VIP Program Enters A New Decade!

A new decade has coincided with further growth of the VIP Program. The VIP Program is built upon a long standing tradition of students helping students academically, socially, and professionally. We are grateful to have the continued support of professionals at SDC who take on the role of volunteer supervisors. With their support, we have been able to provide more volunteer opportunities: both in existing and newly created positions.

One of our goals this year was to see this group of volunteers become a community of students who are dedicated to using their gifts and talents to help others. One of the ways we have helped equip volunteers for this task is the new Professional Development Workshop Series. These workshops provide an opportunity for volunteers to come together as a community, hear from experts and engage in critical reflection about their own areas of strength and weakness. Perhaps the best part of my job as Program Assistant has been witnessing the personal growth of student volunteers and the ways their faces light up when sharing stories of both teaching and being taught, helping and being helped, serving and being served.

A main focus of this newsletter is to share those stories. To hear directly from the volunteers about their experience. There is little doubt in my mind, that for many, these stories are just a glimpse of the positive impact they will have throughout their lives.

Julie Burke
VIP Program Assistant

Julie Burke starts a round of applause for Gerry Goodine at our first workshop
As a part of the new initiatives implemented by the VIP Program this year, the VIP coordinating team put together a Professional Development Workshop Series. This workshop series consisted of four workshops, two each in the months of February and March, and featured the following topics: career-seeking, nutrition, taking the initiative and networking on campus.

The careers workshop was conducted by Gerry Goodine, Career Counsellor, from the Student Services Centre and featured reflections on personal goals’ and turning them into career options. The nutrition workshop was facilitated by UWO’s Nutrition Manager, Anne Zok. She provided an interactive discussion on how to eat healthy and stay energized, while on a shoe string budget.

The workshop focusing on taking initiative was led by the VIP’s Program Assistant; Julie Burke along with VIP Student Coordinators, Doria Keung, Alice Yuan, Valeryia Zaitsava and Joanna Ng. This workshop primarily discussed how to implement great ideas: the follow-through and leadership process. Lastly, Paul Schmidt, Coordinator of SDC’s Writing Support Centre, guided students through the networking workshop. He shared the do’s and the don’ts of successful student and professor networking.

Here is some of the feedback from volunteers who attended the workshops:

‘Marketing Your Skills’ by Gerry Goodine, Career Counsellor
“It was a good way to realize you have more skills than you think you do.”
Chloe Scott, Peer Guide

“Gerry defintely got me thinking.”
Jane Liao, English Conversation Leader

‘Nutrition Made Easy’ by Anne Zok, Nutrition Manager with Hospitality Services
“I really liked the informal format of the workshop. We were able to address the specific questions we had about our eating habits as students.” Doria Keung, VIP Student Coordinator

“I learned simple ways to eat healthier while still eating foods I enjoy.” Joanna Ng, VIP Student Coordinator

‘Taking the Initiative’ by Julie Burke, VIP Program Assistant
“The acronym was a really concise way to put together the skills needed for initiative. HICCP: Highly Observant, Intrinsic Motivation, Communication Collaboration and Persistence.” Alice Yuan, VIP Student Coordinator

“It opened my eyes to the possibilities around me and the importance of taking action even if the opportunities are not explicit.” Valeryia Zaitsava, VIP Student Coordinator
IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

VIP Administrative Assistant Ragini Kashyap shares her first hand account of the Canadian Olympic experience

Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics...the experience of a lifetime! An opportunity to showcase Canadian culture, heritage and pride, whilst hosting a prestigious global sporting event.

Now, for those of you who don’t know, “bustling” is rarely an adjective used to describe the laid back Westcoast. However, the Olympic rush definitely changed that! Let me walk you through my Vancouver 2010 experience. Throngs of Canadians and international tourists filled the streets, visiting several of the Olympics special attractions. Starting at the Olympic torch near Waterfront Station, I headed into the heart of downtown to watch street artists from all over the globe, enjoy a skate at Robson Square, and visit the Royal Canadian Mint Pavilion. Then I walked through Granville and Robson Streets downtown where the party just never seemed to stop! There always seemed to be a boom box, dancers and hundreds of fans chanting “Go Canada Go!”

Hopping on the street car from the Olympic Village over to Granville Island to continue the festivities, I eventually got to LiveCity Yaletown for some spectacular performances. After this, my feet needed a rest so I went to one of the many “beer gardens” to watch the Olympic action while enjoying a pint of something German, Irish, Russian or Canadian. Recharged! I went to Robson Square and waited in the snaking line to ride the zip line through downtown, and to check out the Vancouver Art Gallery’s special collection from Leonardo da Vinci to (slightly) more recent local talent. For anyone who was a bit lost, the turquoise jacketed friendly Olympic volunteers dotting the cityscape were never too far away. Those with tickets to sporting events caught the action at Cypress Mountain, the Richmond Oval or Whistler Village. On the way someone would invariably start a rendition of “O Canada,” and soon enough, the entire train or bus compartment joined in a chorus of Canadian pride. The crowds were back downtown for the evening festivities, shows, nightly fireworks, and to soak in the amazing atmosphere. The city was a sea of the ubiquitous red and white Olympic mitts, tourists sporting their national colors and Olympic fever. From Cypress Mountain, and English Bay to downtown Vancouver; we welcomed the world to our beautiful city.
The staff of SDC’s Indigenous Services (I.S.) work hard to provide a wide array of opportunities to the Indigenous students at Western, and within the London community.

For students currently enrolled at Western, IS offers tutoring, personal counseling, employment information, and internship positions to students. There are also Access Transition Programs (ATP) designed to assist First Nations Students and provide them with academic and cultural support. There are currently three ATP’s established with the Faculty of Health Sciences, Social Sciences, and Sciences.

For prospective students, in addition to admissions assistance, there are two summer camps offered to Indigenous youth. Mini University and Camp P’Skapkiidaa are both weeklong camps offered in July. Mini University is designed to provide students with a preview into university life. Camp P’Skapkiidaa takes students along the shores of South Bay to explore the traditional Indigenous approaches to nature.

More than academic opportunities, IS invites Indigenous elders to UWO every month to provide spiritual and cultural support to students.

Indigenous Services helps fulfill the needs of First Nations students and fosters a welcoming community atmosphere on campus.
Growing the VIP Program

By Valeryia Zaitsava

The VIP Program is always looking for ways to grow upon our strong foundation. We strive to provide new opportunities for volunteers and continue to complement the services provided by the SDC. This year, one of the initiatives was growing our partnership with the Writing Support Centre. By the winter term, VIP Writing Peer Tutors were working alongside students and writing counsellors. I spoke with Aaron Keeler, a writing counsellor and supervisor, to get his feedback on this initiative.

What were your expectations before starting this partnership?
We were eager to accept new talent and the help they were going to provide; the program always needs more volunteers. We were also looking forward to a collaborative process with VIP: the screening process that the potential candidates undergo would distinguish those with the best writing skills. These students were expected to be able to offer the highest quality of service, which is an important criteria of the staff at the Writing Help Centre.

Can you describe one or two of the experiences that illustrate what kind of work the VIPs do in the area?
The writing counseling is a one-on-one process. That way, the volunteers can give the most personalized and effective advice. We always emphasize that the session is not going to be a proofreading service. Rather, it is a learning process, where the students are going to be given strategies for effective writing that are unique to their needs.

What advice would you give to future volunteers hoping to work in a similar area of SDC?
In terms of the volunteer’s writing skills, it is important to continually learn and trust your gut. Even if you are unsure about a run-on sentence or a clause, you will definitely have a strong feeling that something needs to be fixed. In general, we accept senior undergraduate and graduate students, who present a strong writing sample.

Will there be any changes for the next year?
As it stands, we are all very impressed with the caliber of the volunteers. We definitely want to continue pursuing the partnership with VIP. Currently, the writing tutors undergo essentially two sets of interviews, so we might explore eliminating this redundancy. But on the other hand, maybe it is this process that provides the best volunteers. Overall, our experience of having VIPs at the Writing Help Centre has been great and we are definitely interested in expanding our services and adding more peer tutors.
VIP’s Arts Corner

Song Writing in Ecology

“This carbon sink is endanger
And to this Dr. Molot and his team is no stranger
But how can this be?
We can’t have lakes setting their carbon free!
Is it due to climate change? I don’t know?
Acidification? Beats me
Ozone depletion? Could be!
Maybe, we’ll ask him. You think he’d know?

Dr. Molot
He knows quite a lot
About lakes and things do

But wait I’m confused
Are you saying carbon is released
by more than fossil fuels?
...Isn’t that bad?
...I’m feeling kinda sad.

Oh Dr. Molot
We’re asking you to give it a shot
To show us this planet isn’t doomed
That as scientists
We can do our bit
To make this earth sustainable”

Julie Burke wrote this song for a seminar introduction for ecology professor, Dr. Molot, who researches the vulnerability of carbon storage in lakes.

Local Music Scene

The Spoke, UCC
Rick McGhie Wednesday at 9:30pm

London Music Club, 470 Colbourne
Acoustic Open Mics every Friday at 9pm $2
Shows from $5-$15 Wed-Sun
For more details go to: www.londonmusicclub.com

UWO Music Faculty
Friday at 12:30pm Concert Series: UWO Music students perform each week. Experience music by the stars of today and tomorrow
For more information go to: www.music.uwo.ca/events/0910brochure.pdf

Painting by Vivian Wang, ECP