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Bemused in Brussels
FIVE YEARS AGO I introduced myself as the new dean of Gustavson. The time since then has sped by and I have just been reappointed for a second term. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve this school and I look forward to building on what we have already accomplished.

These five years have seen broad growth and change at the school: A fifth cohort was added to our BCom program. 1,387 graduates have joined our alumni ranks, two of them with PhDs. We’ve launched both a weekend-format MBA and a corporate MBA, and three new MGB paths. We’ve expanded our Executive Programs significantly with a series of entrepreneurship programs for First Nations. We’ve also initiated the Gustavson Brand Trust Index.

And yet, at the same time, many of the important things that we value and cherish have remained unchanged.

While the school has grown, we still value the small-school feeling and the strong connections between students, faculty and staff. We still provide an integrated educational experience, breaking down silos and reinforcing the experiential nature of our education. We still encourage and support a global point of view. And, we still promote a greater sense of purpose, commitment to responsible management.

Our desire is for all of our grads to be successful and we recognize that success comes in many different forms. We are proud of our grads for many reasons that go beyond financial success alone. We are proud of our global impact, their community-mindedness, their curiosity and innovation, and their boundary-spanning thinking. We see that it is not only possible to do well while doing good, but that it is core to our future and theirs. And, we are pleased that others recognize the work we have accomplished.

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Welcomes All

OVER THE NOVEMBER 17 to 19 weekend, UVic’s final event marking Canada’s 150th anniversary, the Victoria Forum, takes centre stage. The Forum was designed as a neutral space where policy players and change makers could examine troubling global and local issues, sort fact from fiction and recommend ideas for change. The inaugural Victoria Forum’s theme is Canada@150: Promoting Diversity and Inclusion.

Nationally recognized leaders will speak in six tracks: Diversity and Economic Prosperity; Economics of Indigenous Inclusiveness; Geopolitics of Diversity; Defining Climate Justice; Private Philanthropy; Civil Society and Inclusive Development; and Global Trade and the Economics of Diversity. Seven partners support co-hosts UVic and Global Affairs Canada in this venture: the Canadian International Council; The Conference Board of Canada; the Global Centre for Pluralism; Philanthropic Foundations Canada; the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation; World Wildlife Fund Canada and the Haida Enterprise Corporation. The Gustavson School of Business is platinum sponsor; other sponsors include TELUS and Vancity; media sponsors Corporate Knights and Victoria Times Colonist; venue sponsor Victoria Conference Centre and travel sponsor Flight Centre. For more information on Victoria Forum, go to www.victoriaforum.ca

FoMO? See The World from Here

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How an international internship helped one MGB grad master the world of global business

by Jessica Kirby

From Victoria to Peru and the Netherlands, and back to North America, Spencer Smitheman, MGB ‘17, has studied global business in the best possible classroom—the global community.

Having done so, he developed a cross-cultural perspective of adaptability in the business world he couldn’t have gained from academic learning alone.

The MGB program at UVic is unique among business schools. Students begin with a three-month term at UVic before moving on to second and third terms at partnering institutions in other countries (the Netherlands and Peru, in Smitheman’s case); they finish with an international internship in a fourth location.

Smitheman says the program has challenged him to look at work differently, giving him an enhanced appreciation for multi-disciplinary work and numerous cultural perspectives.

“The experience of producing a high volume of work on diverse teams is something that seems limited to multi-national business when presented in an academic context, but it has been a reality in the internship I fulfilled at the Embassy of Canada in Washington, D.C.,” he says.

“I’ve had to manage intercultural relationships on a daily basis, tapping into an understanding of high or low context; direct or indirect communication; and differing cultural sensitivities to hierarchy. These skills help me navigate the complicated network of culture and high-demand work, which doesn’t allow for time to test communication means before being expected to perform.”

The internship built upon the international economic contexts that are at the core of the MGB program.

“While at the embassy, I was required to analyze the effects of specific policy actions on industry and business stakeholders throughout Canada,” says Smitheman. “This experience emphasized the business implications of a cultural shift, as seen in the change of American administration, and the need to mitigate these implications for the benefit of trading relationships.”

Working in government changed the way he viewed international business by providing perspective on the overarching framework that supports business.

“Working on trade and economic policy in government has shown me the extent to which macroeconomic success relies upon strong trade, particularly in the 21st century, and how managing these policies is necessary to have a strong overall marketplace,” he says. “The internship was unlike anything I’d experienced before, both in intensity and in terms of the opportunities it provided to develop a new skillset in a short period of time,” he says.

Before working at the embassy, Smitheman only had a passing understanding of policy analysis, but through the internship he quickly discovered he had a natural ability in this area. The role required him to take political events, interpret the policy implications for Canada in a range of topics related to the portfolio, and then synthesize them into easily readable reports for government officials.

“In the process I was lucky enough to work on briefings for the ambassador to the U.S., and supported Prime Minister Trudeau’s first visit to Washington to meet with President Trump,” he says.

Smitheman’s MGB journey took him to the Netherlands and Peru, where he and his cohort explored in and out of the classroom. Left: Smitheman while on co-op in Washington, D.C.

Smitheman feels fortunate his internship provided a direct contact to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) in Ottawa—it was through this network he was able to find the job he recently began as policy analyst/economist for ISED.

The MGB program offered numerous practical and personal skills and perspectives with direct application in the working world, but the most important of these for Smitheman were adaptability, intercultural sensitivity and the ability to tailor messages to different audiences.

“These three components were required—either explicitly or implicitly—to perform well in the MGB program, and they are the skills I find most valuable now that I’m in the workforce,” he says. “The international perspective afforded by the program has stayed close to my heart and continues to shape how I view the world, in both my personal and work environments.”

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There’s no question that classrooms themselves have undergone seismic shifts since Scott was sitting in the student seat as an undergrad. Smart classrooms offer all manner of interactive experiences, from live-polling student responses to video conference calls with guest instructors in far-flung locales. But has the content of hospitality courses changed that much, really? “Some things are different, for sure,” Scott agrees, “but there are many fundamentals that are just as essential now as when I was the student, not the teacher.”

Scott spent 15 years in senior finance roles in the hotel industry prior to embarking on a career change to become an educator. His passion for the hospitality world is immediately obvious, and he’s taken on his new pedagogical role with equal zeal.

In June 2017 Scott completed his Masters of Education at Simon Fraser University, which has had him pondering the big questions—everything from how to balance applied learning with theoretical fundamentals to the impact of apps and social media on businesses, and questioning whether his lesson plans are inclusive for students from different cultural and ideological backgrounds. “I see everything differently now,” Scott enthuses. “I’m looking at traditional delivery methods and seeing if there’s ways to change things up a bit to make them more responsive and flexible to current student needs.”

While technology is a big piece of the puzzle, the theories that underpin its use are as essential as they have always been. Point of purchase (POP) systems, for example, are ubiquitous throughout the hospitality industry. It’s imperative that students know what they are and how to use them, but how do you choose which software to train students on? What if the product you purchase doesn’t driving the apps: customer service excellence. When you distill down all the comments and rating systems, a good service experience is at the core of what people are looking for. The fundamentals of service management excellence are as timeless as Tweets are ephemeral, and it’s those strong foundational skills that Scott says will always be needed in the market place, no matter what changes we’ll see in the classrooms of the future.

So, what does Scott see next on the horizon? “I think we’ll see even more collaboration between theoretical and applied learning models going forward,” he predicts, “with instructors exploring more and more ways to mesh academic and applied student learning.”

Scott has seen the impact of experiential learning and co-op work placements in his own learning journey, as well as from the viewpoint of a course instructor. “There is no question, students come back changed from their co-op work term experience,” he says. “They get the chance to apply the theory they have been learning in their courses in real-life situations. When they return to their studies, they’re able to apply their skills to a wide range of situations and challenges.”

And smart classrooms in his world? An operational pub, of course. Dunlop House is a big part of first-year hospitality student learning. They are responsible for pub operations, including menu preparation, food costing and much more—all as well as from the viewpoint of a course instructor. “There is no question, students come back changed from their co-op work term experience,” he says. “They get the chance to apply the theory they have been learning in their courses in real-life situations. When they return to their studies, they’re able to apply their skills to a wide range of situations and challenges.”

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21 years ago, Stephen Scott, BCom ’96, was a Gustavson student with a specialization in hospitality. Today, he’s at the front of the classroom, teaching students in his capacity as program leader for Camosun College’s hospitality, tourism and golf management program. Business Class caught up with him to ask: how has what’s taught in the hospitality classroom changed in the intervening years, and what enticed him to teach after more than a decade as a practitioner?

Business Class  |  PETER B. GUSTAVSON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Although the Soviet Union’s domination of Eastern Europe ended decades ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the institutional legacies of communism are still a reality for the generation of workers who began careers in that era.

“According to imprinting theory,” says Dr. Wade Danis, “adults who were trained in the communist era were not ‘blank slates’ after communism’s collapse. They transitioned into the new market reality with a repertoire of communist-acquired experiences that their non-communist-socialized colleagues did not inherit.”

Danis, an associate professor at Gustavson, recently contributed to a paper analyzing how exposure to communism influenced workplace behaviour. Titled “Communist Footprint and Subordinate Influence Behaviour in Post-Communist Transition Economies,” the paper specifically looked at how willing individual workers were to prioritize the good of the organization over personal gain. As part of an effort to better contextualize workplace behaviours within individual countries, Danis and his research colleagues are keen to grasp these patterns of behaviour—or what they term communism’s “footprint.” Danis, who focuses on transitional economies in countries like the Czech Republic, also refers to these after-effects by the more colourful term “hangover from communism.”

So what does this particular kind of hangover mean for workplace behaviour?

“In this study,” says Danis, “we measured whether the employee showed organizationally constructive or destructive behaviour. In other words, did they prioritize the interests of the organization? Or did they consistently disregard what would benefit the organization, and put their own interests first?”

Which route an individual chooses to go depends upon a couple of factors: the length of time exposed to communism and where in the hierarchy of an organization he or she was employed at the time of the study. To test this framework, Danis and his colleagues collected survey data on professionals working in organizations in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia and Slovenia. According to their study, an individual in a lower-level position who spent more time working under a communist government is less likely to be well-disposed towards the organization. For example, one would probably not work overtime in order to get a project finished. “They take a ‘beat the system’ attitude,” says Danis, “even if their behaviour hurts the company.”

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This is because under communism, they often saw their superiors as corrupt, unaccountable and indifferent to their own plight. “The idea of employee of the month recognition such as we have here in the West would be viewed with distrust,” says Danis. “Ambitions to achieve such recognition would be perceived as complicit and sucking up.”

On the other hand, Danis explains that those similarly low in the hierarchy but with shorter exposure to a communist regime are less likely to harbour ill will towards their organization. Particularly if they encountered market liberalization at a younger age, they will be more convinced that helping the organization to succeed will result in reward.

Interestingly, for those in a higher position in an organization, the correlation between length of time and organizationally destructive behaviour is not as strong.

A possible explanation for this, Danis says, is that they now have the opportunity to shape their organization’s strategy, whereas they recall how subordinates were required to obediently follow orders under the communist system. A shift in mindset occurs. Rather than act authoritarian, they act both in the interests of the organization and for the interests of their subordinates, whom they are more likely to respect. In fact, the longer the exposure to communism in this case, the less the individual tolerates or exhibits behaviours that tarnish the organization.

Although the impact of communism continually recedes from the former Eastern Bloc with the passing of time, Danis views the transition of these countries’ economies as a “natural experiment” worthy of further examination. The knowledge gained is useful for managers working with individuals socialized in the communist era, as it may guide them in how they communicate, motivate and collaborate with them as employees, as well as for those working in these transition companies themselves. However, even as echoes of communism in this region fade, and the number of impacted individuals in the workforce grows smaller, new applications for this research are on the horizon.

“While this particular paper focused on common behavioural legacies in several post-communist countries,” says Danis, “the reality is that there are many different ‘flavours’ of communism and authoritarianism rule, each of which might influence behaviours in different ways. It would be useful to explore these differences and also to determine whether our findings can be extended to existing communist countries, such as China, Cuba and Vietnam.”
Before coming to UVic to pursue an MBA, Bodie Elliott had already worked for almost a decade with PIC Investment Group Inc., a private equity firm in her native Saskatchewan.

That far exceeded the three years of work experience needed to exempt her from the mandatory co-op work placement required by the MBA program. But Elliott, 34, took a co-op job anyway.

She had a “lot of reasons” for that decision. “The first was it’s very rare in your life that you have the opportunity to go into a business for a short period of time with the mantle of a student, and the ability to learn and stick your nose into absolutely everything,” Elliott says. She recently completed her co-op assignment as a patrol workload analyst with the Saanich Police.

Elliott, who finishes her MBA next June, adds that she found her coworkers happy to share with her because, as a student, “you’re not coming in to potentially take their position; you’re just there to learn.”

It was a similar situation this past summer for Gozde Ozbilim, who had three years of work experience in her native Turkey, first with Turk Telekom, and then with a small internet firm, yemeksepeti.com.

“Coming from another country, I have never experienced work life in Canada,” says Ozbilim, 27. “So this was my first concern. As an intern, as a co-op student, I wanted to be able to experience how the work culture work life, looks in Canada.”

Ozbilim also seized it as an opportunity to find work in a whole new field—computer gaming, with one of the biggest names in the industry, Electronic Arts Canada.

“The co-op was a great opportunity to taste that and see if I’m a good fit for the industry—whether I like it, what are the dynamics of the sector,” says Ozbilim, whose placement was as a business analyst at the company’s Canadian headquarters in Vancouver.

It turns out that most MBA students at UVic’s Sardul S. Gill Graduate School of Business take a co-op job even though only about five in the typical cohort of 40 are required to do so, says Brad Erikson, who served as one of seven co-op coordinators in the MBA program.

A recent survey found that 18 of 49 MBA students were either determined or hoping to have a co-op placement. “That means that 33 were not required and they’re choosing to pursue one,” Erikson says.

About three quarters of UVic MBA students come from outside Canada and “nearly every single one” is looking for Canadian work experience, he adds. “The majority want to remain in Canada,” Erikson says. “Therefore, Canadian work experience is paramount to moving their career forward.”

Many students are also looking to change careers after obtaining their MBAs. “If they can get some kind of experience in that new career area before they graduate, it has a tremendous impact on their career moving in the direction they want,” Erikson says.

Those were both considerations for Uma Sundari, who worked with IBM in Bangalore, India before coming to UVic. “If there’s an opportunity to pursue a career in Canada after my MBA, then I think it’s important to have some kind of meaningful experience here to build on,” says Sundari, 27. “And you get to know more about how the businesses work here.”

Her recent co-op job was as a policy and research analyst with the B.C. Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology. (Actually, it was the Ministry of International Trade when she started her work term but changed its name when the New Democratic Party of B.C. took power in July.)

Her work term was not only an introduction to Canadian work culture but also to the public sector, so her co-op term simultaneously gave her a better understanding of both worlds. “I found the working culture very welcoming,” says Sundari. “Combined with my work experience before the program, I now feel prepared for a career in either public or private sector.”

All three students indicated that their co-op jobs resulted in meaningful work.

“I’m happy I decided to do a co-op,” says Elliott. “It’s been an important facet of my MBA experience. It allowed me to explore a completely new role in a low-risk way. And most fulfilling was the knowledge that I was able to contribute—that the organization would use the report I gave them at the end of the term for decision-making purposes.”

“The co-op was a great opportunity to see if I’m a good fit for the industry—whether I like it, what are the dynamics of the sector.” — Gozde Ozbilim
Amie Hubick, BCom ’98, counts himself fortunate to have helped channel millions of dollars to individuals in developing countries through his work with global microlending organization Opportunity International. Although this does flip the notion of the recipient being the fortunate one, it makes perfect sense once you understand Hubick’s personal philosophy: for him, it’s all about striving to achieve purpose by giving back.

“Like everyone, I am in process, and I am not suggesting that I have ‘the answer,’” says Hubick. “I just think there is an opportunity for us all to benefit from the greater meaning that comes with trying to help others.

“One person who I think said it well was psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl,” says Hubick. “He articulated the notion that, in the absence of purpose, people pursue pleasure. In my experience, pleasure is an elusive emotional state, if you’re pursuing it for its own sake. It requires an ever-increasing amount of input to achieve the same pleasure. I want to find a more sustained fulfillment.”

At the time that he came across Frankl’s quote, Hubick was working at Opportunity International as regional director of philanthropy. In his research, he found that poverty was the root cause of many major worldwide crises, ranging from human trafficking and indebted servitude to lack of clean water and infant mortality.

“This perspective made the contrast with what he saw unfolding in North American culture all the more striking. Culturally, we often teach young people to think that the primary goal is to make armloads of money,” says Hubick. “But sometimes the human connection gets sacrificed in that value system.”

In this context, Frankl’s idea of purpose supplanting the quest for pleasure made sense to Hubick. “If you think about it, purpose can load to fulfillment, which for some is a more enduring version of pleasure. For me, purpose is intrinsically tied to philanthropy. That means using whatever resources you have right now—time, money, expertise, whatever—to support the causes you love.

“But for lots of people, it can be really difficult to tap into the exact type of philanthropy that will give them that sense of real connection.”

His work with Opportunity International, which he still performs on a consulting basis, takes Hubick all over the world to show international donors the impact of their contributions. He sees firsthand how different donors connect with different projects, and for different reasons—some like to see numbers and data, some like to meet the people who will benefit from a particular program.

“There is an element of both magic and logic to every connection,” says Hubick. “90 percent of people give from an emotional place, which is why aid and crisis relief have historically received the lion’s share of funding. Development work, whether local or global, has had a harder time finding funding because it does not feel as urgent.”

For donors to get the most out of whatever contributions they choose to make, it’s important that the person first connects with a cause that fits their purpose.

“So many people take a shotgun approach to their philanthropic efforts,” says Hubick. “They aren’t sure what to prioritize, so they end up scattering the resources they have to give, and it doesn’t achieve the lasting effect that it could. Legacy is fulfilled when you have an idea of the impact you want to make and then act with intention to achieve that impact.”

Hubick developed a chart to help people zero in on what matters to them from a giving perspective (see page 18). But for him, philanthropy has gone beyond something you do with your spare time and money. It’s built right into a personal philosophy that extends through his Victoria-based real estate development company, Hub Studio. His work with the full-service architectural design and building firm allows him to focus on leading from within the business community.

“I want to use business as a vehicle for increased purpose in life. Instead of thinking of philanthropy as something you tack on after becoming successful, if you integrate it, you achieve growing and ongoing fulfillment.”

“I know this philosophy will continue to adjust and change as I am challenged by my peers, mentors, and anyone who is willing to commit to the dialogue. We have neighbours all around the world who are less fortunate than us, and it simply takes living with some intention to make a lifelong change with very little effort. I was given opportunities, and I want to pay that forward.”

The Philosophy of Philanthropy

The Philosophy of Philanthropy

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One sector that has rapidly evolved, however, is the world of the chartered professional accountant (CPA, also known previously as CA). Stigmatized at one time as number crunchers, today’s CPA has to juggle a lot of balls—from HR and capital budgeting to resourcing and valuations.

CPAs are now considered a key member of the business family. A recent survey by recruitment firm Robert Half found that nearly one quarter of FTSE 100 CEOs come from a background in accounting. That’s great news for Gustavson graduates planning to become CPAs, and despite not offering an accounting specialization, Gustavson continues to produce some of the finest CPAs in Canada.

“We actively seek Gustavson BCom graduates because of the reputation of the school,” says Sybil Verch, national director wealth management for Raymond James Ltd. “The program is extremely well balanced, more so than most schools that offer an accounting- or finance-specific degree. It allows students to think outside the box and gain far more valuable real-life skills. Gustavson’s graduates are more prepared for the world of accounting and finance that we find ourselves in today.”

In a world of constant change, staying relevant remains a key business challenge. Technology, globalization, open markets, fierce competition, corporate social responsibility—just some of the factors that have upended the business environment and put many sectors a little, shall we say, on edge.

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The urge to help others is hardwired into all of us, in different ways. Veteran philanthropy adviser Jamie Hubick (see p. 16-17) has helped hundreds of people come up with a strategy to help their gifts connect with the causes that mean the most to them.

Do you know what makes your generous side take over? Ponder these questions to learn more about your giving style.

**WHEN YOU DONATE TO A CAUSE, DO YOU:**

- Think more about how it makes you feel to give than what the outcome will be?
- Calculate what impact your gift will have in 10 years?
- Give your gift to an organization to use as they choose, with no restrictions around what person or project it goes to?
- Ask to see the projections of growth resulting from your gift?
- Accept that part of your gift will go to operational costs?
- Support projects with a long-term focus, like microfinance and infrastructure?
- Plan each gift carefully, well in advance?

**IF YOU TICKED MORE BOXES ON THE LEFT, YOU ARE AN EMOTIVE GIVER.**

“Ninety percent of people who give to a cause do so as emotive givers,” says Hubick. “It’s a widespread response for us as humans to see someone in distress and want to help.” This type of emotional giving, because it’s often providing aid to those in crisis, is sometimes more immediately visible in its result. Think: food and medical help to an area that’s just experienced a natural disaster.

**IF YOU CHECKED MORE BOXES ON THE RIGHT, YOU ARE A STRATEGIC GIVER.**

You are in the small minority of philanthropists who are more focused on outcomes and long-term impact than short-term relief. You are more likely to believe that charitable organizations will use your money more effectively if they have the freedom to take risks and innovate in the name of long-term change. Think: micro-loans for small businesses in developing countries.

**WHAT KIND OF PHILANTHROPIST ARE YOU?**

- Do you know what makes your generous side take over? Ponder these questions to learn more about your giving style.
- Do you know what makes your generous side take over? Ponder these questions to learn more about your giving style.

**WHEN YOU DONATE TO A CAUSE, DO YOU:**

- Think more about how it makes you feel to give than what the outcome will be?
- Calculate what impact your gift will have in 10 years?
- Give your gift to an organization to use as they choose, with no restrictions around what person or project it goes to?
- Ask to see the projections of growth resulting from your gift?
- Accept that part of your gift will go to operational costs?
- Support projects with a long-term focus, like microfinance and infrastructure?
- Plan each gift carefully, well in advance?

**IF YOU TICKED MORE BOXES ON THE LEFT, YOU ARE AN EMOTIVE GIVER.**

“Ninety percent of people who give to a cause do so as emotive givers,” says Hubick. “It’s a widespread response for us as humans to see someone in distress and want to help.” This type of emotional giving, because it’s often providing aid to those in crisis, is sometimes more immediately visible in its result. Think: food and medical help to an area that’s just experienced a natural disaster.

**IF YOU CHECKED MORE BOXES ON THE RIGHT, YOU ARE A STRATEGIC GIVER.**

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Bhavjit Thandi  (BCom '09) Senior Accountant at KPMG LLP

Did you always want to get into accounting? No. Definitely not! My father gave me three options: become a doctor, lawyer or accountant. My sister became the doctor, so I decided to become an accountant. Joking aside, it was after joining Gustavson that I decided, of the different directions you can take a business degree, accounting appealed to me the most.

What were some of the unique advantages of the Gustavson program? The program makes you more well rounded. You learn to manage people and clients. It’s definitely redefined today’s world of accounting. Accounting has become a very people-focused sector that oversees a variety of business operations. Clients look to you for a lot of answers and Gustavson gives you those skills.

What additional courses did you complete to become a CPA? UVic offered eight of the 12 CPA prerequisites, so I went to Camosun College to finish the remaining four. To complete the CPA program you need to do a certain number of hours, so I joined PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) audit team to achieve my required audit hours. It’s a big learning curve, client issues in real life aren’t as easy as the issues in textbooks.

Tell us about your job. After working at PwC for two years, I decided to move into reviews. I made the switch because my dad was asking if I could do his taxes and I said, “Dad, I just work on the audit team, the tax comes under the CPA so I got me thinking. So I switched to the review side and I moved to KPMG. It’s a whole different ball game. I’m doing tax returns, T2s and working with smaller businesses.

What advice do you have for Gustavson grads wanting to become CPAs? I would definitely recommend going into auditing first to get your experience. Working in a large audit team allows you to better understand what you are up against. Then you can make the switch to the reviews side and don’t think you will just be stuck as an accountant. There are so many opportunities for CPAs today.

Lauren Melton (BCom '13) Financial Reporting Analyst at Aritzia

Did you always want to get into accounting? I never really considered a future in accounting until my final co-op term at an investment firm, where I worked alongside a number of CPAs. They opened my eyes to the vast opportunities that are available upon obtaining your designation. My colleagues at my school and professional mentors to this day. I would not have been in a position to seriously think about what I would need in order to seriously pursue a career there.

What were some of the unique advantages of the Gustavson program? Coming from Gustavson gave me a huge advantage when going through the recruiting process in Vancouver because I had a much wider range of professional background compared to candidates that simply earned a bachelor’s in accounting. The social aspect of Gustavson certainly prepared me for recruiting events and engaging in conversation with new people. They opened my eyes to the vast opportunities that are available upon obtaining your designation. My colleagues at my school and professional mentors to this day. I would not have been in a position to seriously think about what I would need in order to seriously pursue a career there.

What additional courses did you complete to become a CPA? Upon graduation I participated in full recruit in Vancouver and accepted a full-time offer with KPMG. I then enrolled at British Columbia Institute of Technology to complete the prerequisite classes. After I started at KPMG, I was very fortunate to meet a lot of very intelligent and friendly people who I consider mentors to this day. I would not have been able to learn as much as I did without their help.

Tell us about your job. My group and I are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the systems and processes of the company are prepared in accordance with Canadian Generally Accepted Accounting Policy and are filed on the T51 each quarter. Some of my major responsibilities include preparation of the multi-entity consolidation, bank compliance reporting and financial statement note support. In addition, I have had the opportunity to do various accounting courses to assess the impact of IFRS guidance updates/changes on our reporting process.

What advice do you have for Gustavson grads wanting to become CPAs? To me it is exciting to provide a meaningful service to people no matter what industry or sector I am in. For those looking to become CPAs, I encourage you to look into various conventional and dream big! The designation is an indication of experience (trust me, in an entry-level role) for your school and professional experience (trust me, in an entry-level role) for your school and professional experience (trust me, in an entry-level role) for your school and professional experience (trust me, in an entry-level role) for your school and professional experience (trust me, in an entry-level role) for your school and professional experience (trust me, in an entry-level role).

Catalina Castillo  (BCom '09) Asset Management Group, Brookfield Renewable

Did you always want to get into accounting? Although during my BCom I had completed a co-op term at a smaller accounting firm, upon graduation I was still not completely convinced. After graduating I had the opportunity to work for a couple of CAs in the industry who had taken differing routes in their career and none of them were in accounting or tax-related roles anymore. The opportunity to work with them and learn from their career paths convinced me to pursue my designation, and use the experience and skillset of the BCom degree and the accounting program to help me carve out a career that made sense for me.

What were some of the unique advantages of the Gustavson program? During my BCom entrepreneurship specialization I greatly enjoyed our finance/accounting class and looked up to our professor, Mia Maki. The course taught us technical finance and accounting skills that were practical and instrumental in my career development. I also give credit to the entrepreneurship program for helping me develop critical skills to view and understand businesses and organizations as a whole, understanding the strategy and operations of any organization is key in the accounting profession.

What additional courses did you complete to become a CPA? I was required to complete a number of intermediate and advanced accounting courses in order to enter the CA program, and I was able to use a variety of resources from local colleges and universities to help me do this. Some of the courses were distance learning, while others were classroom based. I would recommend people look into what is available to them locally, and use the experience and skillset of the BCom degree and the accounting program to help me carve out a career that made sense for me.

Rosie Johnson  (BCom '13) Senior Accountant, Financial Assurance department, PwC New Zealand

Did you always want to get into accounting? I took a career quiz in high school and my top recommen- dation was to become a CA (now called a CPA). I also enjoyed working with numbers to give meaning to users, the logical nature of accounting, as well as applying technical knowledge to grey accounting situations... it’s always fun to argue a point. Also, there are many job opportuni- ties for accountants, and the salary is definitely beneficial and increases quite quickly, especially in public practice.

What were some of the unique advantages of the Gustavson program? Besides the amazing professors and peers, it was the fact that Gustavson wasn’t just focused on accounting… I know, weird, right? Gustavson gives students broad, comprehensive knowledge of the business world. CPAs today don’t just account for numbers, they need to know all aspects of a business. Without having a comprehensive picture of a company, it would be very difficult to do my job successfully.

What additional courses did you complete to become a CPA? After my BCom, I completed the advanced accounting CPA program. I didn’t truly appreciate the benefit of Gustavson until I started the CPA program and realized my peers that did not attend Gustavson were struggling as their post- secondary education had focused primarily on technical accounting. I also completed two accounting-related co- ops through Gustavson with superb knowledgeable supervisors, who helped me finalize my decision to become an accountant.

Tell us about your job. My role primarily involves managing the completion of year-end financial statement audits for our clients. My audit strategy is normally range from one to four people and my role involves a lot of project management, which I enjoy. Since New Zealand has a fairly small economy and staggered fiscal year ends, I get to work on a wide range of client industries including telecommunications, retail and printing throughout the year.

What advice do you have for Gustavson grads wanting to become CPAs? Accountants like to party! So get on your dancing shoes. Network as much as possible, to get your foot in the door. Also, use the resources you have at Gustavson—speak with your professors about your career paths and your social and be humble and willing to continue learning. Accept that you have a lot to learn still, and always will.
Michelle vanThiel, MBA ’98, has so many fascinating chapters in her backstory that it’s almost a shame to limit her tale to her business career—but what a career it’s been so far. A self-described “nerdy, shy girl,” vanThiel credits her time at UVic with igniting her passion for interdisciplinary problem solving, innovation and public speaking; what she calls “the holy grail of leadership skills.”

While still a mother of two young boys, vanThiel decided to leave her job with the nationally distributed fashion magazine she had co-founded in order to pursue further education. She chose UVic and dove into art history and museum sciences. Although she enjoyed her studies, by the time she graduated in 1996, she had decided being an academic art historian was not her future career path. So she decided to pursue another one of her passions, business, and enrolled in the MBA program at UVic.

Upon earning her MBA, vanThiel embarked on a career in the public sector. Her goal was to bring an entrepreneurial lens to large, traditional organizations that were ready for change. “I like to build, grow and redesign things,” she says, “It’s how I combine my love of art (creativity) and business.”

To date, she has used her unique combination of skills to great effect in a number of industries: she has created award-winning teams in banking; served as registrar during Mount Royal University’s transition from college to university status; and assisted with the redesign of mental health and specialty medicine programs as regional manager with Alberta Health Services (managing annual budgets of $100 million). She did all this while running her own successful, international consulting firm and teaching the occasional university course.

In 2013, vanThiel took the helm of Victoria Hospice, where she currently serves as CEO. A recognized leader in hospice palliative care, Victoria Hospice was seeking to build on its 36-year legacy by expanding its education, research, advocacy and fundraising capacity, while maintaining and growing its high-quality clinical services. Just the kind of challenge vanThiel enjoys.

“MBA students don’t often think of seeking careers in the non-profit sector,” she says. “However, these purpose-driven organizations desperately need people with strong leadership and operational management skills to help them to sustainably deliver on their missions.

Working in these smaller organizations allows you to wear different hats every day and to see the direct impact of your work on the clients you serve. It is very challenging and very rewarding.”

VanThiel’s passion for hospice palliative care is evident in the way she speaks and the time and energy she devotes to her work. “People don’t want to come into institutions and die,” she says. “If at all possible, they want to die at home surrounded by the people they love. But how do we support them in doing that? The system is stretched to the breaking point and we need to look for new ways to deliver the right services, to the right people, at the right time and in the right place—all in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. This takes creativity, business acumen and willingness to try new approaches. We need leaders with broad backgrounds to look at problems in new ways. Innovative business
“The greatest barrier to success is the fear of failure.”

For Sybil Verch, BCom ’97, national director wealth management for investment company Raymond James Ltd., this philosophy not only helped shape her own career but motivated her to start up the Sybil Verch Woman in Business Award in 2015—an award that recognizes outstanding women in Gustavson’s BCom program who have demonstrated an interest in entering a career in finance.

For Verch, the award is more than about helping someone financially; it’s about providing a stepping stone for tomorrow’s women leaders in the financial sector.

Sybil Verch

How did the idea for the Sybil Verch Woman in Business Award come about?
I decided to start the award because I don’t want money to be a barrier to success. I am also extremely passionate about empowering women in business and I thought I better put my money where my mouth is!

How has the role of women in the finance industry changed?
Although the enrollment rate for women in post-secondary education and business has significantly increased, once they graduate, women seem to get stuck in lower level positions. Statistics show that 86 percent of financial advisors are men.

Why is this?
There are a number of reasons. Yes, there is still some unconscious bias when it comes to promoting women in senior leadership roles, but the biggest obstacle is women getting in their own way. We tend to overthink the whole work/life balance issue. We are risk averse and don’t like the idea of not having a salary.

What challenges did you face?
I remember putting myself through school. I worked all the time just to make ends meet, but I didn’t let money become an obstacle. A successful woman, especially in a male-dominated industry, often faces judgments, but I believed in myself and was willing to put in the hours and take a risk.

How do you feel the award benefits its recipients?
I live by the model “conceive, believe, achieve.” Conceiving is easy for women. Believing it is where they get stumped due to a lack of confidence. With the award we want to build that confidence.

Katlin Aarma (BCom ’17) | 2015 AWARD RECIPIENT

How has receiving the award impacted you and your career?
I have always known that I’ve wanted my career to focus on building a better community for others and improving their quality of life, which is why micro finance is so appealing to me and this award has helped me realize that. Receiving the award helped motivate my studies, especially in my finance classes. It was a great feeling to know that my academic efforts were being supported by such a prominent figure in our community. I can only hope I will have the opportunity to pay it forward one day.

Nichelle Ryan (BCom ’17) | 2016 AWARD RECIPIENT

How has receiving the award impacted you and your career?
I was so honoured and grateful. My involvement in the finance industry has pushed me to become more dominant and confident in a male-oriented industry. Seeing strong women in the finance industry brings me so much excitement. Receiving the award was extremely humbling and I couldn’t be more thankful.

How did it make you feel to be recognized by the award?
I was so honored and grateful. My involvement in the finance industry has pushed me to become more dominant and confident in a male-oriented industry. Seeing strong women in the finance industry brings me so much excitement.

Award recognizes financially focused female undergrads

by Natalie Bruckner-Menchelli

AWARD RECOGNIZES FINANCIALLY FOCUSED FEMALE UNDERGRADS

For more information on the award and giving to Gustavson, visit: www.uvic.ca/gustavson

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Barriers

BREAKING DOWN

 Congratulatons to Alicia Ward, this year’s winner of the Sybil Verch Woman in Business Award!
Don Mattrick built a video game when he was 17 that made millions of dollars in royalties. At the same age, he co-founded a company, Distinctive Software, which many hail as the foundation of the video game industry in B.C. He oversaw substantial growth at Electronic Arts and later at Microsoft, with a 700 percent growth of Xbox 360’s global user base during his time.

As you can imagine, the pull he took to entrepreneurial success is not for the faint-hearted, the marginally committed or the under-caffinated. In honour of being awarded Gustavson’s 2017 Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year, Mattrick made a guest appearance in the BCom entrepreneurship class last May. Mattrick talked with students about his own experiences as a young entrepreneur, emphasizing the mindset and work ethic that are needed in order to thrive in the start-up world.

**Work Hard, Harder Than Everyone Else.**

“I’m reminded of the persistence quote by Calvin Coolidge,” says Mattrick. “There are so many great people who don’t apply persistence and tenacity, and they don’t end up achieving their potential, right? So I kind of grasped early on, that really what I was trying to do was compress time. If it traditionally took 30 years to build a career, I was trying to solve for: how could I do it in 15? What I realized was, I probably needed to spend 10 to 30 percent more time every day on work than anybody else."

**Just Start Doing Things.**

“I knew early on I would need to land summer jobs and save money for university,” he says. “And that motivated me through a whole set of experiences. Every summer I would try something, and then think about the following summer, and what would be better. That’s how I got my first job with computers, working the retail floor at ComputerLand, and when I was 15.

“We also took that approach with our game development, early on at Distinctive Software. You just start doing things, building things, and some of it worked, and some of it didn’t. The best way to find out if something is the right fit for you is to just start doing it.”

**Follow Your Passion.**

“It was always easy to get up early in the morning, to work long days, because it never felt like work,” says Mattrick. “For a young person who wants to be an entrepreneur, you would say follow your passion and find where it intersects with future market growth.”

**Don’t Aim for Life Balance Early On.**

Want life balance? Don’t be an entrepreneur. Mattrick took little time off during his 20s.

**OverSubscribe.**

Challenge yourself to do more than you think you can. You will build capabilities and confidence. “When I was in university, I did everything. I built games. I met new people. I went out. I didn’t sleep much and I may not have gone to class as often as I was supposed to, but I studied and got my work done. So, oversubscribe, because that’s how you meet the brilliant people, that’s how you stumble across an idea that never occurred to you before.”

**Compete.**

There’s nothing shameful about going for the win. “America isn’t any better than we are at math. No better at physics. It annoys me that more Canadian products aren’t breaking through. “All America does differently is set bigger goals and compete harder. We’re every bit as capable of doing that here.”

**Get Lucky With Your Partners.**

“My wife, Nanon, is very in touch with the EQ part of things. I, on the other hand, tend to approach things very much as an engineer. She’ll say to me sometimes, ‘Hey, you need to slow down and communicate more, because no one understands what you’re thinking.’ Or sometimes, ‘I can’t believe you said that out loud!’ Her coaching has been appreciated and good for my career and development.”

In the business partner realm, too, Mattrick has found the perfect foil for his own talents in Paul Lee, the CFO of his first company and long-time friend. “There’s a certain degree of luck required,” he says. “Paul was seated beside me in grade eight math. Lee and Mattrick have since progressed from advanced-math-nerd-camaraderie to running multi-billion dollar companies together, but the friendship is still stronger than ever. ‘Being put next to Paul that first day of school, that was a blessing,’ reflects Mattrick.

**Manage Yourself First.**

“Don’t forget, people need hope. As the boss, you can’t go to work on Monday and say ‘we’re all doomed.’ The first person you have to manage is yourself.”

**Ride Shoulders With the Smart Kids.**

“Do as much as you can with as many bright people as you can, because that will accelerate your learning curve. And then hopefully you get some luck along the way, because it is a bit of a random event, to create something that is a hit. But if you get that and you’re with a team, it’s easier to recognize the second time around, the third time around, when that chemistry and energy is coming together. It’s very analogous to being on a winning sports team. When everyone’s showing up, practicing, playing their position, it just makes the desired outcome more likely to happen than not.”

**Have Fun and Appreciate the Journey.**

“Think of building and creating inside a frame of gratitude. It is a privilege to lead a team of people. Enjoy the successes and challenges each day.”
India holds a special place in BCom student Will Howling’s heart. Its diversity and complex amalgamation of cultural identities and religions, its vibrancy, and its history and culture—the list of reasons to love this beautiful land are endless. Having chosen a career path in international business, the chance to intern for a non-profit in India helped Howling fulfill a lifelong ambition to experience this land of great opportunity, gain work experience and help people along the way.

His trip to India has been interesting and exceptionally challenging, both physically and mentally. “I am based in New Delhi, where the India chapter of PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) has its head office,” he explains. They also have nine field offices throughout India. The projects he works on deal with youth groups, specifically gender issues, domestic violence and career aspirations.

“PRIA has a hallmark of community engagement, which involves meeting people and trying to understand the knowledge that already exists in the community,” he says. “One of the teams I work with is focused on gender issues. This team has been establishing youth groups for both boys and girls in rural villages. The idea is to sensitize the youth to issues of gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls in the community.

This allows the youth to engage and make a difference.”

He adds the gender team is involved in a number of different activities, but are generally focused on working with the youth groups. “We plan activities to participate in events such as World Mental Health Day and Domestic Workers Day. The rights and conditions for domestic workers are particularly important as that affects women and girls in India. My overall task while I’m here is to try and understand the livelihood aspirations of the youth in these villages, both boys and girls. We want to help them see what they can do and what they can be.”

The reality of what this looks like on the ground, however, varies greatly depending on the location. The work that happens in the head office is much different than the work the team does in a field office, or when they carry out programs in the community.

Head office work is from nine to six, five days a week. “When I’m in the office, I could be anywhere in the world,” says Howling. “I have my own desk and a laptop, I do research and write material or blogs, or whatever program we’re working on. We also plan activities and have meetings. In fact, other than the fact that the majority of my coworkers are Indian, we eat Indian food at lunch, and the power goes out every once in a while, it is a typical office. We also have the occasional monsoon.”

Working in the field, however, is a different story. “In the office, work is conducted in English,” he explains. “But one of the complicated things about living in India is there are 22 different languages recognized in the Constitution. When you want to implement things anywhere else in the country, the language has to be more localized. Sometimes there are interpreters, depending on where I’m working. The interesting part of that is even within a village, or small community within the city, there are seminomadic people who have settled in the area. They essentially have a language that they use at home, and no one else in the area speaks it. In this situation, we can’t find anyone to translate.”

So how have the UVic classroom teachings intersected with his work in India? “Obviously there’s a lot that we never covered in class, but I’m writing a SWOT analysis and feasibility study for a youth self-help group-based savings and microcredit model, drawing on my experiences in the field at Namunda. This touches tangentially on things we studied in marketing, international business, and business and sustainability, for instance.”

Dealing with temperatures rising to 47 degrees and no AC is difficult, but Howling says the experience has been invaluable and one he would highly recommend. “Looking forward, I think the challenging or uncomfortable scenarios I’ve faced will help me be more adaptable and confident in the future, whether in the classroom or the boardroom. It’s also shown me how useful it is to always maintain a good sense of humour!”

Will Howling gets a taste of life in India  
by Laurie Jones
Each one of us that moved to Canada has a story behind what brought us here, and why we choose to stay. I can hardly believe it was 10 years ago that I made my move to Victoria, B.C. What a leap for this Caribbean island girl! I came to fulfill what seemed like an unimaginable dream—to pursue an MBA at UVic. The transition hasn’t always been easy. I know as an immigrant that you can get homesick or face failures or disappointments that can set you back. For me, forming strong relationships with my classmates helped to create a positive support system while living in Canada. Sometimes, we can underestimate the power of relationships. But in small towns, relationships can transform your settlement journey by opening doors. A listening ear can help someone see the world differently and use any failures as a stepping stone to achieve greater things. Many times, I have sought counsel from people who have lived here longer than me. As I look back, I am thankful for my classmates who took time to share their wisdom and helped me understand cultural norms and personal learning opportunities. It was through volunteering in the English Language Program at UVic that I discovered my love for engaging with people from diverse cultures. Each day was a new experience as we got to know each other on a human level while completing language assignments. I was always eager to find out: What brought them to Canada? What did they like about being here? What were their struggles? What were their dreams? What kept them motivated each day? Did they miss their home country? Building relationships with people from various parts of the world fascinated me. I feel the same curiosity to this day!

Sometimes, however, it’s still challenging. When I go home to Barbados, I feel like I go through reverse culture shock. I suppose I will always feel like I belong in two cultures. But I have come to embrace this feeling. It is part of what makes me strong as an individual. I decided to blog about my life as an immigrant and mother, and it has proven to be a great platform for sharing my experiences.

Today, I am a Canadian citizen. I am honoured that, through my life experience as an immigrant, I am able to help others in their adjustment and settlement into Canada. I am amazed at the diversity of people that I encounter every day, at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society, as an engagement coordinator for the Immigrant Women’s Project. My MBA experience provided me with an international, integrative and experiential foundation to begin my career journey in Canada. Therefore, I give thanks to UVic and Gustavson for the awesome support in my gentle adjustment into Canada. And I thank you, Canada, for 10 years!
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