He spends the first half of the book revealing the awesome power of the snap judgment (via art historians who can identify a fake ancient Roman statue at first glance; a psychologist who can determine the path of a marriage, with uncanny certainty, from a three-minute conversation; and tennis coaches who can predict a double-fault serve before the ball is hit, among others), and the second half cautioning the reader against believing their impulses. The inaccuracy of consumer testing, the pitfalls of car salesmen, and the crossed wires that often precede incidents of police brutality are cited as examples to the contrary of the book’s initial thrust.

Gladwell argues both sides of his discussion incredibly well. Each example reads like an engrossing feature article; he examines every angle and proves its point soundly. The problem is that there are so many points proven I had a hard time understanding where Gladwell was going with them. It isn’t until the book’s final 15 pages that any concrete conclusions are drawn, and even then, they seem more like common sense than insight. We are instructed to trust our instincts to a point, but constantly question their origin: “Every moment — every blink — is composed of a series of discrete moving parts, and every one of those parts offers an opportunity for intervention, for reform, and for correction.”

In this case, “no kidding” might be a very reliable snap judgment, indeed. &c
Interview with Dean Ali Dastmalchian

Still Thinking Differently After 15 Years

Ali Dastmalchian on Why Not Business As Usual

Do you get asked why UVic Business doesn’t offer traditional business streams called Accounting, Finance, Marketing, HRM, Operations Management, and so on? As the 15th anniversary of the first BCom class approaches in September 2006, Business Class asked Dean Ali Dastmalchian to provide some insight into why UVic Business takes a non-traditional approach to business school education.

In 1990, when the school was first established, it took a distinctly non-traditional approach to business education. Why was that?

There were a number of factors that played a role in the decision — our location in the Pacific Rim, the existence of other programs and certainly luck — but much of it was conscious effort. For some time, many of us in business education had recognized the need to get students to think more holistically about business related issues. In fact, the first acknowledgement of the issue began with a review of American business education in the 1950s. At that time, business education was mainly focused on turning out functional specialists and analysts. Additional evidence of the need to get students to think differently about organizations, about business and about management was provided by Porter and McKibbin, in their 1988 book entitled Management Education and Development: Drift or Thrust in the 21st Century. In the course of their research, they heard from executives in the business world that business students tended to be too narrowly educated and that business curriculum did not include meaningful attempts to “integrate” the learning or develop leadership, communication, negotiation and what they termed as “people” skills, as well as international dimensions. It is important to note, they did not ask for less analytical knowledge, but rather more on leadership, integration and international aspects.

So we were lucky then in terms of timing. The Porter-McKibbin research came out in the late 80s and we were established in the early 90s. The idea, to create a program where students learn to think across subject matters and thus be better prepared to make complex decisions and appreciate the messiness of typical managerial challenges, was one we took to heart. And because we were a brand new business school, we could implement this idea in a way that no one else could. Instead of building a program around the functional areas of business, we built one based on developing four mind-sets which, we believe, teach students how to think differently about complex business problems. In our view, that requires a program that is integrative in design, international in scope, innovative and one that provides hands-on experiential learning.

How does UVic Business integrate learning across the functional or departmental areas of business?

In many other business schools, integration is often only represented in the so called “capstone” business strategy/policy courses. At UVic Business, we connect the pieces right from the start, throughout everything that we do — whether through our Essentials of Business and Leadership module and integrative management exercises (IMEs) in the MBA Program, or through the coordinated and cohort-based teaching in our specializations which are all integrative in nature, or through across-the-board case competitions and an integrative business simulation for all undergraduate students. We spend time, energy and resources to connect the students in terms of courses they take, the subject matter they cover, and the knowledge they accumulate to help them see the big picture in the complex, messy and often unpredictable business decision-making process.
How does UVic Business deliver that international dimension referred to by Porter and McKibbin?

We work to develop a more worldly or global mind-set in a number of ways. One is through the student experience. With the advent of new technologies and world-wide communications, a broader understanding of the issues occurring beyond the boundaries of one country is part of the decision-making process. We wanted to expose our students to the social, economic and political facts about other countries and international locations, but also to the experiential side. We wanted them to feel the culture, to see how people behave, and to learn by doing. At the time there was nothing else like it, so in 1991 we set about designing a program to provide that experience. Now we have a teaching staff from around the world who speak multiple languages and who have worked, or undertaken research, in different parts of the world. We have international work studies and field experiences, co-op opportunities, exchanges and international IMEs that are all part of the student experience and are all contributing to developing a global mind-set.

How does the international dimension fit within the classroom?

We try to create a mini-United Nations within the classrooms by planning for and managing the overall cultural representation. For example, if we have a large number of people coming from Greater China, we make sure to compensate so we have students from other parts of the world balance a pre-dominance from one particular culture.

However, one of the more difficult aspects of internationalization is the classroom experience. Unleashing the experiences, values, habits and traditions that students from elsewhere have, and bringing them into the discussion about a case on finance and accounting, is difficult. We are learning to take advantage of the experiences of people from 32 different countries and enhance everyone’s learning — but it takes time.

How do you develop an innovative mind-set?

Partly by example and partly by doing … in developing a new type of business school, we have had to be innovative. We’ve done things at UVic Business for the first time, many times. Our entrepreneurship specialization is really the one that walks the talk of creativity. It is symbolic of our innovative approach as well as one of the ways we teach students to think differently. Along with the Entrepreneurship specialization, a short-list of other ‘first and only’ experiences include our MBA program — it was the first under-two-year program in Canada, the first to introduce the concept of integrative management exercises, and also the first to be introduced in Asia. We started the first reciprocal exchange program in Canada where students did not have to pay fees at their host institution, first to establish a formal executive mentor program, and first and still the only school to introduce an “across-the-board” case competition for our BCom students; we were the first and only to introduce a mandatory (or universal) co-op, and offer the only service management specialization in Canada.

Are you anticipating any changes?

As I look back over the 15 years, I know we are on the right track. We get very positive feedback from employers and from our students. We’ve taken risks and made mistakes but we learn from them and keep on learning. It is always our challenge to innovate and demonstrate that the way things were done in the past are not always the way they should be done in the future. BC
“Employers are looking for people who have a broad range of experiences and networks, whether it is a better understanding of international customers or knowing how to operate in a global context,” says business professor Dr. Ignace Ng. Consequently he helped design a new 18-month UVic Global MBA program which launched in September 2005. The program sees students study at their home institution their first year, then spend their second year as part of an international cohort learning the intricacies of business operations in North America, China and Europe. “Our aim is to develop global business leaders who can operate effectively around the world.”

Brendan Houle and Adriana Alvear from the UVic MBA program joined 14 other students from Taiwan’s National Sun Yat-Sen University and Austria’s Johannes Kepler University to become part of the first-year pilot. The group spent eight weeks at UVic, six weeks in Taiwan, two in China and eight in Austria learning about the business, political climate, culture, and customs of these countries.

Houle thinks the new program is a winner and is now motivated to study Mandarin to reinforce his global experience. “Our professors organized frequent field trips to business organizations, so we really experienced the day-to-day of business in both countries,” says Houle. “While most of the larger operations have people on staff that can speak English, smaller companies in Taiwan and China have very limited English resources. I’ve decided to study Mandarin because I want to communicate beyond a formal lunch encounter. I don’t expect to become really fluent in the language, but I think having a working ability helps form the relationship and counter the ‘arrogant North American’ image.”

Houle says a key aspect of his experience was gaining a better understanding of different cultures. “In a business setting, Austrians are very serious people. If I hadn’t studied with them, or joined in business trips and meetings, I might think they were abrupt and rude. However, now I know that’s not the case; they are just much more formal than North Americans especially in a business environment. On the other hand, Asians and Europeans think we [North Americans] can also be rude and aggressive. That’s because their teaching model is much more theoretical and lecture-based and students sit back and listen, whereas we are taught to speak up and join in. It’s all part of the learning process, so going with an open mind is the most important part of the global learning experience.

“I enjoyed the whole experience but Taiwan was my favourite place. The food was excellent and not expensive and their culture is very different. So many things we take for granted here are just unacceptable there. Honour and respect play a much larger role. Here in a business setting, I can be direct with my boss and speak up when I think things could be done differently or better. Outside of North America you can’t be that direct. Another example is about the idea of ‘face.’ At home, if I’m asked for a favour and can’t deliver, I can say no and explain my reasons. In Taiwan and China saying no must be done much more carefully. They might say, ‘maybe I can get around to that for you later next week’ which would be considered a more satisfactory way of saying no.”

The program has struck a positive note with UVic Business MBA participants. Five more students are joining the 2006-07 class. “We learned a lot about operating a program over three continents — including working in different time zones,” says Ng. “Based on student and faculty feedback, we are adjusting the curriculum to increase the practical learning opportunities and adapting other elements of the course work. Overall we are very happy with the program and its contribution to building a global mind-set within participants.”

BC
If you have big aspirations in business, you might dream of going international with your product or service. If you do, Peter Gustavson will tell you there's a world of opportunity.

As president and CEO of the international firm Custom House, Gustavson has seen the hazards and high points of building a business overseas, and as a member of the UVic Business Board of Advisors, he can offer plenty of insights into global entrepreneurship.

With 83 offices worldwide, Custom House has seen that different countries provide challenges and benefits that are unique to their geography, culture, politics and business practices. "One of the challenges of growing internationally is that every market is unique, and what works at home won't necessarily work in another country," says Gustavson. "You really have to understand the uniqueness of every market before making the leap. We've had failures and successes, and you learn not to pre-judge another culture as to how they're going to conduct business."

Consider when Custom House opened an office in Italy. They began providing currency transfers to large reputable business clients and promptly invoiced them for their services as they would do in Canada or the U.S. Then they waited weeks for payment, bewildered. "We went to them and asked, why aren't you paying us?" says Gustavson. Custom House had assumed their invoices would be paid immediately per North American practice. The client replied that the invoices would be paid at the end of the month, per standard Italian practice. It was never a question that Custom House would be paid — these were good clients with AAA credit ratings — but the question of cash flow was daunting. In the end, Gustavson says they were able to arrange a payment process that was a hybrid of Italian and North American practices.

The Italian experience hints at some possible drawbacks in international business, but Gustavson points out there are plenty of benefits to be gained. "One of the benefits is that you might have a very competitive market for your product at home, but then you go to another country where the market is not as competitive and the profit margins are greater," says Gustavson.

The key to taking advantage of these benefits and avoiding the pitfalls is to develop a global mindset. "When you go global, you're not just thinking about what works locally, but how will this work in Hong Kong, or Thailand, or Australia," says Gustavson. "You're always looking around to see if there's a potential for a business opportunity in another market, so you have to imagine how it will sell in New York, or how it will sell in China."

"What's the likelihood that the very best market for the product or service that you've developed just happens to be in the market where you live? You always have to think bigger — you don't want to put parameters around your pursuit."

When they hire new employees, Custom House looks for qualities that fit this global view. "We look for people who are clever, hard working, and think outside the box," says Gustavson. "Specialized knowledge is nice to have, but it's much easier to teach someone foreign exchange than it is to teach them how to be entrepreneurial."

Since he was once a commerce student himself, Gustavson has some ideas about what business students need to be learning to be successful in the new global marketplace. "I had a very Canadian or possibly North American-centric education," says Gustavson. "We were always studying Canadian case studies. That's the real strength of the UVic Faculty of Business — they've made the international perspective part of their core competencies and opened up the student mindset to think globally."

Gustavson maintains that the co-op program's practice of securing student work terms overseas with non-Canadian companies, and the faculty's relationships with other universities around the world, is effective in exposing students to different business cultures. "It's these connections and first-hand knowledge of the people, economy and business environment that will make the difference when operating an international business," says Gustavson. BC

James Grove is a freelance writer based in Victoria, B.C. In addition to journalism, he works regularly in corporate communications and public education.
An Entrepreneur with a Difference
Thinking Differently Helps Build Sustainable Communities

Dr. Ana Maria Peredo, who addresses academe and activism with equal commitment, is a UVic Business role model for “thinking differently.” “I am a product of severe economic and political hardship, yet I consider myself very lucky to have been born in Peru,” she says. “It was a real education and it has made me passionate about fundamental issues of economics and justice." As well as working as a journalist, Peredo earned a degree in anthropology, doing a master’s thesis on how poverty was intimately connected with agrarian issues, globalization, and women’s rights. Insights from that work continue to inspire her today, personally and in the classroom.

“There has to be a better way to do development,” she insists. “I believe in something called ‘social entrepreneurship’ — an approach to development that allows communities to address concerns such as dire poverty, environmental degradation, and lack of education." According to Peredo, “if you think of business as a means, it can do amazing things.” One common example is micro-credit: giving, for example, $50 to a woman in a developing country to enable her to start a tiny weaving collective.

“And people often have capital that they don’t think of as capital,” adds Peredo, who typically uses real-life stories to teach concepts. One example from her native country involves a village with fading agricultural prospects. Although they didn’t have any tangible resources, villagers realized that they could be a “middle man” so that people living in remote villages deep in the Andes didn’t have to travel all the way to Lima. “They decided to set up a market to cater to these distant communities, which suddenly gave them a whole new economy — they had customers for food products as well as customers for many services like haircuts,” she explains.

“This kind of thinking, and the challenge of building a sustainable society, inspires students," asserts Peredo. “I’ve been at UVic for six years and when I first started many people didn’t see the connection between being an entrepreneur and feeling that they had a role to play in making a better society,” she says. “Now a lot of students really ‘get it,’ and they approach me for mentoring.” According to Peredo, ethical issues are coming more to the fore these days, and are making themselves felt in business schools where entrepreneurship is still typically seen as an individual or team effort and not something that involves a whole community. “When I teach a class it’s not just about developing a business plan… it’s about engaging the students as citizens,” she says.

BC

UVic grad Robert Moyes is a local author who has freelanced as a writer for the last 15 years.
An entrepreneur gathers no moss, and UVic Business Distinguished Entrepreneur Jeff Mallett is no exception.

Following a series of successes in developing new products and ventures — notably Yahoo! Inc. as President and Chief Operating Officer until 2002 — Mallett has now joined the Internet startup Snocap as Executive Chairman.

The brainchild of Napster founder Shawn Fanning, Snocap is developing web technology to position itself as an online clearing-house for the legitimate downloading and sharing of digital media files. The Snocap model fits into what has been broadly dubbed Web 2.0 — the new technological buzz word for Internet platforms that are increasingly interactive, and subsequently reshaping content, products and services through their interactions.

What is Web 2.0? In simple terms, Web 2.0 is an approach to software design that promotes a higher degree of interactivity between Internet users and content. As software and hardware technology advances, users are increasingly able to affect what content is delivered and how. A very simple example might be the difference between a personal webpage (call it Web 1.0) and a personal blog (Web 2.0). One is essentially static, while the other offers greater ease of access and interaction between author and user.

In the case of Snocap, this interactive model is expressed in how Snocap promises to make sense and respond to a variety of users who are communicating and transmitting files over the Internet — consumers, retailers, copyright holders and peer-to-peer networks. Part of this communication may also lead to different users sharing their favourite playlists with each other, or it may involve Snocap detecting and cataloguing new digital assets as they are introduced to networks online. As information travels in multiple directions, it will be reshaping content at the same time.

“I see a giant market shift,” says Mallett. “There is a proliferation of digital media, photos, TV, music and video on the Internet, and this is only likely to continue to increase as more digital assets are created.”

As everything moves towards media delivery over the Internet, unique business opportunities are being created for entrepreneurs. Mallett thinks successful entrepreneurs might be both born and taught.

“I think if you don’t have a few things in your DNA, it’s really hard to find it in a book,” says Mallett. “However, in this global economy, you absolutely need both. You need to have as much historical data from others as possible, including studies in accounting, marketing and the rest. I think UVic has done a great job providing education. That’s a tough challenge, and there are only a handful of universities that are doing it successfully, so I continue to applaud them.”

Still, he points out that it’s essential that entrepreneurs challenge the established models. “If you’re a good entrepreneur, you’re always ready to challenge what was before you,” says Mallett. “But not everything has to change — making a 20-30 per cent change may be all that is required to turn you into an Apple, a Yahoo, or a Google.”

Ultimately, Mallett believes there are three essential ingredients for a successful entrepreneur. “First, you need to have the ability to take what appears to be a disparate collection of information and somehow distil it down to one clear vision — basically, make sense of the madness,” says Mallett.

“Then you have to be able to bring people together as a team. There’s the few old school, pound the table, ‘follow me’ guys where there’s really only one leader. However, I see millions of entrepreneurs who are able to bring in other people who are better than they are and hitch them to their wagon.”

Finally, he says entrepreneurs need to be able to “zoom in and zoom out” on a real-time basis. “On one hand, you’re showing up to work as a leader, and you have the ability to look around and see what could happen,” says Mallett. “Then five minutes later, you get thrown into a product or sales meeting, and you have the ability to zoom in on the immediate practical needs and have at least one if not two feet on the ground.”

Entrepreneurs are not simply dreamers. “If you’re just a dreamer, you won’t have the ability to lead your operational people,” says Mallett. “You have to be able to inspire people so they will pick up the ball and fill in the gaps when you’re not around.”

James Grove is a freelance writer based in Victoria, B.C.
Dr. Gwyn Morgan, who established EnCana Corp. as the country’s largest energy company, is the recipient of the 2006 Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year Award. The annual award, created and led by the UVic Business board of advisors, acknowledges an inspirational entrepreneur who has had a significant and positive impact on the global community through his or her business leadership.

“Gwyn is an outspoken visionary who established EnCana as a world class Canadian company,” says chair of the board of advisors, David Schneider. “He has been instrumental in defining the ethical behaviour expected of leaders, employees and contractors and is a great example to our students.”

Morgan, who stepped down as President and CEO of EnCana in Dec. 2005, describes himself as a “farm kid from Carstairs, Alberta.” He says farm life taught him the importance of everyone doing their share, and the adversities of weather, livestock disease and commodity prices.

“I crossed paths with the oil and gas industry in my childhood since our farm was only two kilometers “down wind” from the Carstairs sour gas plant. Interestingly, this four-decade-old plant continues to operate today, achieving much higher emission standards than it did at the beginning. I also remember the times when those darned seismic outfits would leave the gates open or cut the fences and I’d end up trying to collect the cattle back into the field. These experiences reinforced the importance of EnCana being an environmentally responsible good neighbour.”

Morgan first considered a career in medicine and then biomedical engineering. In the end, he was inspired to study mechanical engineering. “Upon graduation, I joined the industry’s regulator, then called the Oil and Gas Conservation Board, and had two years of “basic training.” This included inspecting drilling rigs and production facilities in Rainbow Zama [oilfield in North Western Alberta] during the famous winter of 1968, when the temperature never went above -50°C for three months up there.”

After a few years in the oil and gas business, Morgan became intrigued by the potential of Alberta Energy Company, a new, Western Canadian-based and Canadian-controlled resource company. He was approached by AEC during its start up in 1975 and jumped on board enthusiastically. “My first job was to develop its oil and gas business. We drilled our first well in 1976. One of my proudest moments was seeing a Canadian flag fly above that first well.”

Now EnCana’s executive vice-chair, Morgan spent nearly 30 years with AEC then merged it with Pan Canadian Energy to create EnCana in early 2002 — now North America’s largest producer of natural gas. “EnCana sprung from my desire to keep the Canadian flag flying over a Canadian-headquartered company,” said Morgan.

Morgan was voted Canada’s most respected CEO for 2005 in an end-of-year survey of 250 chief executive officers. In the 1990s Morgan created an ethics/code of conduct for AEC and later developed the EnCana constitution. The constitution defines the company’s business and moral principles and forms a part of each employees’ annual performance review. “I consider creating an ethical company which is a positive force in communities and countries where we work, the heart of my life’s work.”

“Gwyn Morgan is a role model for our students,” says dean of business Ali Dastmalchian. “He embraces the values of honesty and transparency that are fundamental to a successful business venture.”

Morgan’s commitment to healthy living is equal to his commitment to corporate ethics. “Throughout my life, I’ve tried to maintain a healthy balance between my passions: for my job; for my family and friends; and for outdoor activities — which include hiking, skiing, cycling, ocean sailing and physical fitness.” Morgan will be getting a lot more opportunities for year-round cycling as he and his wife Patricia Trottier have moved to North Saanich and are making this community the base for the next chapter of their life.

Along with the UVic Business Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year award, Morgan has received many other tributes, including receiving honourary degrees from the Universities of Alberta and Lethbridge and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. In addition to his BSc (Mech. Eng.), he is a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering.

A five-member panel of UVic Business board of advisors, chaired by Peter Gustavson, president and CEO of Custom House, considered the award nominations. In making their choice, the panel considered the nominees’ vision, entrepreneurial drive, and impact on the Canadian and global economies.

Morgan was presented with the award at a gala evening on May 18 at the Victoria Conference Centre. More information about Gwyn Morgan is available at www.business.uvic.ca/deya.
Noodling Around

UVic Business faculty and staff are often in the community connecting with our stakeholders both at home and abroad. Pictured here is Leslie Liggett, our Vancouver-based Co-op Coordinator and Brian Leacock, Manager of International Programs, enjoying a hot pot dinner in Hong Kong last November where they visited with our international partners and met future co-op employers. They were making noodles, and seeing who could make (and eat) the longest noodles. They were joined by Elena Chue (taking the photo) and Emily Mah who stayed out of camera range.

Thank You To Our 2006 Sponsors

UVic Business Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year Award Event
Thursday May 18, 2006 Victoria Conference Centre

Event Sponsors

**BMO Financial Group**

**CUSTOM HOUSE**

**ENCANA**

**Sierra Systems**

Media Sponsors

**COPELAND COMMUNICATIONS**

**TIMES COLONIST**

Reception Sponsor

**RBC DOMINION SECURITIES**

Table Sponsors

AGF Group of Funds
Aon Rees, Stenhouse Inc
Bear Mountain Golf Resort Properties
Black Press Ltd.
BC Ferries
CIBC Wood Gundy
Coastal Construction & Development
Encana
Glenlyon Norfolk School - Matthew & Jack Schneider
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
Guardian Group of Funds
HSBC
HSBC Securities
J.C. Simmons & Associates, Inc.
Jones Emery Hargreaves Swan & Hall
KPMG

Mackenzie Mutual Funds
Manulife Investments
National Bank Financial
Poets Cove Resort & Spa / Sky Energy Corporation
Raymond James Ltd.
Richard Flury
Royal LePage Coast Capital Realty
Scotia McLeod
TD Bank Financial Group
Thrifty Foods
UVic Business Board of Advisors
UVic Business
Vancity Savings Credit Union
WCG International Consultants Ltd.
Wellington West Asset Management
Does the opening of the second Home Depot and the legendary Mountain Equipment Co-op spell doom and gloom for smaller specialty shops in Victoria? Some retail outlets may not only be wondering what else is in store for them (no pun intended) but also how they will thrive or even just survive in this environment. If you are a small retailer facing a David and Goliath situation, take heart, there are ways to compete effectively with the large retail big box brands.

The first thing to note is that large chain stores exist for a reason — they are very good at what they do. So while they might be seen as the enemy (Wal-Mart comes to mind) by many, most think they are providers of excellent value. In this respect they are big in store size and pervasive in reach because they compete very successfully within each of their target markets. This point should be reinforced by the fact that some big retailers have failed in Victoria. Famously, Ikea was once in Victoria but left because they did not make money (seems hard to believe now). Success is not a right, but the result of an effective, well thought out strategy in each location. If there is a better alternative, customers will vote with their feet. Research shows that it is not the industry companies compete in which makes them great, although it is a factor: how they compete is what really determines success.

It is also worth noting that mega-retail stores have two contrasting impacts on local retail businesses. First, there is a positive effect as a result of increased traffic. Sales increase in outlets in the immediate area that carry different product categories than the mega-outlet, and decline in outlets carrying similar categories. Second, and less positive are impacts that require changes to competitive strategy. Reducing the number of employees, due either to a drop in sales or increased efficiencies in the business, may be necessary. Or, a change in marketing practices such as re-thinking pricing, product mix, store positioning or location might be needed. However, recognizing that customer service is central to your survival may be the ammunition in your slingshot.

It is the recognition and then implementation of high customer service levels that the mega-retailers can’t provide, their very size limiting their abilities in this area, that will, I believe, enable small retailers to thrive “in the shadow of the retail giants.” Service quality in these stores needs to revolve around three concepts:

1) Building relationships with customers by being friendly, recognizing them and treating them with respect, being knowledgeable, ‘going above and beyond’ to fulfill their requests, handling their complaints effectively etc.; the list goes on but you get the idea.
2) Saving customer’s time by reducing waiting times for service, improving store layout, or changing opening hours to accommodate shift workers are other examples.
3) Being reliable by fulfilling promises and having customer-centered return policies and practices.

Adopting these strategies moves the store away from price competition, which is one strategy which will not work when a small retailer competes in the same market as a mega-retail brand. Thrifty Foods is a local example of a retailer which competes very successfully with mega-retailers such as Safeway, which has nearly 300 stores in Canada. Thrifty’s clearly competes on service rather than on price (although product quality and their strong community role are important distinguishing factors too). In fact some say Thrifty’s is expensive but their growth suggests it is the value they provide which has enabled them to thrive. Store management has realized, and successfully introduced the notion, that value does not necessarily always mean the lowest price but is a trade off between quality and price.

Excelling at customer service is one way to create high levels of quality — one of the more bizarre paradoxes of business is that large firms are generally poorer at customer service than smaller firms. However, it is this opportunity that small retailers must utilize to the fullest to break out of the box and stand tall with the Goliaths. BC

UVic Business offers the only MBA with a Service Management Specialization in Canada. New research on "Preventing Customer Failure" by Drs. Mark Colgate and Steve Tax is published in the spring issue of the Sloan Management Review. Contact editor@business.uvic.ca with questions or comments about service management practices. We would love to hear about, and respond to examples of poor or exceptional customer service. Our responses will be posted at www.business.uvic.ca.
“I already knew how to paint, what I didn’t know was the business side of being an artist.”
Well before *La Bohême* was a hit opera, the image of the artist starving in her or his garret was popular currency. Unfortunately — and like many clichés — there is a great deal of truth to the notion. Despite the commercial success of painters like Robert Bateman or Fenwick Lansdowne, many of Canada’s most creative citizens make less than $20,000 annually. One artist eager to defy that dismal statistic is Leanne Cadden, an enormously talented painter originally from Vernon. Mostly self-taught, Cadden began winning provincial awards for her colourful and technically skillful floral and wildlife studies while still in her teens.

When Cadden enrolled at UVic, an initial streak of pragmatism had her working towards a career as a veterinarian. Her abiding passion for art quickly prompted a seismic shift towards… UVic Business. “I guess the obvious thing to have done would have been to choose Fine Arts,” says Cadden. “But I already knew how to paint — what I didn’t know was the business side of being an artist.” A driven person with an intuitive knack for thinking outside any box, Cadden blazed through a BCom degree with a major in Entrepreneurship. “I think some of my professors thought I was a bit… odd,” remembers Cadden with a characteristic high-spirited laugh. What Brock Smith, long-time professor in Entrepreneurship remembers, is a remarkable, gifted person. “Of all the students we have had go through our program, I think Leanne is the one who most embraced entrepreneurial thinking,” recalls Smith, who was a key mentor for Cadden and remains in regular touch. “She keeps so many balls in the air, I sometimes wonder if she ever sleeps.”

The “balls” Smith is referring to include some of Cadden’s notable post-graduate activities, such as being the first person hired to help brainstorm the start-up of the luxury Brentwood Bay Resort & Spa (which later morphed into a job as the director of arts and cultural consultant).
Recently, she has become a full-time "creative consultant" (and resident artist) on James Island, the ultra-luxe retreat just off the east coast of Southern Vancouver Island, that is slowly being developed by Seattle billionaire Craig McCaw. "On the Island I am appreciated for my creativity more so than my business degree," says Cadden, "and that has never happened to me before." Her job — which includes event planning, running art classes, programming guest services, and developing unique marketing materials — combines nearly unfettered creative freedom with a great deal of responsibility. "The people I work for are innovators," she adds. "They realize that money doesn't make your business succeed, it's the creativity that brings the success."

Cadden, who rents a rustic house-cum-studio on Old West Saanich Road, is still in awe of her highly lucrative dream job. "It's like I won a Canadian version of The Apprentice," says Cadden with a grin and a giggle, and her delight is so innocent that somehow it's impossible to hate her. Oh, and it's probably worth mentioning that she's blonde, charismatic, looks fabulous on her motorcycle, used to box competitively, and is only 28 years old.

Cadden didn't need to be encouraged to put a bold and individual stamp on her university work. Her class presentations often had choreographed music and painted wall murals, with shock factor being a goal. During the course of her undergraduate degree, Cadden was successful in all three in-house competitions she entered. In one, students were allowed to run ideas by a panel comprising venture capitalists as practice for pitching business plans and angling for funding. Cadden, prophetically, was offered funding for real by one of the panelists because he was so impressed with her pitch.

Her biggest success at UVic came via the respected Peter Thomas Innovation Project, an annual contest where budding entrepreneurs form groups of five and have $5 and 10 days to create a business or service and generate as much profit as possible. After losing five days to an idea that businesses couldn't respond to inside the time limit, Cadden and her "Group of Five" were still able to raise $3,100 by soliciting corporate art commissions for paintings that would be done by you know who. They cobbled the competition, and held the contest record for the next three years.

In between third and fourth year, Cadden was working on her entrepreneurial "class project," which in her case meant starting her own 3,000-square-foot art gallery on lower Yates Street. As part of the promotion of the business, she organized a launch party for the opening. And going one step further than guerrilla marketing, she dressed up her pet bunny in its best faux-leopard skin coat, went down to A Channel's "speaker's corner" and, holding Mopsy up within camera range, did an out-of-sight promo pitch while a sign in the background gave the gallery's name and street address. "The 'bunny marketing' really worked," laughs Cadden. "The Mopsy segment was on for the next three years.

Never one to rest on her laurels, Cadden also found time to organize and promote a one-woman/one-night show at the late-lamented Crystal Gardens. It was part of her BCom business plan and was "all worked out, right down to the cost of stamps for the promotional mailout." By the end of the evening she had raked in $30,000 for her troubles.

According to Smith, Cadden really took to heart what she learned in the program. "She chose experiences over money, developed useful relationships, was always open to opportunity, put herself in positions where she was learning and being mentored, and was willing to commit 100 per cent," he summarizes. "She is well on her way to being an 'expert' entrepreneur."

"More artists need to go into business and entrepreneurship... not because it will make them richer, but because they will make the business community and corporate world richer with their creative minds that think and do things differently," declares Cadden. "Artists can have a unique perspective, and companies today need the kind of competitive edge that creative people are able to contribute."

Dr. Dave McCutcheon, Director of Undergraduate Programs for UVic Business, also remembers Cadden well. "Leanne is indicative of the breadth of student we are looking for within the program," he notes. "Our admissions requirements are much broader than they are at many other business schools because we are hoping to attract special students," says McCutcheon. "Entrepreneurial training doesn't do much if you don't have much to work with. Leanne not only had a great talent, but she brought an eagerness to use everything she had to maximize her gift."

Although Cadden agrees that it "makes perfect sense" to get a degree in entrepreneurship so you can go out and make a living from what you love, she doesn't stop there. "Doing things differently in business is more than just making money or creating cool new widgets. It's really a way of life that stems from doing something you love and having a positive attitude," she says. "But mostly it's about giving back and being generous to those around you. It's about believing in your gut intuitions and taking that risk."

When not working on James Island, Cadden typically lives a near-monastic, Thoreau-style existence on the bottom half of a 14-acre farm, where she devotes time to yoga and meditation. Sirius radio and a five-month-old mini lop-eared rabbit provide her with company. Superficially, a Cadden soundbite can sometimes sound like a combination of Anthony Robbins and Deepak Chopra, but this is one woman who can put in 18-hour days and truly walks the walk. Despite an intense job she still does a lot of painting for private commissions, and somehow makes time to sit on the board of directors for the Canadian Research Chair on Sustainable Community Development, essentially an environmental think tank. "Being in business is also about doing things for the right reasons and having a social conscience," she asserts with characteristic passion. "If you care enough to make a difference then future generations will have the same opportunities on this planet that we did."
Our survival skills have seen us through dramatic change in the workplace, enabling us to deal with downsizing, loss of job security and a paradigm shift that has permanently altered the way we do business. We have morphed into entrepreneurs, independent contractors and telecommuters and adopted ‘added value’ strategies that are based on flexibility and specialization, in order to be competitive in the workforce.

So having come through turbulent times, can we finally look to a status quo that is once again, comfortable and predictable? Not a chance.

Today I listened to a group of business students describe the integration of robotics into the professional world — artificial intelligence capable of performing surgery, mining asteroids, teaching complex curriculum. There is no question that technology will continue to affect rapid change in business and subvert any status quo from evolving.

This is certainly true of the Internet. It has created a 24-hour marketplace and as a result, traditional timelines have been blurred. Weekends and evenings are no longer exclusively designated for personal use but instead, are used to accommodate our professional lives. Our homes now take on a dual functionality that integrates family and business. And if we are looking for job and/or business opportunities, the ‘net’ is the venue of choice.

Technology is not the only force that has redefined the workplace. Globalization has compelled organizations to substitute full time employees with a growing contingent (temporary) workforce to enhance flexibility in dealing with change. As a result, workers have had to develop exceptional team and communications skills, enabling them to move from one project to the next, to adapt to cross cultural and language differences, and to add value quickly through specialization. And they have had to manage these challenges knowing that there are no guarantees of a renewed contract or a new job offer from another employer. While some workers thrive in this environment, many are gasping for air, fighting burn out and desperately seeking the security of well-defined roles in a stable organization.

Management has had an equally challenging time in dealing with change in the workplace, as they can no longer rely on traditional business practices to produce optimal results. For example, tasks around assigning 24-7 work schedules, measuring productivity, protecting proprietary rights etc., take on new meaning when applied to virtual teams. Even the performance review process is dramatically affected — qualitative assessment of face-to-face interactions is meaningless in the virtual workplace and evaluation becomes singularly tied to measurable outputs.

Further, time-tested motivational strategies have little bearing on the contingent worker. Promises of promotion, salary increases and job security, have no application to someone hired on a contractual basis. Because of the increasing reliance on this type of worker, today’s manager finds himself rewriting the textbook on how to motivate the temporary employee.

So what does all of this add up to? Management would argue that anything status quo preempts the firm’s ability to compete and that flexibility in being able to respond to market-driven change is a critical success factor. This translates into employing a workforce that can adapt to any direction the organization chooses to take — even if that direction eliminates job security. And while this may be the reality of globalization, workers coping in this imposed state of flux are bearing the brunt of financial uncertainty, job insecurity and an increasing sense of isolation in their roles as temporary employees. Whether or not this proves to be a sound long-term strategy in maximizing the firm’s competitiveness remains to be seen. It certainly presents a question mark if you subscribe to the belief that an organization’s most valuable assets are its human resources.

Claire Ward, BA, MBA, currently writes a weekly column on workplace issues for the Victoria Times Colonist. She also teaches organizational behavior at the University of Victoria, UVic Business and offers mentoring, advocacy and consulting services in her business, Corporate Ladders (www.corporateladders.ca)
You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby

Commerce Student Society Then and Now

From its infancy as a social club to its current status as a generator of business leaders, the UVic Commerce Students’ Society has progressed by leaps and bounds over the last 13 years. Many alumni will remember the society chiefly in its original role: providing commerce students with social functions to network with other students, and unwind from their intensive programs. While the society is still dedicated to facilitating interaction between students, its focus has broadened to include an array of learning opportunities for professional development.

An important change to the organization has been its focus on philanthropy. Over the past few years the society has contributed to a number of charities, totaling almost $10,000 per year in student-raised donations. They also participate in hands-on volunteer opportunities and events, such as the 24-hour Easter Seal relay, which raises money for disabled children.

The CSS dedication to creating strong leaders has inspired a variety of speaker series to help better educate commerce students on specific elements of the business world. The most recent series was a great success, and was sponsored by Vancouver accounting firm Ernst & Young. As well, this year saw the first CSS UVic Leadership Conference, organized and executed entirely by the society. The theme was, rather aptly, “Stepping Forward,” and encapsulated today’s changing business climate and the necessity for business students to step forward in the competitive crowd. A huge accomplishment, the conference marks the beginning of a legacy for UVic Business students.

The road to so much action and involvement — not to mention success — was not a short one. Current CSS president Chris Stuart is quick to acknowledge those who were present at the society’s inception, and all those who have worked hard to maintain the organization since: “It is to the credit of every member over the past 13 years that the CSS lives strong today, and continues to develop leaders who will contribute at all levels when their university years are passed.”

Changes to the Bachelor of Commerce Program

As Benjamin Disraeli would say, change is inevitable. Change is a constant. His sentiment is certainly true at UVic Business where regular reviews help ensure the content of various programs keep pace with new ideas and with the feedback we receive from students, staff, faculty and the business community.

In 2005, the Bachelor of Commerce program underwent its five-year review. As a result, we are now introducing changes to better connect the co-op and international exchange experience with the classroom. We are also continuing to strengthen the integration of coursework across different subjects. In addition, to encourage enrolment from students with a diverse range of interests, entry requirements are changing. The faculty is looking for well-rounded students, and encourages students to take a variety of electives to gain a broad perspective. Strong math and communication skills are important to us and to the business community. While students are no longer required to take calculus or macroeconomics, they are still encouraged to take them as part of their electives. An additional English/writing course has been added to the required list to help develop their communication skills.

In recognizing that many of our students already have valuable work, international and life experiences, our evaluation process has been changed to reflect this. We are putting more weight on a student’s qualitative assessment as we hope to include well-rounded students who have devoted their personal time on valuable extra-curricular pursuits.

Even though competition for business students has increased nation-wide, the UVic BCom application pool has grown rather than diminished. This fall, the BCom program is scheduled to increase its enrolment from three cohorts (180 entrants) to four cohorts (up to 240 entrants). And with these new students, comes more opportunity for input, evaluation and change. If you have any questions about the BCom program please email Associate Professor Dr. David McCutcheon, Director Undergraduate Programs at dmccutch@business.uvic.ca.
Win-Win with Pro Bono Efforts

“Pro bono” is short for pro bono publico — for the good of the public. Instead of donating goods or money, many businesses and individuals choose to connect with their community by providing their services free of charge to charitable groups, nonprofits, and other organizations in need.

As an independent design firm, we are often approached by such groups for assistance with everything from annual reports to websites and email campaigns. For us, pro bono work is not a chore, but rather an opportunity to highlight our skills and promote the firm. For service-based businesses, pro bono work should be considered as part of an overall marketing plan.

Nevertheless, as important as social responsibility is to a small business owner, my firm simply cannot meet everyone’s request. When we are working on a pro bono basis, certain guidelines must be followed to make sure the work benefits both the firm and the recipient. Some might mistake this as opportunism, but there really is no reason why both parties can’t benefit from pro bono efforts.

How can you achieve a win-win situation out of pro bono projects?

Make sure the recipient group means something to you. What kind of groups do you want to help? What causes are you interested in? We specifically work with non-profit only organizations that promote the arts, education, and animal rights. With the amount of requests received, it makes good sense to narrow down the kinds of pro bono projects you would like to take on, and will help to direct your efforts to areas that have personal relevance for you.

Draw up a contract. Just as with any other project, both parties should discuss and agree upon what kind of services will be provided, as well as when and how the services will be completed. Making expectations clear for both sides will make for a better pro-bono working relationship.

Have one point of contact. When working with non-profits and community groups, you often encounter many committees and boards, each with motivated individuals that want to help with the project. To keep the work as stream-lined and efficient as possible, have one person from the group act as your project contact person. This will simplify the process and allow you to do the pro bono work, rather than focus on managing the client’s committees and requests.

Submit an invoice. This seems counterintuitive, but doing so allows everyone involved to see the amount of time and effort expended on a project. There is nothing worse than working away on a pro bono project for months, only to go without a thank-you at the end (yes, it does happen). By its free nature, pro bono work can imply that your work has no value. Submitting an invoice noting the value of your work (with the fees waived of course!) leads to higher appreciation of your efforts.

Don’t be afraid to ask for something in return. There is nothing wrong in asking the recipient of your pro bono services for mention in their monthly newsletter, a quote for your press release on the project, or a public thank you at one of their upcoming events. Again, as part of your marketing plan, publicity for your pro bono efforts is always a good thing.

Erin McCall, BCom’01, is both Creative Director and Lead Designer at Sunlit Media, a visual communications firm based in Vancouver that specializes in identity, print, and web design, as well as copywriting and editing services. For more information, contact: info@sunlit-media.com or www.sunlit-media.com
Aegean Leung

UIuc Business has long acknowledged its position as part of the Asia-Pacific community, but those ties will become even stronger this fall when Hong Kong-born Dr. Aegean Leung joins the faculty to teach entrepreneurship. With a masters in International Affairs, and a second degree in Asian Pacific Human Resources Management, Leung has also lived and worked in five countries — China, Hong Kong, the United States, Japan and Singapore. And as if that isn’t international enough, she is fluent in Chinese (both Cantonese and Putonghua), English and Japanese.

“My main focus at the moment is on the core personnel that entrepreneurial firms put together when they are starting up,” explains Leung, who has extensive experience in international sales and marketing. “I’m interested in how they find these people, and also how a new, fast-growing firm handles its personnel so that the business start-up suffers no unnecessary bumps.”

After 13 years of industry experience, Leung looks to bring that experience and knowledge into the classroom. “I’m attracted to a sharing and learning process as a professor. The idea of combining conceptual learning with aspects of personal experience, like the co-op program, is one of the things that attracted me to UVic Business.” According to Leung she didn’t interview at many universities before making a choice. “Other business schools are less distinctively focused… when I looked at UVic it was like everything clicked into place,” she says.

With three young children, Leung sees Victoria’s “livability” as a further bonus. “This was an optimal choice both in terms of career and family,” she explains. “The campus is excellent, and Victoria is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, right?” Although Leung rarely has spare time on her hands, she is looking forward to some skiing, a hobby she picked up in Japan. “And being a mom keeps me pretty busy,” she admits with a quiet laugh. “My kids will be chasing the UVic bunnies… and I’ll be chasing my children.”

Vivien Corwin

The English-born and Saskatoon-raised Dr. Vivien Corwin didn’t have far to travel when she started her new position at UVic Business this April: she just moved down the road from Royal Roads, where she’s been a core faculty member for the last four years. “I was able to design classes and programs there and in 2005 I directed the MBA program,” she says. “It was a great opportunity because you don’t get that kind of freedom at more traditional schools, especially when you’re just starting out.”

So why the recent job switch? "One big draw at UVic is their strong support for research,” explains Corwin. “There is a real enthusiasm for ideas and writing, and they aren’t afraid of abstract thinking or critical theory,” she says. “And they are open to different points of view, and ideas from different disciplines.”

Corwin will have two key teaching areas. She is experienced in service management and will be working closely with colleagues teaching operations management and marketing, at both the BCom and MBA levels. Her other focus of specialization is human resources. “Service management is such a big portion of the North American economy, and the human resources aspect of that is usually accorded a subordinate position compared to marketing and operations management,” she explains. “Yet, in my experience, HR has so much to contribute in terms of creating an effective, stable, and productive work environment.”

Corwin is especially interested in the challenges represented by “part-time professionals,” in particular the different ways of structuring work and achieving balance. “This is what I did my dissertation on, and I’m fascinated by what it takes to make a part-time professional successful — I look at the kinds of space and organization that are needed to make the arrangement work.”

With two young daughters and a third child due near the end of June, Corwin insists that she doesn’t have time for any hobbies or passions. “Anything interesting has been beaten out of me by domesticity and exhaustion,” she quips with a wry smile. That said, she remains a huge fan of classical music and still does lots of reading, everything from biographies to contemporary and literary fiction. “I even took an undergrad course in detective fiction, and nearly went for an English Lit. degree,” she adds.
Mark Colgate

Although most businesses are exclusively interested in success, associate professor Dr. Mark Colgate has lately been obsessed with failure — specifically, a little-discussed topic known as “customer failure.” According to Colgate, there are innumerable instances of this phenomenon, ranging from patients who go to their doctors but don’t follow through by taking the prescribed medication, to someone quitting a Weight Watchers program half way through. “Most organizations believe that you can’t manage customer failure, but in fact you can ‘train’ people to be better customers,” says Colgate. “Doctors who take the time to properly educate patients find that there is much better compliance with the taking of prescriptions, and when Weight Watchers moved to a group format all that built-in peer support meant that fewer people dropped out early.” According to Colgate, any company with “educated” customers will have more success and fewer problems.

Another of Colgate’s insights is how most of this country’s business schools still have a traditional “manufacturing” mindset — even though the vast majority of Canada’s economy is now service-based. “A lot of manufacturing by companies like Nike has been outsourced to Third World countries; what we have here are predominantly services such as finances, airlines, consulting and the hospitality industry,” he says. An expert in service management — the English-born Colgate moved here from Auckland University three years ago because of UVic Business’s excellent reputation in this field — Colgate also specializes in the hospitality industry. “It’s really the quintessential service-management sector,” he notes. “Many banks could learn from better hotels and restaurants how to treat their customers.”

Articulate, rapid of speech, and possessing a ready sense of humour, Colgate has won three “teaching excellence” awards since 1999. “Enthusiasm is the most important tool for a teacher,” says Colgate, who favours innovative thinking over just working from a textbook. “I respect creativity, because it’s so important in marketing, where the ability to see things from a different angle can be very useful.”

Michael Fern

Just finishing his first year as an assistant professor at UVic Business, Los Angeles native Dr. Michael Fern played a hunch when he moved to Victoria and is thoroughly pleased with the results. “I sensed that UVic was an opportunity-rich environment in terms of my research and academic pursuits,” says the 31-year-old Fern. “I’m interested in entrepreneurship and innovation, and this job has proved to be an excellent fit as regards my teaching and research interests.”

In the classroom, Fern teaches entrepreneurial decision-making, strategy, and business-planning (for Entrepreneurship), and also lectures on innovation and technology. As a scholar, Fern says that he is broadly interested in “anything creative” as it applies to business. “My research is about the role of knowledge in a business context,” he explains. One of his current research projects — an expansion of his PhD thesis — involves looking at entrepreneurship in the air-transportation industry and how prior knowledge affects decision-making during the formation of a new business venture. “Essentially, I’m exploring whether I can make predictions about how your past experiences will affect new decisions… such as location, choice of industry, and business focus.” He’s also working on a paper, slated for publication in the prestigious Academy of Management Journal, that looks at how large companies such as General Electric share knowledge between divisions, and how that process affects their ability to be innovative.

Fern’s biggest coup occurred just over a month ago in the form of a $400,000 grant to create a Web-based tool that will make academic knowledge available to managers of public and private organizations. The so-called Utilium Project (Latin for “useful”) is cross-disciplinary and involves three faculties: UVic Business, Social Sciences, and Human and Social Development. “There are great professional opportunities here, but Victoria itself is just such a great place to live,” enthuses Fern, whose passions lean towards outdoor activities such as hiking, backpacking, skiing, and running. “I was at the University of Oregon and I always wanted to return to the Pacific Northwest…but this way I get to live in a different country and get the benefit of a different perspective,” he adds. “If you care about quality of life, Victoria is one of the best places in the world.”
TRISTA DAWSON, MBA '02: After spending three years in Germany, handling public relations for a biotech company and then a research institute, I decided it was time to move to New York City! I started with GCI Group in September 2005, a global public relations company, where I am now managing a team of three people and working on a $1 million account. It’s very exciting and I am doing well here. I am always open to helping UVic MBA students that want to work internationally or in public relations. Let me know if there is anything I can do. Contact me at tristadawson@hotmail.com

SALIM GULAMANI, BCom ’00, Hospitality: Following a four-year stint in hotel appraisals with HVS International, I joined GE Capital Solutions – Franchise Finance as a Senior Financial Auditor, that he really found his niche. Audibly enthusiastic when describing his employer, Diemer cites their original and highly socially-conscious approach to the service industry among his top reasons for taking the position. “You hear all of these catch-phrases from companies, but Thrifty’s has a policy of ‘extreme customer service’ that they genuinely live up to. To them, ‘customers’ aren’t just grocery shoppers — they’re employees, too. The company strives to create a great working environment, and you can see the positive effects continuously.”

Indeed, Thrifty Foods is a company on the rise — they have recently moved from a private ownership to a board/CEO structure, and are very serious about expansion, with plans to open three new mainland stores within the next 18 months. At the centre of so much action, Greg Diemer is pleased with his involvement, calling it “a dream for anyone coming out of an MBA program.”

In addition to his busy Thrifty’s schedule, Greg is involved in the Sage Hills Development, a private athletic academy which will be based in Comox — and run by IMG, the world’s largest Sports Management firm. Diemer, a tennis enthusiast, has a definite note of excitement in his voice while relaying that the school may provide training grounds for the 2010 Olympics.

When asked if anything specific at UVic Business contributed to his success, Diemer says the school’s unique focus on developing the personal qualities of its students gives them an edge when applying for jobs. “Realistically, an MBA might not get you in the door,” he muses, “But once you’re in, it ensures that you’ll only go up.”

Greg Diemer MBA ’96
New Job A Dream

“I was the youngest person in my part-time MBA class, and I wasn’t young,” Greg Diemer chuckles while recounting his years at UVic Business. “I was studying alongside seven or eight very experienced professionals from around Victoria, which made the quality of our work, and especially our projects, quite high.”

“I remember once,” he continues, “our group did a mock-RSP investment strategy that was so well done the company took it for real! It actually created quite a bit of confusion…”

This tight-knit group dynamic was one of the things about UVic’s part-time MBA program that made a difference for Diemer. After graduating, he article with Victoria-based Lee and Sharp, and then moved to Green, Horwood, Monro and Tuckey, where he received his CA designation. However, it was seven months ago, when he relocated to Thrifty Foods as their Senior Financial Auditor, that he really found his niche.

Audibly enthusiastic when describing his employer, Diemer cites their original and highly socially-conscious approach to the service industry among his top reasons for taking the position. “You hear all of these catch-phrases from companies, but Thrifty’s has a policy of ‘extreme customer service’ that they genuinely live up to. To them, ‘customers’ aren’t just grocery shoppers — they’re employees, too. The company strives to create a great working environment, and you can see the positive effects continuously.”

Indeed, Thrifty Foods is a company on the rise — they have recently moved from a private ownership to a board/CEO structure, and are very serious about expansion, with plans to open three new mainland stores within the next 18 months. At the centre of so much action, Greg Diemer is pleased with his involvement, calling it “a dream for anyone coming out of an MBA program.”

In addition to his busy Thrifty’s schedule, Greg is involved in the Sage Hills Development, a private athletic academy which will be based in Comox — and run by IMG, the world’s largest Sports Management firm. Diemer, a tennis enthusiast, has a definite note of excitement in his voice while relaying that the school may provide training grounds for the 2010 Olympics.

When asked if anything specific at UVic Business contributed to his success, Diemer says the school’s unique focus on developing the personal qualities of its students gives them an edge when applying for jobs. “Realistically, an MBA might not get you in the door,” he muses, “But once you’re in, it ensures that you’ll only go up.”

BC
When asked what aspect of their UVic education alumni found most helpful in their current positions, a number of past students replied that the focus on small teams and group work was instrumental to their success.

Lance Abercrombie would like to clarify: “I definitely wouldn’t say I liked it at the time. In fact, it was torturous, but the skills I developed were great.” Abercrombie is of course referring to the fact that in group work you don’t get to pick your partners — much like you don’t necessarily select who you’ll work with in the business world. For him, the focus on team work, though often frustrating, was a rewarding dose of the reality to come post-graduation, and helped him to develop some very key interpersonal skills.

It is evident that Abercrombie took those lessons seriously. In 2005, after 13 years between KPMG Victoria and Ernst & Young Vancouver, he made the move to partner by joining forces with fellow CA Chuck Burkett to form Burkett & Abercrombie, Chartered Accountants (www.burkettabercrombie.ca).

The move from large, corporate KPMG to a medium-sized firm carried new challenges. “My current position is much more hands-on than what I’ve done in the past: suddenly, I was involved in all facets of the business, from overseeing office renovations to determining the strategic direction of our company. I really enjoy it.”

He also enjoys the entrepreneurial focus of his firm, which provides services to small and medium sized businesses as well as high-net-worth individuals. This comes as little surprise, given Abercrombie’s history. As an enterprising undergrad, he cold-called the six largest accounting firms in Vancouver in order to secure a co-op position. Though he is a huge advocate of the UVic Business unique mandatory co-op program, Abercrombie urges students to not sit back and wait for positions to come to them. “Take initiative! Employers are keen to hire a co-op student, because they know they have a guaranteed four-month term in which to try you out, with no strings attached. And then, if they like what they see…”

Ernst & Young, Abercrombie’s co-op employer, liked what they saw. Following graduation, they took him on, and it was there that he did his articling and received his Chartered Accountant designation. He attributes much of his success directly to co-op, as well as to the mentorship he received during his career, including outstanding mentors like KPMG’s Randy Decksheimer. In this respect, he is also a great supporter of the UVic Business Executive Mentoring Program, which pairs prominent members of the business community with BCom and MBA students. “The mentorship I received was definitely a critical success factor for me, and was instrumental to my achievements,” he explains. One would safely wager that his work-ethic played a considerable role, as well.

Abercrombie is equally industrious in his time off. Married with two small boys, he says he “spends a lot of time being a dad.” However, on top of coaching his boys at hockey and playing golf, he manages to squeeze in vice-chairing the UVic Business Advisory Board, and sitting on the steering committee for the Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

2005 and am currently in the police academy at the Justice Institute of BC in New Westminster. I’ll graduate in July 2006 as police constable after eight months of schooling and on-the-job-training.

MATTHEW SCOTT, BCom ’97, attended law school at UBC and, in 2001, moved to Toronto to join the law firm of Groia & Company. He focused on securities litigation and worked on some of Canada’s leading securities cases over the last few years including the corporate governance disputes at Hollinger Inc. Late last year, Matthew joined a start-up securities litigation boutique in Toronto, Crawley Meredith LLP. Matthew is married to Meghan Whittaker-Van Dusen and they have two children.

RICH MCCUE, BCom ’96, recently did some consulting work for USAID on the Rule of Law Project in Serbia (McCue works as the Systems Administrator at the UVic Faculty of Law). “I spent two weeks [in July 2005] visiting Law School Libraries, and Court House Libraries, making recommendations on which computer hardware, software and server setups would be most appropriate to help Serbian faculty and students gain greater access to EU legal resources. I was also able to play a couple of pick-up basketball games at a downtown park in Belgrade, not too far from some buildings destroyed in the NATO bombing in 1999.” Read Rich’s report at: www.law.uvic.ca/mccue/docs/serbia_diary.pdf

IAN CHAPRIN, MBA ’05, has renewed a six-month contract to serve as Director of Administration at the Global Village ESL school in downtown Victoria. “I manage our highly capable administrative staff in a very energetic environment that verges on chaos on some days. At any
Alumni Updates

Lincoln Webb MBA ’02

International Experience Opens Windows

For Lincoln Webb, the UVic Business international exchange made all the difference.

After spending the final year of his MBA at the Leipzig Graduate School of Management at Mannheim University in Germany, on top of his International Business specialization, Webb found his perspectives significantly broadened. “Going overseas gave me a good opportunity to work with people with very different backgrounds. It really opened windows for me.”

It also broadened the scope of jobs Webb would consider post-graduation. As it was, he successfully applied at the BC Investment Management Corporation, working first in Public Equity, and then making the switch to Private Equity after two years. Recently — a mere two months ago — he was made Vice President of Private Placements. From his new office, Webb explains that the challenges of his latest position make great use of his MBA specialization: “The position requires an active understanding of the global investment environment and strategy formulation within this context — which I enjoy.”

A master of understatement when it comes to his own accomplishments, Webb concedes that the new job was “a little hectic” in his first few weeks. He is quick to acknowledge the highly team-oriented nature of the organization (another aspect of his UVic education he found particularly satisfying), inferring that his team is an excellent one.

There are other, non-professional changes afoot for Lincoln Webb, as well. While he still enjoys what he dubs ‘typical West-coast activities’ such as hiking, camping and skiing, he now has a regular partner to share them with: in August he and classmate Rita Mayer (MBA ’02) were married.

With adjustments being made pretty much across the board, Webb exudes nothing but confidence and professionalism — it’s easy to understand his quick success. With signature conciseness and thoughtfulness, he offers his advice to those currently in the throes of their MBAs. “Understand what you expect to get out of the program and use it to leverage yourself into your new career. Thinking carefully about what skill sets employers in your current or target industry are looking for is also important.” Essentially, he advises strategy, planning and awareness in all of one’s endeavors.

Fortunately for Lincoln Webb, he’s smart enough to take his own advice. 

The British Columbia Investment Management Corporation (BCIMC) provides professional funds management services for public bodies and publicly administered trust funds in British Columbia. The company’s investment activities help to finance the retirement benefits of more than 350,000 residents of BC. www.bcimc.com

CONGRATULATIONS In Feb. 2006, Richard Fyfe, MBA ’99, received a Premier’s Award for Innovation and Excellence. Along with colleague Frank Blasetti, he received a Leadership Award for his work on public-private partnerships. Fyfe works at the Victoria-based offices of the Ministry of Attorney General.

MBA Career Updates

ANDREW BOYLAN, MBA ’06, has been hired as Assistant Portfolio Manager at the BC Investment Management Corporation here in Victoria.

ANGELA CHAPMAN, MBA ’06, is living in Vernon and starting a position as a Health Services Project Planner with the Interior Health Authority in Kelowna.

DAVE DROK, MBA ’06, started work with DC Energy in Calgary in late January 2006. The company has 200 employees and is in hyper-growth.

SORIN POP, MBA ’06, has moved to Silicon Valley USA and joined KPMG in a career position in their Risk Advisory Services practice.

MING SUN, MBA ’06, has taken a full-time position as a Business Analyst with Custom House Global Foreign Exchange.

KWAN-WOO LEE, MBA ’06, has taken a full-time position as a Business Analyst with Custom House Global Foreign Exchange.

DAVE POPOWICH, MBA ’06, is working in Calgary as an Associate in Institutional Research with an investment banking firm called Tristone Capital, which specializes in the oil industry.

TOM EN SHENG SU, MBA ’06, took up his new role as Sales Manager at the Four Seasons Resort Whistler in Whistler B.C. in December, 2005.
Jen Trew, BCom ’05

A Labour of Love

Jen Trew has spent her time since graduation spinning her wheels — and that is a good thing. The BCom grad, who began cycling competitively at the age of 16, has stepped up her game in the last year. All this before the end of September; she then self-financed a one-year move to Australia to boost her training and exposure. Most recently she competed in her second World Cup race in Melbourne, placing 76th in a group of 130 bikers boasting some of the fastest in the world.

“It was really neat,” she laughs, “to place like that, when the women coming in 20th are still so fast. It was just… neat!”

While Trew has all of the drive and focus of a young athlete on a successful trajectory, she lacks the conceit. Consistently laughing at her own jokes, and mine, one of the first things she tells me about Australia has little to do with her bike: “We lived one block from the beach! The Gold Coast was an absolute dream. I’m a very spoiled girl.”

Judging by her track record, this last comment is a little hard to believe.

While young, up-and-coming athletes will often choose to forgo post-secondary education in favour of a rigorous training-and-competing schedule, Trew elected to tackle both. Beginning with Kinesiology in her hometown of Calgary, she soon transferred to UVic to study Commerce, in hopes of one day combining her passion and business. The fact that Vancouver Island is the only place in Canada where one can ride year-round was no small factor in her decision.

Still, Trew always saw the value in being a student athlete, explaining that her education kept her anchored, and provided her with the insight to constantly upgrade her training. It also helped her through some rough patches: “My first year in Victoria, I was diagnosed with mono. Being in school reminded me that there was something else out there.”

While one day she would like to employ her BCom degree and manage a cycling team (“We’re talking years and years from now. Waaaay down the line!”), for now Jen Trew is putting all of her energy into aiming for the 2012 Olympics, and eventually going pro, despite the poor salary prospects compared to other professional sports.

“Professional cyclists make about $5,000 a year, on top of their expenses being covered. It’s funny,” she laughs, again displaying her infectious humour, “but right now my greatest dream is for someone to pay me $5,000 a year to ride my bike.” After a brief, contemplative pause, she adds what could be the ultimate truism of her career.

“You do this because you love it.”

Jen Trew

BC
In 1999, at the pinnacle of the dot-com boom, the successful tech firm I was working for was acquired by a company with zero revenue. No, it wasn’t a holding company. Rather, the owners, flush with cash, and investors, giddy with dreams of dot-com sugarplums dancing in their heads, were confident that the venture capital would keep rolling in — at least until they decided what, if anything, they would actually produce. Until that time, they were happy to simply gobble up other companies until eventually hitting upon a strategy that worked.

Today, a reborn high-tech sector has learned from past mistakes and continues to charge ahead with constant innovation. And on the leading edge is a growing phenomenon known as “podcasting”. If you’re not familiar with the term, here’s a quick primer. An increasing number of websites are posting audio (and, more recently, video) content to which you can subscribe (usually for free) and receive daily — or hourly in some cases — updates. You can then play these files on your computer or upload them to your iPod (or any MP3 player) to listen to them on the go. For instance, I refresh my podcast library regularly with a selection of reports from Slate, CNN.com and NPR.org. Of course, it wouldn’t be the Internet if you weren’t also able to tap into all manner of inanities, including daily podcasts featuring prank phone calls, celebrity interviews and Fox News.

What’s interesting, however, are the social phenomena to which podcasting has given rise as we try to figure where this new technology plugs in and where it’s a no-go. For example, last weekend my wife told me we had tickets to the ballet. Now, let me call attention to my master’s degree in English to point out that I’m able to muster some appreciation for the arts. Still, ballet just doesn’t turn my crank. Not wanting to be a party pooper, I hit upon what I felt to be a win-win compromise. I’d go with her, but I’d load my iPod with enough podcasts to get me through the 80-minute performance. But, to my genuine surprise, my wife, who puts up with most of my juvenile antics, made it clear that, were I to bring podcasts to the ballet, I’d create an embarrassing scene and no doubt perturb, or at least distract, those around me who actually wanted to be there the enthusiasts seated nearby.

Despite the whimsical uses I’ve found for podcasting, the technology has been applied to more serious ends. Specifically, Chinese podcasters have used the medium, which is currently able to fly under the radar of most government censors, to disseminate information that would likely run afoul of the party line.

And, in another sign of the times, Fitchburg State College, a four-year liberal-arts school in Massachusetts, has now begun notifying successful applicants via an upbeat podcast and also uses the technology for classroom activities. Those not making the Fitchburg cut, however, miss out on the virtual group hug and receive their brush-off the old-fashioned way: a form letter via snail mail.

But, as with anything, there are those who just can’t help themselves from making too much of a good thing. Recently in the U.K., Internet service provider BT has gone after broadband gluttons. These individuals, identified as “excessive users,” have been downloading between 100 and 200 gigabytes of data a month. To wrap your head around these numbers, note that 100 gigs corresponds to 800 billion keyboard characters of information. That’s a lot of podcasting. Maybe too much. Definitely too much.

Still, whatever your personal comfort level with technology, industry analysts predict that 25 per cent of Internet users will be accessing podcasts by the end of the year — the last time I saw growth this robust was in 2000 when I bought those shares in the pets.com IPO. Come to think of it, I haven’t seen a dividend lately. Anyone know if I can get stock quotes via podcast? BC

Cameron Elford is the managing editor of an athletics magazine and is determined to add some business savvy to his arts background. He is an MBA candidate, studying in the part-time program with UVic Business. Cam is our first ‘back-of-the-class’ contributor.
The Victoria Chapter held its first annual Business Alumni Curling Bonspiel at the Victoria Curling Club on February 4. The group of 64 alumni and friends curled several ends, enjoyed some great food and drink, and won fabulous prizes. The sold-out night was an overwhelming success and the chapter hopes next year’s event will be even better. Contact David Ballinger (BCom ’94) at lballinger@shaw.ca or (250) 704-0559 for information on how to get involved.

UVic alumni turned out to a night of fun and St. Patrick’s Day cheer at the Original Motorcycle Cafe in downtown Toronto on March 15. Food, prizes and of course green beer were enjoyed by all. The event was hosted by Kara Flanagan (President, UVic Alumni Toronto) and Tim McGuire (President, UVic Faculty of Business Alumni Toronto), pictured below.

This was the first time that the two groups had come together to host an event. “Based on the limited number of Commerce alumni in Toronto, it just makes sense to hold some joint events,” McGuire stated. Flanagan, a recent transplant to Toronto, contacted the university about getting the chapter going again after a three-year hiatus. “I think the alumni association is a great way for all UVic grads to stay connected with each other and with a great university,” says Flanagan. Based on the success of this event, another joint event is planned for the National Yacht Club in August — details and dates will be available at http://alumni.uvic.ca/events.html in the summer.

Jeff Gaulin and Howard Plato (both MBA ’02) are connecting with MBA alumni at informal meetings every month. If you would like to get involved with planning events or you just want to meet other MBA alumni for a drink, please contact Jeff at jeff.gaulin@molson.com.

An annual event is planned for BCom and MBA alumni in September, and further details will be available soon. Check the Business Alumni pages at www.business.uvic.ca for information.

The chair of the Vancouver Chapter has stepped down from his position, and therefore we are seeking new leadership. If you are interested becoming involved in your alumni association, please contact Amanda Wright, Alumni and Development Officer at UVic Business at arwright@uvic.ca.

Got Something On Your Mind?
Tell us what you like best about Business Class and what you could live without.
Send an e-mail to editor@business.uvic.ca and we’ll publish the results.

INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI CONTACTS
California – Jeffrey Harris
Romania – Roccos Cosmatos
Hong Kong – Alan Cheung

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL UVIC BUSINESS CHAPTER
Victoria – David Ballinger
calgary – Tracy Hatton
Toronto – Tim McGuire

KEEP IN TOUCH WE’D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU
Comments, ideas, classnotes, questions, change your address? You can contact us in the following ways:
Tel: (250) 721-6411
Fax: (250) 721-7221
editor@business.uvic.ca
Or visit our website at www.business.uvic.ca

EMAIL FOR LIFE
Following graduation from the University of Victoria, all students lose access to their @uvic.ca email accounts. This makes it hard for classmates to stay in touch, especially when people frequently change their work and hotmail addresses. Great news — there’s a solution! You can register for a permanent email forwarding address through Alumni Services. Simply visit www.olcnetwork.net/uvic/ and sign in using your Netlink ID. Click on “Email for Life” and follow the simple instructions. You can even keep the same alias — if you had johndoe@uvic.ca as a student you can register for johndoe@alumni.uvic.ca. It’s easy, and it’s free, and it’s the best way for your classmates to stay in touch with you.