HELPING HANDS

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2013 - 2014
SPECIAL EDITION

Volunteers In Progress
Student Development Centre

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Following the tradition for 30 years, the annual VIP orientation was hugely successful and a great start to the school year. To kick off a great year, the VIPs were refreshed regarding the various services offered through the Student Development Centre and Western International. We hosted the largest number of returning VIPs along with a growing number of new members who learned more about our student organization.

Along with the scrumptious dinner, there was an excellent vibe as everyone socialized and formed a cohesive network among the VIP community; this event was certainly a memorable and enjoyable one. We hope to see you all next year!
CAN YOU DESCRIBE AN AVERAGE DAY ON THE JOB?

I’m an English Conversation Leader. We’re a group of volunteers who work with the IESC and the English Conversation Program here at Western. You end up meeting a really great group of international students. Every single session is so different, and that’s why it’s so cool. Sometimes, we’ll sit down and play games or talk about events in London, right? But other days we’ll go to East Park randomly, or we’ll go to the batting cages for 2 or 3 hours, or we’ll go mini-golfing, or we’ll do something really fun!

COOL! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT THE “GOING-OUT” PART OF ECP.

I don’t know if the going-out part is actually part of the ECP program, but you end up knowing these people so well that they’re your friends, a really great group of friends.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS OR ADVICE FOR NEW VIPS?

A lot of the time, working off spontaneity is fun, it’s cool, it works. But I found that my sessions were most enjoyable in terms of feeling like something was done, when I actually had a good schedule of things planned for my group. For example, a typical English conversation meeting is about 2.5 hours, and that could be a lot of time to spend with a group of strangers for a new English conversation leader. If you have a good schedule planned out, say for the first hour you’re going to do this game, and then you’re going to break up the two activities with maybe some idioms, and then you can move on to your second activity. It makes those 2.5 hours go by very quickly, and it seems a little bit more organized. I think that the international students really pick up on that, and because of that, they feel more inclined to come.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR AFTER UNIVERSITY?

If you were to ask me what my ultimate dream would be, it would be to start a business, I think it is the coolest thing ever. I feel like the area’s already a little bit saturated, but something biomedical related, biopharmaceutical, biomimicry – a company would be awesome. Med school’s always been in my mind as well, but I don’t know if my heart’s really there. I guess on my path right now, in terms of my education in medical biophysics, since I am in this clinical stream, it allows me to complete a program here at Western called CAMPEP, a certification giving you the title of medical physicist, and as a medical physicist, you can work in a clinic-based setting and you can do things like cancer planning and you can work with the imaging systems at hospitals, maybe that’s another direction. Either med school, my own company, or medical physics!
We started off October with our first VIP social at the Grad Club! There is honestly nothing better than chatting with friends over delicious burgers, fries, and salads. It was super nice to see so many people come out. We had lots of laughs and fun conversation – and we definitely got to know each other a lot better!

Minute To Win It

Can you keep 3 balloons in the air for 1 minute? How about stack 3 golfballs on top of each other? Or move a cookie from your forehead to your mouth using only your facial muscles?

VIP put on its own edition of Minute to Win It, featuring lots of fun games and prizes to be won. Hilarity ensued - it was quite a night!
WHAT WOULD BE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR VIP POSITION?

I am a learning skills assistant, so I work in the drop in centre alongside one of the learning skills counselors, and we help students with any academic concern, whether that be learning skills – learning strategies, time management, acing multiple choice exams – or content specific areas, like math, science, calculus, stats, MOS, psychology, writing. We have 12 volunteers this year, and we each work about 2 hours a week. We have monthly training sessions with professional development, where we get trained to develop our communication skills and receive updates on new strategies that different researchers have found around the world. It’s a really great opportunity, so I’ve been working at it for three years!

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR AFTER UNDERGRAD?

After undergrad, I am thinking mainly graduate school, looking at UofT, maybe Western. I took my Dental Aptitude Test, so I may pursue that, but I think probably after grad school. I just don’t think this is the right time to go to dental school yet. But you know, it’s on the backburner, I’ll see what happens after two years. I am really interested in pursuing neuroscience for my grad school.

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU THINK YOU DEVELOPED THROUGH VOLUNTEERING WITH VIP?

I think the program really helped me with communication, how to communicate effectively, in a respectable manner, and in a professional setting. In a professional setting, we want to say things with a lot of structure – it’s not just whatever comes to mind. It’s also more communicating in a counseling kind of way, where you’re not ever arguing with a student, but you want to try and get a point across, and that kind of speaking is really kind of an art form. It’s also been really rewarding in the social sense – our volunteer team is small enough that I feel like I can actually get to know each of them and really spend time with them, and they’re really really polite, nice people who are here for the right reasons.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO?

I can’t decide between the two. I love watching movies, and I love spending time with my family, and I’ll say that my favorite thing is watching movies.
FALL PREVIEW DAY

Student partnership members and VIP student coordinators have teamed up to represent the Student Development Centre. As a student coordinator, it was an amazing experience to meet prospective students and their families. Along with a huge SDC banner and brochures from all services, we answered any questions that the students and their families had. I’m sure everyone remembers the days when walking around campus and learning about Western for the first time was a daunting task. We hope we did our job by educating the students (and their families) and alleviating the anxiety that we all experienced.
CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR POSITION?

As an English Conversation Leader, I lead groups of people who want to practice their English skills or want to learn more about Canadian and North American culture. Usually we meet at the same time every week for an hour and a half or two hour sessions, and they go by pretty quickly! The whole thing is just talking, making friends, practicing their conversation skills – because most people have really good grammar.

SO, DO YOU DO A LOT OF PLANNING?

I sometimes plan little things on homonyms and synonyms and slang – I’ll add things that are related to talking. But if I find that they already know that sort of stuff, then I won’t really elaborate on it too much, it will just be up to them if they want to learn more about it.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS/ADVICE FOR NEW VIPS?

I would say, don’t make your plan for the session to be too organized. Have a few ideas in mind, but make sure you’re still able to adapt, because sometimes people might not like what you have planned. For example, if you had a certain game you wanted to play, and you find that your group isn’t really getting into the game, then you have to be ready to change and be able to adapt quickly to how the nature of the group goes. Sometimes I’ll have an introductory question, and it can literally go on for the whole session, and I won’t get to go through any of the things I had planned, so you have to be really easy-going, able to go with the flow, able to adapt and change based on the environment of the group.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU PICK UP FROM WORKING AS A VIP?

I would say the ability to approach people and go beyond your comfort zone. A lot of people are really shy when they come. They might say things that you might think are inappropriate. So, changing your comfort zones when you’re interacting with people who are not too familiar with the culture and customs, and just being able to adapt to new situations, I would say is the biggest thing, not being too structured. Don’t restrict yourself to the rules that you make.
WHERE ARE YOU FROM? Atikamegsheng Anishinawbek (near Sudbury)

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR MOST EXCITING VACATION?

In 2010, I had a 3-week vacation from work and had no travel plans. One of my best friends is from Trinidad and decided to go home and visit. I then asked my friend and everything seemed okay for me to go, immediately my travel arrangements were all done within a day. I stayed in Trinidad for 10 days but the fun didn’t stop there! My sister then called and said that she and uncle were going to Edmonton. I was reluctant to go as I already spent so much time in Trinidad and travel arrangements needed to be made. However, she told me, if I came to Edmonton, uncle would give me his car to take home! So I ended up in Edmonton after I visited Trinidad and I still have that car today. I love it!

WHEN DID YOU MOVE TO LONDON?

I moved to London in January 2003 to start fresh and start school here too!

WHO DID YOU DRESS UP AS FOR HALLOWEEN AS A KID?

I never wore store bought costumes, my parents always made them for me. From the props to the makeup, my parents did it all. One year I was a Ninja Turtle, Michael Angelo; I had the bandana and everything. It was fantastic!

Another year, I was dressed up as a robot, I remember wearing boxes all over that were painted silver and decorated. Great memories.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MOVIE? FAVOURITE SONG?

I usually don’t have favourites; I like a lot of things! Since you ask now, I love Drake. I’m listening to “Nothing was the Same”. I only have Drake on shuffle as I listen to music!

My favourite movie right now is End of Watch, I can watch it all the time. I recently watched The Internship and now that is my new favourite too!

IF YOU WERE A KITCHEN APPLIANCE WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

I really thought about this. I think I would be a blender because it’s very versatile and I use it a lot to make of drinks, juices, and sauces. Also, a blender (like me) is very cooperative and puts things together. All you need is a couple of simple ingredients and then MAGIC! —you get something absolutely delicious.
As many prospective students have received their acceptance into Western, it was a refreshing experience to answer questions from students and their families. Just like Fall Preview Day, student partnership members and VIP student coordinators joined forces in hopes of helping students and assisting in the potential transition into Western University. We educated many people but we also learned a lot from meeting new faces and hearing what they had to say. I hope we can continue to make a difference in upcoming students and their future university careers.
VIPs GOT TALENT

Micaela Jacobson, ECP Leader
Living off the edge, here is Micaela climbing in South Africa!

Joanne Afghani, SDC's Student Partnership Member
Joanne loves creating music! She plays piano, sings, and is currently learning to master the guitar & ukulele. Check out her Facebook Music Page here: https://www.facebook.com/gojobotgo
Alex Lausanne, IL
Communications Coordinator
Tackling the waves, here is Alex sea kayaking in Scotland!

Sarah Yip, IS Office Assistant
Sarah's passion for music resides in the many singing competitions she contends in; both in and outside of school. Check out her Youtube channel:
http://www.youtube.com/user/exquisiteinricacy
THANK YOU FOR A GREAT YEAR, VIPS

Hope you have a safe & happy summer!

Love, the VIP Administration Team

Starting from left: Aishi Jiang, Olivia Oh, Deepika Goyal, Sandra Pehilj, Michelle Char, and Sivisan Suntheralingam

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