



Co-operative Education at UTech

“Partnering with industry to produce work-ready graduates”

Co-op Ed Partners: VIP Attractions



What's Inside

- ⇒ Co-op Ed Partners: VIP Attractions Commendations 1-2
- ⇒ Student Success Stories: Pan Caribbean Sugar Company 3
- ⇒ Career Corner: Preparing For An Interview 4
- ⇒ Interview with School Co-op Ed Coordinator 5
- ⇒ Highlights of WIE Practitioners' Forum 6

VIP Attractions has been partnering with UTech since 2011 in providing students with opportunities to acquire professional work experience, while earning an income. This partnership commenced immediately after the inception of the company and was fostered by the belief of the owner and executive chairman Mr. David Hall, that students are our future and hence needed to be nurtured in order to reach their fullest potential.

Mrs. Ann-Marie Burke, Director of Human Resources, is pleased with the partnership so far. She stated that the company operates as a lounge for incoming and departing passengers at our two international airports and that the nature of the business allowed for flexibility in the engagement of students. She explained that while students are engaged year round, their contribution is greater during the peak travel periods when the company is at its busiest, and that these periods coincide with the interns' summer and Christmas holidays.

Continued on page 2

COORDINATOR'S PEN

In this issue, we continue to highlight successful partnerships with industry partners, as well as, present students' shared experiences with the Programme. Reflecting on this and previous issues have confirmed that the Co-op Ed programme is one which is pivotal in building a pool of highly skilled and talented graduates who will impact positively on national development.

We welcome our new partners and commend our older partners for the continued partnership. Going forward, it is our wish that our employers will continue to partner with the

University with greater consistency and will assist in promoting the Programme within the respective associations.

As we enter into the yuletide season, we pray for the gift of love peace and joy among you and your families. May 2015 be a productive and fulfilling year.

La-Presha Gordon-Brydson
University's Co-op Ed Coordinator

Co-op Ed Partners: VIP Attractions

VIP Attractions continued support of the Co-operative Education programme stems from the special attributes possessed by students, such as their work attitude, decorum and the fact that these high achieving students could earn to offset some of the expenses associated with studying.



David Hall, Executive
Chairman of VIP Attractions

Mrs. Burke remarked that management was certainly pleased with the students' quality of work and that the expectations set by the company were greatly exceeded.

Student Training

VIP attractions has so far provided professional work experience opportunities for students mainly in the areas of hospitality, bartending and culinary. Recently, the company has sought to expand the specialization areas from which students are engaged to include the Accounting and Computing fields.

The company has a very effective training system for Co-operative Education students. To prepare students for the job and expose them to various aspects of the company, VIP Attractions has implemented a 'buddy system'. This involves pairing students with older, seasoned employees (team leaders) for approximately three weeks.

Mrs. Burke stated that she would recommend that other companies participate in the programme as it is a "win win" for those involved.

She advised students to maintain a keen interest in their education as the job market is very aggressive and also, that they maintain a positive approach to work.

Commendations



Vanessa Vidal,
student enrolled in
the Bachelor in
Business
Administration
course of study

Vanessa Vidal and Lennox Forbes were both introduced to VIP attractions (Club Mobay) by UTech (Western Campus) in 2011 and 2012 respectively, in order to gain valuable work experience while earning. Both students started with the company as customer service agents. Miss Vidal stated that the experience has been wonderful and that she was pleased with the great interest shown by the management in both her professional and personal development. Mr. Forbes remarked, "My growth over the two (2) year period has really exceeded my expectations as I am still very young. I intend on following the footsteps of those set above me in order to constantly grow and make my company proud."

Both students have excelled in their respective positions, which prompted the company to offer them permanent employment. Lennox was first promoted to team leader and currently holds the position of trainee supervisor. Vanessa was first promoted to international sales coordinator in the international sales department and is currently the office supervisor in the Telecoms Division.

We wish both students well.



Lennox Forbes is
enrolled in the
Bachelor in
Business
Administration course
of study
(Major: Marketing)

STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES:

Pan-Caribbean Sugar Company

Being Proactive, Professional and Positive



Donna Anglin, 2014 graduate,
BBA Administrative and Information
System Management

In March of this year, I was placed by the Co-op Ed Unit at Pan Caribbean Sugar Company to complete a ten-week Co-op Ed experience. This experience was life changing.

The Co-op Ed experience has not only helped me to fulfill my course of study requirement, but it has provided a platform for me to exhibit a mix of skills and obtained a realistic perspective of the working world, that is, offering exploration and verification of my career interest and increasing my ability to think critically, while illustrating classroom relevance in the professional world.

During the first weeks of my Co-op Ed experience, I was given relatively simple assignments. However, being self-motivated, I demanded more challenging tasks in a tactful and professional manner.

These were given and within no time I began to feel like a part of the organization and was commended on my high level of professionalism. Whenever I was given difficult tasks I would look at templates and past data or documents and asked a lot of questions. At the end of the internship period, I was offered permanent employment. While the offer came as no surprise, (as I ensured my presence at the company added something that had not been there before) when this was made, I was overcome with mixed emotions; I wanted to cry and I wanted to laugh, however I remained focused throughout.

In accepting the job, I knew that I was ready for the working world. I used three (3) P's as a mantra to guide my behavior: Being Proactive, Professional and Positive. I do believe my academic development at UTech has been instrumental in my mental preparation. It was now up to me to prove myself work worthy and apply theory into practice, which I did.

The Co-op Ed programme has been an awesome; one of the best things that happened to me was realized through Co-op Ed and of course I would love the same for others. Co-op Ed is an avenue to prove to employers that you have the requisite skills, qualities and attitudes to give their organization that competitive edge as well as boosting their confidence and interest to "buy into" the Co-op Ed programme.

I am encouraging students to stay focused and not only dream but believe in their dreams. There are clear advantages especially in today's highly competitive job market to have work experience on your résumé and to give you stronger credibility in job interviews that sets you apart from others. Co-op Ed makes you more attractive to potential employers and increase skills in problem solving, critical thinking and team work. It also allows you to make valuable business contacts (networking) that may assist you in finding employment. In addition, it increases your skills in understanding and working with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures and to work effectively within a diverse environment.

I take the opportunity to once more thank the UTech family for my academic development as well as the Co-op Ed experience provided.

Career Corner: Preparing for an Interview

Before you go in your first interview it is important that you are adequately prepared. Here are some useful tips to keep in mind when going on your interview.

Practise, Practise, Practise!

In preparing for your interview, you must practice answering the usual interview questions. Setting up mock interviews can really help you prepare for this experience. Your potential employer may ask questions such as:

1. *Why do you want this job?*

One of the most predictable questions and very important! You need to **demonstrate that you have researched the employer** and tie your knowledge of them into the skills and interests that led you to apply.

2. *What are your weaknesses?*

Don't deny that you have any weaknesses - everyone has weaknesses and if you refuse to admit to them the interviewer will mark you down as arrogant, untruthful or lacking in self-awareness.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/interviews/commonquestions.htm>

Dress for success

The first thing potential employers look at is your attire. Your appearance can make or break your interview as it is your first area of judgment. You must ensure that you are dressed professionally, have a professional hairstyle and that your cologne or perfume is not overbearing.

For more information visit: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewattire/a/interviewdress.htm>
<http://career-advice.monster.co.uk/job-interview/preparing-for-job-interviews/top-5-job-interview-tips/article.aspx>



Have all important documents in hand

Be sure to bring all the documents needed along with those you may need during the interview. Be sure to take your résumé and/or portfolio to your interview. For more information and tips, visit <http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/jobinterviewtip.htm>

Be on time

Arrive for your interview at least fifteen minutes early.

Stay Calm

During the interview, it is important that you stay calm and relaxed. If needed, you may take a few breaths before answering questions. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer and be confident. For tips visit <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/03/26/14-tips-for-staying-calm-during-a-job-interview/>

Ask questions

Typically at the end of the interview, you will be asked if you have any questions or concerns. Be sure to ask questions relevant to the interview and about the job. Examples include, but are not limited to:

⇒What have you (the employer) enjoyed most about working here?

⇒Can you tell me about the team I'll be working with?

⇒What is the next step in the process?

For more questions visit, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2014/06/18/10-job-interview-questions-you-should-ask/>

Say Thanks

At the end of the interview, be sure to thank the interviewer. This is good interview etiquette and also reinforces your interest in the position to the employer.

Interview with School Co-op Ed Coordinator



Mr. Junior Bennett
Co-op Ed Coordinator
School of Natural & Applied Science

In what way does the school coordinator assist in the placement process?

The School Coordinator arranges mutually beneficial placement opportunities for students within the public and private sector, locally. Students are placed in organizations partnering with UTech that provide relevant

experiences in their area of specialization. Students placed are those pursuing the Bachelor of Science in Applied Science major in *Forensic Chemistry, Environmental Sciences or Industrial and Analytical Chemistry.*

How do you view your role as school coordinator?

I feel honored to be appointed to this very important role of supporting, nurturing and preparing the students to make the transition from classroom to the working world. I have a good relationship with the external partners that I seek to maintain and improve.

How have students benefited from the Co-op Ed experience?

The students have reported that they have gained greater appreciation for their course of study. The activities they performed during the internship coincided with the theory and laboratory exercises. Students have gained significant maturity and are far more ready to transit into the workplace after completing the Co-op Ed exercise.

In addition, the Co-op Ed experience provides greater understanding of the significance of procedures, protocol and codes of ethics in their specialization. Students have benefited from the opportunities to develop meaningful professional mentorship with their supervisors after completing the Co-op Ed programme. Some supervisors have allowed students to use them as referees when applying for jobs.

How do you envision improving the Co-op Ed process in your School/Faculty?

The Co-op Ed programme is going well in the School of Natural and Applied Science. The Dean, Head of School, Programme Director, Faculty Administrator, school administrative support team and lecturers on the programme are all supportive of the programme. It is my aim to get more industry partners on board for 2015. Communication between UTech and industry partners will continue to improve. Additionally, the number of site visits will improve from a minimum of one visitation to a minimum of two visitations per site, where practical and feasibly. Students will be given more support in the preparation of application letters and résumés, interview tips, and creating and maintaining a professional image.

What advice would you give to students who are nervous about placement?

There is no need for any student to be nervous about placement. Students are never alone while on work experience.

The Co-ordinator and the site supervisor/s collaborate for the mutual benefit of the students. Students will have the Co-ordinator's personal and work contact details. The Co-ordinator will contact students by phone during their work experience in addition to site visits. Students are also free to initiate contact with their coordinator for advice, updates, reporting on incidents or just any concern or issue that may arise.

What opportunities have the Co-op Ed experience provided for students and employers?

The Co-op Ed experience provides students with the opportunity to market themselves, form meaningful professional networking within their area of specialization, increase their knowledge, understanding and technical skills as well as, get the opportunity to use equipment they have knowledge of, but may have never used. Students also get the opportunity to be considered for employment when vacancies arise at the site or they may be recommended for employment by the supervisor elsewhere, based on their performance and attitudes. Employers benefit significantly from having students to assist them in meeting their objectives before the required timeline or in a timely manner.

Highlights of WIE Practitioners' Forum

The Co-op Ed Unit, UTech, in collaboration with the Association of Higher Education Administrators hosted a Work Integrated Education (WIE) Practitioners' Forum, under the theme *Promoting Work Integrated Education in the Caribbean Region: Way Forward*. This was held on Friday, November 21, 2014 at the UTech Papine Campus.

One of the main goals of the Forum was to share perspectives on how existing national and regional frameworks could accommodate a broader project for the successful implementation of WIE. The main (Power Point) presentation may be viewed at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4KuOJWo_OT_ajZCRzEzQjZVbnc/view?usp=sharing

The event was attended by key stakeholders from the UTech, the Ministry of Education, industry partners, and WIE Practitioners in other tertiary education institutions in Jamaica. A special thanks to all those who attended. We anticipate your participation and support of future WIE Fora.



Distinguished Panelists at the WIE Practitioners' Forum : (L-R) Mrs. Maxine Henry - Wilson (CEO, Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission), Mrs. Brenda Cuthbert (CEO, Jamaica Employers' Federation), Dr. Donna Powell-Wilson (ED, Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica) and Dr. Phylicia Marshall (Asst. Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education)

Important Dates

DATES	EVENT	VENUE
December 15, 2014 - January 9, 2015	CHRISTMAS PLACEMENT PROGRAMME	Participating Employers
December 24, 2014 12:00 noon to January 2, 2015 8:00 a.m.	UNIVERSITY CLOSED	
March 27, 2015	CAREER AND JOB PLACEMENT FAIR	Papine Campus
April 3, 2015	CAREER AND JOB PLACEMENT FAIR	Western (Montego Bay) Campus
May 6 - August 15, 2015	SUMMER PLACEMENT PROGRAMME	Participating Employers



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<http://utechco-opedu.blogspot.com/>



<http://www.utech.edu.jm/services/OCE/>



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Special thanks to **Shanice Forbes** for providing editorial assistance for this issue of the Co-operative Education Newsletter.

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