

HINFormation

A Newsletter of the School of Health Information Science,
University of Victoria

January 2008

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome back to a new term. The past four months have been busy ones for faculty and students alike, and it looks like this term will be no different.

One of the School's greatest supporters, Steven Huesing, was presented a special COACH Lifetime Achievement Award at the Canadian Health Informatics Award Gala Review in November. Steven's current contribution to the field includes being editor/publisher of *Healthcare Information Management & Communications Canada*, the official journal of COACH, and President of the Canadian Healthcare Information Technology Trade Association (CHITTA). The Founding President of COACH, he has been instrumental in taking health informatics mainstream with the association for more than three decades. Congratulations, Steven!

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In addition to providing a free copy of the COACH magazine to each HINF student, Steven provides the annual COACH Found President's Award which includes a cheque for \$500 and a one year membership in COACH for the deserving student. Steven has also agreed to be the Co-chair for the **Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH 2009)** conference.

As part of the School's initiative to increase undergraduate student enrolment, we offered HINF 130 and 140 in both the fall and spring terms. We will also be offering HINF 130 in the May – August term. Eight undergraduate students joined us for our first official January entry. The next deadline for undergraduate applications will be March 31, 2008 (for September 2008 entry).

We will be having an open house at 4:30 on Tuesday, February 26 in HSD A300. If you have friends interested in the program (or who want to know more about either the undergraduate or graduate programs we offer) encourage them to come out and learn more about the School.

Hope you have a good spring term!

Andre Kushniruk,
Director

STUDENTS

Perfect 9.0 GPA

Congratulations to Dave Greig on receiving a perfect 9.0 GPA for the fall term while taking four courses and auditing one course. Well done, Dave!

Dave joined the Combined Major in Computer Science and Health

Information Science program in September 2006 and completed his first work term last summer with



Dave Greig

Providence

Healthcare at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver where he was able to utilize his skills, as he divided his time up between two positions: Clinical Analyst and Programmer. He noted in his work term report that "This work term was a fantastic learning experience and I couldn't be happier with the way things turned out."

November Grads

Landon Cunningham, Lindsay Forland (MSc), Nancy Gabor (MSc), Janine Greenwell, Wei Hong, Phyllis Lai, Shahid Manji, Steven Murenbeeld, John Martin (MSc), Aman Nurmohamed, Byung Park, Sumeet Sahota, Kate Tickner and Chaojun (Bonny) Zhou received their degrees at the November convocation ceremony. Congratulations and good luck to all.

This year we started our first official January entry point for the undergraduate program. We are very pleased to welcome Nathan Bowell, Jesse Gardner, Tashu Girn, Hua Jiang, Norman Jiang, Miranda Li, Courtney McQuair and Julia Pearson. Also joining the HINF family are new graduate students Greta Castillo, Shari Anne O'Keefe and Alan Yung in the distributed stream MSc program and Maryam Katani Shoshtary as an on-campus MSc student.

A Co-op Experience in Bonn, Germany



Tyrone Austen

Coming into my last co-op at UVic, I had a lot of ideas about what I wanted to do and where I wanted to end up. The thought that was most appealing to me at the time was to break away from the norm, and to attempt to get into some international work. I knew right away that this was going to be difficult, so around six months before the co-op term started, I went to Dave Hutchinson (the HINF co-op coordinator) for some help with arranging it.

Dave and I talked at length about the different possibilities of international co-op terms and how I should go about trying to get one. One of Dave's ideas was to contact my old professor, Benjamin Jung, about a possible placement at empirica, a consulting firm for the European Commission, which is located in Bonn, Germany. Benjamin had previously expressed to Dave his company's possible interest in taking on a co-op student from UVic before he left for Bonn earlier that year, so the chance was there. I contacted

Benjamin right away, and although he made clear that he would be interested in taking me on as an intern, he knew that it was going to be difficult for him to establish a contract for me, because his firm had never hired an international co-op student before. Due to this, I decided to go along with the normal co-op finding activities (applying for jobs on mycoop.ca and interviewing) while Benjamin attempted to work out the contract issues for me.

In the end, I had a very difficult decision to make, because I had interviews with three very interesting, well-paying jobs in Canada, and at the last minute (a day or two before the co-op job ranking day), I was contacted by Benjamin with a contract offer. There was one issue with this contract, however, and that was that it would only be for a minimal salary (in Europe, student interns make far less than they do in Canada, at least when compared to the HINF co-op program). As much as I would like to say that money isn't a factor when choosing a co-op placement, and that it's all about the experience, the bitter reality is that it is very important on a student budget to make 'ends meet' with co-op placements, so it was a factor that I had to put into strong consideration. After much thought and discussion with my girlfriend Lydia (who had to make the decision with me, since she too would be going to the co-op location), we decided to throw caution to the wind and make the trip to Germany. This ended up being one of the best decisions of my life!

Working at empirica was a great learning experience. There, I got the chance to see and participate in the research behind how some of the highest levels of policy decisions are being made. Although everyone there spoke English, there were still a few challenges for me to take on in order to adapt to my new settings. The main annoyance was that all of their computer systems (their operating systems, software, and even their keyboards) were in German! This made life quite difficult for me, but

luckily it didn't take me too long to adapt, because the work there started the second I walked through the door (orientation, evidently, isn't a word in German).

My task at empirica was to aid in one of their current research projects for the European Commission (EC), which was to report on the current situation in health standards (i.e. HL7, DICOM, SNOMED CT, etc.) around the world, especially those relating to the Electronic Health Record (EHR). As anyone who has looked into this topic knows, this is not an easy task, thus it involved numerous long days on the computer, researching a myriad of different standards from different regions, and analyzing their strengths and weaknesses. My colleague and I then pooled our research together to collaboratively write a draft report on the topic, which was then sent to the EC for review and comment. After the draft was sent away, my tasks shifted from research and reporting, to creating an online survey and developing a set of interview questions to poll experts from around the world about the standards situation. The remainder of my time at empirica was spent developing and implementing both the survey and the interview, as well as analyzing the results gathered. These were especially rewarding tasks, for they gave me the kind of insider/expert knowledge about the industry that would have been impossible for me to gain anywhere else.

As one would imagine, traveling to Europe isn't all about work. The adventures that my girlfriend and I got up to during our time off of work were enough to make anyone jealous (even the people who lived in Bonn). No other co-op position would have given me the chance to tour around the streets of Berlin, drink too many litres of beer at Oktoberfest in Munich, look over Paris atop of the Eiffel tower, meet up with an old traveling friend in Amsterdam, or eat a gelato whilst overlooking the Duomo in Milan, Italy (to say the least). Whether it be checking out the regional sites from around Bonn (the German sauna

complexes are an experience not to be missed) or hopping on an overnight train for a cheap (around \$40 CAD) international weekend trip, the times spent away from work on an international co-op are enough to fill a lifetime of memories.

I think that most people want to have experiences like this (world travel), but reject the idea of actually doing it due to thoughts of financial or other impossibilities. This, however, should not be the case due to some simple facts. It is a fact that it can be (and most often is) cheaper to fly to Germany than it is to fly within Canada (i.e. I paid \$300 for a one way flight to Bonn and around \$400 for a one-way trip to Toronto). It is a fact that living in Germany is much, much cheaper than living in Canada (i.e. I paid around \$375 for a two bedroom apartment, compared to what would be around \$1000 in Victoria, and grocery prices are roughly half of what we pay here... \$0.50 for a litre of German beer anyone??). It is also a fact that the University of Victoria has countless programs (i.e. scholarships) available to help students who are wishing to travel abroad. Put all of this together, and you come up with the fact that I ended up saving about as much living in Germany (and touring around Europe) as I would have by staying in Canada.

In hindsight, going off to a foreign land to take on a co-op with a lot of unknowns was definitely a risky endeavour, but it's these kinds of risks that can end up paying off the most in the end. I can't recommend enough to anyone interested to bite the bullet and see the world for one of your co-op placements. I guarantee that it will be one of the most memorable experiences in both your professional and personal lives!

For a full report of my co-op adventure (including pictures, videos, a how to guide on finding an apartment in Germany, and a digital rendering of Super Mario kicking me off of a train), check out my online co-op blog at: <http://tyrone-hinf.blogspot.com/>

Tyrone Austen

STUDENT UNION

On behalf of the HINF Student Union, welcome back! The HINF Student Union is a group of enthusiastic HINFers who are actively involved in organizing social events for the student body. Yes, we will be organizing a pubcrawl this semester (tentatively scheduled for February 29) as well! We are also currently planning a snooker/pool night at Peacocks. Want to get involved? We would love to have more involvement from the first and second year cohorts! If you have an event idea or would like to be directly involved in event organization, please feel free to email me at briancbc@uvic.ca.

Good luck this semester and we hope to see you out!

Brian Chou

ALUMNI

Alumni - London



On November 2nd, Denis and Pat Protti hosted a small wine and cheese get together for HINF alumni in London, UK. Shown in the picture above are Denis Protti, Tim d'Estrube ('02), Kate Lawrence ('03), Karalee Close ('95) and her daughter Sophia.



Sulma, Jai and Kiran

Sulma Gandhi (MSc '01) and husband Michael Letawsky are enjoying Hawaii all the more these days now that they are parents of twin boys. Jai Alexander Letawsky 6lb 9oz and Kiran Gabriel Letawsky 7lb 8oz. were born March 20, 2007.

Vanessa Magiera ('07) was the lucky candidate for a new position as a Clinical Telehealth Coordinator for the Siksika Nation. In this project she will be working with the Calgary Health Region, and the Siksika Health and Wellness Centre to deliver healthcare services to residents through the use of videoconferencing technology. The doctors involved are located in Canmore and on site. They are also going to work in conjunction with Elbow River Healing lodge. This project is unprecedented as the Siksika is a federally funded site, however they are using provincial dollars through Alberta Health and Wellness grants and the project is run through the Telehealth department at CHR.

Steve Pedersen ('02) has moved to Cardston, Alberta where he is working with the Alberta Public Health Association.

An Open Letter to Dr. Jennifer Zelmer from One of Her Many Admirers

January 19, 2008

Dear Jennifer:

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge your appointment as the first Chief Executive Officer of the new International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO). You take over leadership of a global not-for-profit association based in Denmark which is responsible on a global scale for the international release of the terminology SNOMED CT. SNOMED CT is the structured healthcare terminology, consisting of more than 300,000 unique medical concepts, which provides the foundation for electronic health records. It is used in more than forty countries and is rapidly becoming the global standard for healthcare terminologies.

I still remember the first time we met in March 1989. You came for an interview to enter our School. After conducting yourself very well, you left the room as my faculty colleagues and I completed our assessment forms. I opened the discussion with the comment that you were in my opinion an ideal and outstanding candidate. All agreed – there was really no need for any discussion. I then made a passing comment that my only reservation was that you seemed a wee bit immature for someone who was 27 years old. One of my colleagues quickly rebutted, “Protti, your arithmetic is wonky, this young woman is not 27, and she is only 17!”

You breezed through our program achieving A’s and A+’s in all the courses you took regardless of the subject. Not only were you constantly at the top of the class you were also on everyone’s favorite list. Faculty and students alike were constantly amazed how you could perform at such a high intellectual level and be such a wonderful person to boot.

You headed for Australia when you graduated in 1994, and we were so happy that you decided to return to Canada in 1995 to join the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) as an analyst. You are leaving CIHI as the Vice President for research and analysis, having quickly risen through the ranks. You will be remembered for many things but particularly for leading the teams responsible for developing CIHI’s annual report on health care in Canada.

While accomplishing much while at CIHI, you found the time to get your Masters degree and most recently you completed a doctoral thesis at McMaster University, focusing on the economic burden of chronic illnesses. You also became an adjunct lecturer at the University of Toronto, a Canadian Harkness Associate for the Commonwealth Fund in Washington D.C., a research associate with the Research Institute for Quantitative Studies in Economics and Population at McMaster University, and a member of a number of health-related boards and advisory committees.

It has been with a great deal of pride that we have watched your career progress – not that we can take much credit – you would have succeeded in any field of endeavor. I know a number of senior health care executives in Canada who tried to woo you to their organizations. The Canadian health care system has benefited tremendously from your commitment and contributions – and now the international community will profit as well.

We should have known you would end up on the world scene since most of your co-op education work terms were with a variety of health, academic, and governmental organizations in Australia, Denmark, and India. Daniel Forslund, an IHTSDO board member from Sweden and Chair of the Selection Committee, said that the Committee unanimously selected you based on your impressive track record of working in an international and political

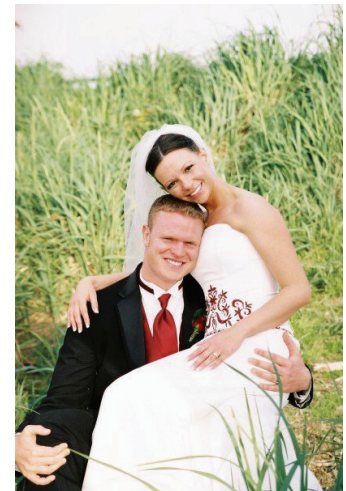
environment, and your extensive experience in successfully leading and motivating teams within a new organisation.

You are the epitome of all that we hope for in our students – someone who is bright, personable and a doer. Congratulations on your most recent accomplishment and best of luck in this very very important job. We will continue to monitor your progress and no doubt in a few years we will be praising your successes once again.

Good luck Jennifer.

Yours truly,

Denis Protti,
Professor



Wedding bells were the order of the day on May 12, 2007, for Colette Wells ('03) and Rob Snowden. Colette met her maid of honour, Emily Boulton ('03) while they were both students in the HINF program.



Ja-Neen Simmie ('99) and husband Carlos Janela are pleased to announce the birth of their "Irish twins" (above): son, James Manuel Janela was born on October 2nd 2006. He weighed in at 6 lbs 5 oz. and 11 months later daughter, Sophia May Janela was born on August 26th 2007. She weighed in at 3 lbs 14 oz and had to spend a couple of months at the Royal Alexandra NICU. She came home the end of October and is growing and doing well. Ja-Neen is still on maternity leave but plans to return to work this April at Capital Health Edmonton.

GRADUATE STUDENTS



Our graduate students continue to garner awards. PhD candidate Mowafa Househ won the award for Technology in Health Care at the first Northern B.C. *A Healthier You Expo and Forum* held in Prince George last November. This award was sponsored by the Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC to be awarded to a company/individual/organization that has developed, introduced or improved a technology product or has improved the interface or service between technology and health care which enhances health and wellness within Northern British Columbia.

Coach Award

Reza Shahpori, currently a student in our Distributed Stream Master's program was part of the team to win the COACH Innovation in the Adoption of Health Informatics Award for 2007.

The award went to the Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP) Surveillance System, Calgary Health Region, Calgary. The VAP Surveillance System project team members are Reza Shahpori, Critical Care Clinical Information System Manager; Alan Delosangeles, System Analyst; Pamela Ritchie, Infection Control Specialist; and Dr. Dan Zuege, Critical Care Physician Consultant.

Ventilator-associated pneumonia is considered to be one of the more serious life threatening ICU complications, despite it being entirely preventable. The Ventilator Associated Pneumonia Surveillance System demonstrates an innovative example of using health informatics for the purpose of quality improvement and patient safety.

The project was completed in one year and integrates data from several hospital and departmental systems to produce key information used in the evaluation of suspected cases of VAP. Infection control practitioners have access to patient demographics, vital physiologic data, radiology and microbiology reports and case-specific antibiotic utilization to study every case. Such data also enables the Department to assess the incidence of this calculation by site, time of year and by case mix. These findings drive improvement processes, and have resulted in a 75 per cent decrease in incidence over those years that, if sustained, could potentially translate to a \$1.7 million savings annually and ensure continued active participation of all stakeholders.

Co-op for HINF Graduate Students

Did you know that students pursuing a graduate degree in Health Information Science are eligible to participate in the Co-op program? This includes students in the Masters program (on campus as well as distributed) and the PhD program.

The primary purpose of Co-op is to complement what students learn during academic terms, with practical, experiential learning in the professional workplace.

Co-op for graduate students is an optional program; Masters students complete two 4-month work terms, while PhD students complete three terms. The work terms can be undertaken at any time during their program, in consultation with their committee.

We've had two graduate students complete work terms to date; due to the increasing enrollment in our graduate programs, we're hoping to see more graduate students available for work terms across the country.

If you have questions about Graduate Co-op, from either the employer or the student perspective, please contact:

Dave Hutchinson
HINF Co-op Coordinator
hiscoop@uvic.ca

MISCELLANEOUS

New website

If you haven't had a chance to do so, check out the "new look" on the School's website at <http://hinf.uvic.ca>. A new section on the site is "alumni". We are hoping to use this page to profile our alumni and show potential students what kinds of career opportunities are available. If you would like to participate, please contact Leslie Wood at lwood@uvic.ca

Career Forum



The second annual HINF Career Forum on October 17 was a big success due to the volunteer panel of Andre Kushniruk with alumni Jill Strachan ('91), Jeff Barnett (MSc '07), Goldie Luong('03) Michael Li ('03), and Janice Williams ('01). The contributions alumni make in supporting initiatives such as the Career Forums are very much appreciated by the School.

ITCH 2009

The biannual **Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH)** conferences are another example of how alumni support the School. The alumni helping out on the Steering Committee for ITCH 2009 are: John Bartle-Clar ('01) Poster Co-ordinator and Technical Co-ordinator; Peter Hughes ('90) Technical Co-ordinator; Jim McDaniel (PhD '94) Program Co-chair and Proceedings Editor; Al Schyf ('98) Exhibitor Co-ordinator; and Jill Strachan ('91) Sponsor Co-ordinator. The conference Co-Chairs are Andre Kushniruk and Steven Huesing.

Other members of the Steering Committee are former HINF director, Paul Fisher, Program Co-chair; Colin Partridge, Workshop Co-ordinator; Leslie Wood, Business and Promotion Co-ordinator; and members at large Elizabeth Borycki, Alyce Capron and Nancy Gault. The conference web site is at <http://itch.uvic.ca>.



REVOLUTIONIZING HEALTH CARE with INFORMATICS: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

February 19 – 22, 2009 Laurel Point Inn, Victoria, BC Canada

An international conference addressing Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH)

We would like to invite you to the tenth international conference addressing Information Technology and Communications in Health (ITCH)

Revolutionizing Healthcare with Informatics: From Research to Practice is the theme for the 2009 International Conference being held in Victoria, Canada February 19- 22, 2009.

Information technology affects nearly every aspect of healthcare today. Health information systems are seen by many as the critical element in improving and modernizing healthcare in Canada and internationally. In order to achieve this potential there will need to be a stronger bridge between research and practice in order to solve complex healthcare problems using technology and to develop best practices based on proven results.

This conference will be of interest and importance to all health professionals, clinicians, information technology experts, and anyone with an interest in the health care system.

Mark your calendars now and watch for conference updates at: <http://itch.uvic.ca>