UVic grads among the world’s most employable

Graduates from UVic are among the world’s most employable, according to a prestigious international ranking by Times Higher Education (THE).

THE’s 2019 Global University Employability Ranking report identifies UVic as the best Canadian university in preparing its students for the workplace, based on feedback from top international companies. Only nine Canadian universities made it into the international ranking, which was released in December.

UVic prioritizes dynamic, hands-on learning as a core focus of its student experience, with research-enriched experiential programming that includes co-operative education (co-op) work terms, practica, internships, field schools, research opportunities and more.

Three-quarters of UVic co-op graduates receive an offer of employment before they graduate, often returning to work for a former co-op employer in a full-time role. "Students tell us that the hands-on work experience they gain at UVic is transformative," says Andrea Giles, acting executive director of UVic’s Co-operative Education Program and Career Services. "They apply what they’re learning in class to solve real-world challenges, and in doing so, they develop confidence, connect with passionate professionals, and discover how they can positively impact the world around them.”

Student participation in co-operative education at UVic is also on the rise, with 45 per cent of eligible students taking part. Co-op integrates paid work experience with employers into students’ academic schedule. Last year, UVic co-op students completed 4,288 co-op terms with 1,520 different employer organizations around the globe, including 325 international work terms. Co-op is built right into programs for students in the faculties of engineering and business, and available as an option for students in most other areas of study across the university.

Google, Tesla, the Canadian Space Agency, Global Affairs Canada and Western Digital Thailand are among the diverse employers who hired UVic students for co-op terms in 2019. Google and Tesla also regularly hire UVic graduates—currently Google employs more than 50 UVic graduates, while Tesla has hired close to 20.

Here in BC, employers range from local small businesses to large-scale organizations. Companies such as AbeBooks turn to UVic to recruit new talent. Since 2011, the online book marketplace, which is a subsidiary of Amazon, has hired 84 UVic co-op students studying everything from software engineering and computer science to economics and global business. Amazon is likewise a long-time employer.

"AbeBooks has supported UVic’s co-op program for many years, integrating students into our technology and business teams," says Arkady Vitrouk, chief executive officer of AbeBooks. "We take around 10 UVic co-ops each year and we are always impressed by their knowledge, skills and creativity. With around a dozen UVic alumni currently employed at AbeBooks, we appreciate having this institution on our doorstep.”

Cross-campus strengths in THE subject rankings

In November, THE also released its 2020 world university rankings by subject, placing UVic programs in physical sciences and psychology among the Top 200 around the globe. These are in addition to previously announced Top-300 rankings for UVic in arts and humanities, computer science, and engineering and technology.

THE subject rankings comprise 11 broad subject areas that gather related disciplines together. For instance, THE’s physical sciences category includes the fields of chemistry, geology, environmental, earth and marine sciences, math and statistics, and physics and astronomy.
The new Student Housing and Dining Project will become more visible to the public as preparations begin in earnest. The planning phase begins at the beginning of the month—once the letters of intent have been received—planning, we are eager to be moving forward... The award will be presented at the magazine.

Austin Willis is one of 11 overall recipients—of the US-based award. The award will be presented at the magazine.

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The Victoria Hand Project extends its reach

BY ANNE TOLSON

A UVic initiative that provides 3D-printed prosthetic hands to Canadian and American students and patients is helping to increase global awareness and improve the quality of life of people living with amputations.

The Victoria Hand Project (VHP), led by mechanical engineer Nick Decker, received a $1 million award from the 2017 TD Ready Challenge. UVic was one of 16 grantees announced in December by the TD Bank Group.

The new funding will enable the not-for-profit VHP to provide low-cost 3D-printed prosthetic hands to Canadian and American students and patients to increase global awareness and improve the quality of life of people living with amputations.

Over the next three years, the grant will support VHP’s efforts to print thousands of prostheses and 160 children with scoliosis braces. The funding will also enable VHP to build a network of partner prosthetic and orthotic clinics that will refer patients living in remote and underserved regions to VHP for prosthetics.

“By leveraging new technologies and collaboration, we envision a future where our clinical partnerships are able to create high-quality prosthetic care that is accessible for many people who usually cannot afford this care,” says Nick Decker.

Since 2015, VHP has provided low-cost, 3D-printed prosthetic hands, primarily in developing countries, where access to prosthetic care is difficult and costly. The prostheses help amputees again function, improving their quality of life and increasing their access to employment and education.

Decker and VHP have been testing a similar approach to developing a cost-effective 3D-printed scoliosis brace. It’s estimated that between three and five children could be treated for $125 in 3D printed scoliosis braces compared to $250 in a custom-fitted brace.

The discovery, Wulff says, is another example of a scalable solution to help people on the planet who need it most.

Researchers at the University of Victoria, UVic’s Canada 150 Chair in Materials Science, and University of British Columbia have discovered a way to more efficiently sequester carbon dioxide in waste ocean basalt. The discovery offers a way to reduce the impact of climate change and directly address the Paris Agreement's binding targets.

“The new method ultimately leads to the surface being covered with the special solid carbonate—permanently removing CO2 from the atmosphere,” says Robina Thomas, executive director of UVic’s Office of Indigenous Affairs. “This not only helps to mitigate climate change, but is also safe and essential.”

These experts are able to navigate the world’s oceans to deliver a demonstration and UBC has an internationally-recognized research team on the Cascadia Basin.
Galaxy clusters reveal a 10-billion-year-old story

Using high-powered telescopes including NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope, scientists from Canada, the United States, and Denmark have captured the clearest image known of a cluster of galaxies from 3.5 billion years ago in a discovery that provides clues the universe was more evolved than previously thought.

The discovery is the best-case example found so far of gas, dust, rendered, some UVic astronomer Jon Willis, lead author of research published this month in the European journal Astronomy and Astrophysics.

Q. What is a galaxy cluster and what can they tell us about the universe?

A. A galaxy cluster can be likened to a great city of galaxies, though galaxies themselves are much smaller. A galaxy cluster can be likened to a great city of galaxies.

Q. What was the latest snapshot of a galaxy cluster like a Milky Way?

A. We’ve discovered what is the most ancient city of galaxies in the universe. It is the youngest snapshot of a galaxy cluster like a Milky Way.

Q. How unique is your discovery?

A. Our discovery of a young galaxy cluster is the most recent galaxies we have seen, which are those wonderful stories of clusters that are oldest—clusters are the carousel of massive black hole.

Q. You’ve captured these images using high-powered telescopes. How do you gain access to these tools?

A. Although the Hubble Space Telescope is the most recent telescope we used, which gives us those wonderful stories of clusters, we have used a number of telescopes to get to this discovery. This includes the European Space Agency’s SINS-Southern Sky Observatory, the Canada France Hawaii Telescope, and the European Southern Observatory’s Very Large Telescope.

Q. What’s next?

A. We are fortunate that the James Webb Space Telescope, which is the successor to Hubble, in late 2020 due in May 2020. We don’t need to show you an equation; I don’t need to know how to do a problem, I just want to know you how to do the brain.

Q. You’ve captured these images using high-powered telescopes. How do you gain access to these tools?

A. We are fortunate that the James Webb Space Telescope, which is the successor to Hubble, will launch the James Webb Space Telescope, a perfect match as Farghali needed a perfect match.

Q. What’s next?

A. We are fortunate that NASA is planning to launch the James Webb Space Telescope, which is the successor to Hubble, in late 2020 or early 2021. The first observing program is due in May 2020. Best asked for us to apply to study this cluster in much more detail.

Q. Are you providing a simple analogy for this discovery?

A. It’s the equivalent of meeting a child who grows up and sees the universe. We have not met these young clusters—when the universe was not only billions of galaxies, but in the early universe.

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Q. The Rockefeller Institute of Climate Change

A. There is no greater challenge today for the planet than climate change, says UVic astronomer Jon Willis, lead author of research published this month in the European journal Astronomy and Astrophysics.

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When doctors see big data

BY JENNIFER KWAN

VCU health informatics graduate student Ame Farghali has developed a tool to help hospitals manage a deluge of patient data—improving the speed and accuracy of cancer diagnosis.

“The human immune system is a complex system that needs to be understood in order to improve cancer treatments,” says Elizabeth Borycki, assistant professor of health informatics. “By using our data-driven tool, hospitals can improve their capabilities with the latest technology.”

Farghali’s tool, called the Virtual Clinical Assistant, uses artificial intelligence to analyze medical records and predict patient outcomes. The Virtual Clinical Assistant uses artificial intelligence to analyze medical records and predict patient outcomes.

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New cancer screening methods automated visual data for faster diagnosis, more accurate care BY UVIC’S HEALTH INFORMATICS

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BY ANNE MACLAURIN

Last August, as the sun set on the Serengeti National Park, 19 UVic geography students and their instructors arrived in Tanzania to begin a month-long field school on conservation management.

Despite the difficulties of water rationing and extreme weather, it was a trip of a lifetime for the students, who immersed themselves in the customs and culture of Tanzania while learning about local forest management and ecological conservation practices.

The students—led by geography professor Phil Dearden, adjunct professor Bruce Downie and teaching assistant Emmanuel Ole Kileli—divided their time between two locations: the Mkange village near Saadani National Park and the Enguserosambu community forest lands (the traditional homeland of the Loita Maasai).

Many of the students had not previously travelled outside Canada, remarked Dearden, but they demonstrated an openness and willingness to engage with the local communities.

“We were very impressed with the students’ resilience—they never complained even though it was cold and windy in the Maasai camp and water was rationed,” says Dearden.

The students were tasked with group projects, and final assignments focused on practical suggestions on how to improve various aspects of the Maasai conservancy area. The Maasai have been engaged with forest management for generations, but were open to sharing ideas and best practices.

Chenchah Shine, a recent geography graduate, said, “my favorite part of the field school was the opportunity to engage with the Loita Maasai people of the Enguserosambu Ward. This experience was enlightening. I believe the opportunity to try and understand different epistemological view is so important for the development of compassionate, engaged, critical and open-minded citizens.”

Shine explained how, “in the formation of this project we interviewed locals in their homes, met with the Elders Council and Enguserosambu Forest Trust board, and learned about Maasai forest management practices from our local guides during forest walks.”

UVic and the Loita Maasai have shared a partnership through the Kesho Trust for a number of years. Last spring, the UVic geography department hosted a visit from some members of the Loita Maasai who travelled to BC to share approaches to resource management and traditional lands.

For fourth-year UVic student Rachel Stewart-Dzaima, the Mkange village stood out. “The people were incredibly friendly and welcoming,” she said, “eager to know about our experiences in Tanzania. The village was vibrant with bright colours and bold patterned fabric. Chickens wandered between red mud homes as children played. Women fanned cooking fires, working together in the shade.”

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A storied rivalry in Canadian university men’s rugby fifteen championships culminated on Sherbrooke Field on Nov. 24 in Montreal. The Vikes and UBC Thunderbirds, both powerhouse rugby programs in BC, went head to head in the final seconds of play, with no time on the clock.

The victory was the program’s third championship title following wins in 1997 and 1998. After 1999 the Canadian University Championship went on hiatus but was resurrected in 2017 thanks to the Canadian Rugby Foundation. The Vikes earned a silver medal in 2017 and then hosted and finished with a bronze medal in 2018. This season’s eight-team tournament was hosted by Concordia University and included teams from Western Canada, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

On Nov. 24, long-standing head coach Doug Tate showed his experience as he led the Vikes to overcome an early 12-0 deficit. UVic’s James O’Neill scored two tries, both converted by Jonner Teufel, to leave the Vikes trailing 14-12 at half time.

The Vikes continued when Nick Carson scored a third try for his side and Teufel converted to leave the Vikes up 21-15. UBC had a chance to take the game in the final seconds of play as a try from Evan Morris put the Thunderbirds down by one. A missed convert left the Vikes victorious, 21-20, with no time on the clock.

O’Neill was named the game’s MVP. The win marked UVic’s 80th overall national championship won across all sports. It’s also the second championship won this fall following the Vikes women’s field hockey team claiming their second-straight national title in November.

She said sitting outside with the Maasai’s Enguserosambu Ward’s Elders Council discussing how their climate change was a moment she would never have imagined.

“Their desire to contribute to the global effort forced us to take a closer look at what Canadians are doing and how we can play our part in mitigating climate change,” added Stewart-Dzaima.

After the students completed their community projects and before their long flight home, they had an opportunity to go on a safari and really explore the environment that was home to the Maasai.

“We arrived at the Serengeti world heritage site at dusk,” said Dearden, “as we drove into the national park we saw a beautiful male lion babysitting five playful cubs, not five yards from the road. The cubs jumped on him, chewed his mane—it was an incredible experience.”

The students returned to Canada with a new appreciation for other cultures and ways of knowing as well as a deeper commitment to conservation management.

“It was an important experience in my educational career that provided perspective and strategies to meet the growing challenges of our time—it was an inspiration,” said a student.

The Tanzania field school will be offered again in 2020 by the Department of Geography. Please visit the department website for more details.

Energy week Week FEB 1-7

PHOTO: PHIL DEARDEN

PHOTO: PHIL DEARDEN

Students on a safari, Serengeti National Park.

A women’s meeting during the field school.

Vikes on their way to the championship.

UVic women’s rugby crowned national champions