Living for the Weekend (MBA)

21 professionals
+ 24 weekends

= UVic’s first Weekend MBA cohort completed!

by Rich Taylor

MID-AUGUST, 2018. It’s a time when most of campus is bathed in the stillness of summer. One group of business students, however, was in the midst of celebration.

The occasion? The inaugural Sardul S. Gill Graduate School Weekend MBA cohort had just completed the MBA program, a journey that had been equal parts inspiring, challenging and life changing.

Since September 2016, the students — who brought expertise from careers in industries including healthcare, manufacturing, public relations, IT and more — had been learning, working and growing together. Meeting one weekend per month on campus and collaborating online in between, the program fostered a learning experience that combined the flexibility of part-time graduate study with intimate access to a group of peers with far-reaching collective professional experience.

“I can easily say that one of the best things about the UVic Weekend MBA program was the diversity within my cohort,” says Melissa Uppal, Weekend MBA ’18 and project manager with Island Health. “It was an incredibly positive experience to partner with professionals across such broad and advanced career backgrounds. I always knew that no matter the problem we had to solve, someone in our class would have experience in dealing with it, which facilitated a lot of peer-to-peer learning and created an environment of openness and support.” This particular characteristic of the Weekend MBA is enhanced by the fact that students in this program have, on average, 12 years’ career experience and are generally balancing full-time jobs — and in many cases, families — with their coursework.

One experience that many ranked as a highlight of the Weekend MBA program was the International Applied Project (IAP). Working as consultants for Canada-based green energy firms looking to expand their operations, half of the group travelled to China and half to Brazil for 10 days to immerse themselves in their clients’ businesses, and build recommendations on manufacturing, sales and sustainable development opportunities in each region. While there, they took the opportunity to visit other local organizations (and take in a few of the sights on the way). The trip provided a global lens through which to view key concepts of leadership, teamwork and strategy.

“Another pivotal moment, and one that was a high point for me, was watching the students complete their capstone consulting projects this summer,” says MBA Associate Director Ian Robertson. “Each team had been working on the projects for almost a full year, which gave them an excellent opportunity to apply their classroom learning and do something really meaningful, either for their own employer or a different client organization.”

So, after all that, how would Robertson describe the mood of the cohort on that August weekend that marked the group’s final time on campus? “I’d say it was euphoric. The cohort was buzzing with excitement and proud of completing the difficult endeavour they had set out to tackle together.”

And naturally, we share their sense of celebration and pride in their accomplishments. Congratulations, to our trailblazing Weekend MBA alumni!

To learn more about the Weekend MBA program, visit www.uvic.ca/gustavson/gill/mba/weekend.