



University of Technology, Jamaica

## Co-operative Education at UTech, Ja.

"Partnering with Industry to produce work-ready graduates"

### Janelle Marks Shares Her Co-op Ed Experience



Janelle Marks, final year student, pursuing the B.Sc. in Economics.

It is the mission of UTech, Ja.'s Co-op Ed programme that every undergraduate student, prior to graduation, be given the opportunity to obtain practical and professional work experience that are related to their course of study and career goals.

Janelle Marks is a spirited and involved fourth year student at UTech, Ja., who is pursuing a B.Sc. in Economics. She has had the privilege of completing her Co-op Ed experience at the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ). This Co-op Ed experience, which occurred in summer, was quite unlike previous work experiences. Miss Marks describes this experience as rewarding, fun and life changing.

"It wasn't just the different operations of the Bank of Jamaica, it was just the total experience. I got more than I expected," smiled Miss Marks.

**"The experience was just so different."**

Miss Marks was granted the opportunity to work in the Economics Publication Department where she worked on projects which were directly related to her area of study. The projects she engaged in included data verification, designing a logo for a centralized database management system, coding data, entering data and making dashboards replica. Miss Marks recalls having to improve on some of her skills to efficiently and effectively complete the duties assigned.

**"I had to improve my listening skills, skills in presenting data and my analytical skills."**

Throughout Miss Marks' Co-op Ed experience, she was blessed with a strong support group. This group consisted of the head of department (HOD), co-workers and her direct supervisor. According to Miss Marks, the work environment was very professional, her HOD was humble and her co-workers were very encouraging and helpful. "My supervisor was Miss Marsha Thomas. She was so instrumental in my learning. She watched and allowed me to learn," said Miss Marks passionately.

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**"She was the force driving me through the programme."**

Miss Marks recommends the Co-op programme to all students at UTech, Ja. whether mandatory or not. She also placed emphasis on how important it is for students to complete their Co-op Ed experience. She stated that Co-op Ed was not just an experience of the working world but that it was an integral part of learning.

Miss Marks successfully completed her Co-op Ed experience and left with new bonds, knowledge and friendships. She now looks forward to owning her own business in the future and getting another opportunity to work at BOJ.

## Coffee Break With Two Of Our Industry Partners

Interview by Cait-Amoi Goulbourne



Ms. Norma Breakenridge,  
CEO, Breakenridge &  
Associates.

**B**reakenridge and Associates is an organization that continues to serve the Jamaican population by helping them to acquire their dream homes. Similarly, the company has the goal of serving tertiary education students, by providing them with professional exposure to further their dreams and career goals. Breakenridge and Associates has partnered with UTech, Ja. for over ten years and counting; the relationship between the two institutions has grown and continues to grow.

I caught up with Ms. Norma Breakenridge to ascertain the reason(s) behind her company's continued partnership with UTech, Ja. and her advice to other employers wishing to partner in the programme.

### **Would you agree that Breakenridge and Associates' partnership with UTech, Ja. in Co-op Ed has been mutually beneficial?**

I would agree that the partnership with UTech, Ja. in Co-op Ed has been mutually beneficial and is really a "win win" situation, as UTech is able to access on-the-job training for the interns where they are able to both expand and enhance their classroom experience; whilst the employer is able to both refresh and impart academic knowledge and experience to the intern. It is also gratifying to know that one is giving back to the society as a whole and assisting with nation building.

### **Would you recommend other companies to partner in the Co-operative Education Programme?**

I surely would encourage other companies to partner with UTech, Ja. in Co-op Ed as it is a worthwhile venture to help young persons to realize their ambition. In addition, the best way to really refresh your knowledge is when you have to pass it on to someone. There could also be scope for future employment in some cases.

### **What advice would you give to students about their participation in the Co-operative Education programme?**

They are to make the best use of the opportunity. It helps to cement the learning experience by practical applications, prepares them for the work world and allows for exposure to other areas of their professional life.



Ms. Kadiesha Watkis,  
Programme Manager,  
TBC Radio 88FM.

**T**BC Radio 88 FM is a Christian radio station that has been in existence since 1998, with the mandate of providing inspirational programmes and uplifting music. I posed similar questions to Ms. Watkis regarding TBC's participation in UTech, Ja.'s Co-op Ed programme, as well as, sought to ascertain her advice to prospective partners. Ms. Watkis notes that:

"TBC Radio has benefitted tremendously from the partnership with UTech, Ja. The students received from the programme have made sterling contributions with their skills, so much so that even after the end of placement, a number of them have been considered for full-time positions. Arising from last year's partnership, one student was later hired as a member of staff. As an organization we also made sure to equip the students with valuable lessons and experiences to help them in the working world. It has been a "win-win" partnership.

We would definitely encourage other companies to partner with UTech, Ja. in the Co-operative Education Programme. The programme provides the company with an opportunity to assist these students in being 'work-ready' by recognising and honing their talents/skills in various ways. In addition, it also helps organizations see potential candidates for future jobs."

The TBC Programme Manager noted further, "I would encourage students to take their placement opportunities seriously. It should not be treated as just a means to graduating; rather use it to find out the kind of environment in which one could thrive professionally as well as the skills on which to focus. Put your best foot forward and make a lasting impression."

## UTech Ja. Promoting International Internship Exchanges



Mark Slaunwhite,  
International Internship  
Exchange student

UTech, Ja., since February 2015, has partnered with Saint Mary's University in Canada to provide opportunities for students in both institutions to obtain international internships and academic scholarships. This partnership was made possible through the Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarship (QEII) Programme, which allows students to be hosted and monitored by the partner institution in the foreign country. Mark Slaunwhite was one of two exchange students received this summer. He was monitored by the Co-op Ed Unit, as well as by an academic supervisor while interning at Grace Kennedy.

I engaged Mr. Slaunwhite in a discussion in order to obtain some insight on why he chose to take this opportunity and what his experience was like. **The questions and responses are as follow:**

### **Why did you chose to complete your Co-op Ed experience/Internship in Jamaica?**

When asked if I would be interested in interning in Jamaica through the Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship programme I thought it would be great to get some additional work and travel experience and to experience the culture.

### **Did you do any research after you were informed about the opportunity?**

Yes. I researched the company I was going to work with. Also, I researched UTech Ja. to find out what they were known for and what they offered. It looked valuable.

### **Would you agree that there is a difference between the Jamaican corporate culture and the Canadian corporate culture?**

Definitely. I have had a corporate job in the past and I will admit that from my personal experience, I think Jamaica has a little more close-knitted corporate culture.

### **Were your expectations fulfilled at the end of your Co-op Ed experience?**

This programme can be a rewarding experience for students. The greater part of my expectations of this programme were met. I enjoyed Jamaica and I have had nothing but positive experiences.

### **Would you recommend students from your country to complete their Co-op Ed experience in Jamaica and through UTech, Ja.?**

Yes, I would recommend this programme. This country has treated me well and I've had a fantastic time, I'd like other students to experience the same.

Interview by: Cait-Amoi Goulbourne

## Journey From a Co-op Ed Student to a Permanent Employee



Nichale Chulan, 2015  
graduate of the B.Ed in  
Business and Computer  
Studies

This Co-operative Education experience has given me more than the typical work experience; it gave me a growing career. I was excited when I was informed that the National Housing Trust (NHT) was accepting students to participate in a Co-op Ed programme, as I needed some professional career guidance development, experience and outlook. Yes, I was already exposed to the different business activities, as my parents are entrepreneurs, however, I needed professional development that would enhance my marketability, as well as to put the knowledge I gained into practice. I was introduced to the Co-op Ed Unit by my Faculty Office, where I was further enlightened about the great opportunity of working in a business organization. The necessary contacts were made, and I was sent to NHT's Head Office.

Upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed by the staff and the members of the Human Resource Department. I cannot overstate the great emphasis that was placed on the strong relationship existing between NHT and UTech, Ja., and the Co-op Ed Unit in particular. I was briefed on the expectations, rules and guidelines of NHT, after which I was escorted to the Loan Management Department. The Loan Management Department handles the overall supervision and management of loans for all mortgagors. The activities done in this department came in just right to strengthen the knowledge I attained from the Bachelor's degree at UTech, Ja. At the end of the work experience, I was able to master each project assigned.

## Managing Co-op Ed Students

- ◆ Expose them to real work experiences and tasks. It is important that you give your Co-op Ed students real business experience so that they can gain valuable work experience.
- ◆ Be a mentor. Provide your Co-op Ed students with feedback on what they are doing well and where there is room for improvement.
- ◆ Set guidelines and parameters. It is important that you set expectations for interns. They should know what type of dressing is appropriate etc. Also, it is important that Co-op Ed students are aware of their position and role in the organization.
- ◆ Educate your Co-op Ed students. Co-op Ed students should know background information as well as the goals of your company. They should know what their daily tasks entail. In addition, they should know the purpose of their tasks and how they will be contributing to the growth of your company.

### Career Corner



#### True or False

1. When the interviewer asks the question, "tell me about yourself" he/she wants a concise narrative of your professional background and goals, and how they relate to the job at hand.
2. Conducting a research on the company/industry is a suggested strategy for preparing for an interview
3. Some of the most important keys to a successful interview is making eye contact, showing enthusiasm and speaking clearly.
4. The final minutes of an interview are the most important part of an interview.

Answers: 1. T 2. T 3. T 4. F

### From a Co-op Ed Student to a Permanent Employee

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Some of these included logging and dispatching files on the day of receipt, acknowledging correspondence from mortgagors on the day of receipt and preparing correspondence.

The experience of this programme has been beyond my expectations, as it was not just "work work," but a learning experience that will stay with me for life and a career development that will continue harnessing my fullest potential. I must report also that after I completed my Co-op Ed experience, I was retained and given the opportunity to be a part of the Summer Work Programme-which I did not even apply for. But it did not stop there; I was later made an employee.

### I am now an employee at the National Housing Trust.

I am now a part of this body. I was congratulated on the outstanding performance during the Co-op Ed experience, and Summer Employment programme, where-in I was offered a place at the organization. This organization is not just a work/organization but a home that gives homes. The theme printed on the souvenir summarizes it all- "National Housing Trust - a fun place to work."



### Acknowledgement

Special thanks to Cait-Amoi Goulbourne for this issue of the Co-operative Education newsletter. Cait-Amoi is a third year student at the University of Technology,

Jamaica, where she is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Arts and Technology.

### Bulletin

- ◆ UTech, Ja. Career and Job Placement Fair :March 18, 2016
- ◆ Co-op Ed Summer Placement Programme: May 09 - August 12, 2016
- ◆ The Association of Caribbean Higher Education Administrators (ACHEA) 15th Annual Conference: July 7-9 , 2015; Venue: Runaway Bay, St. Ann

Stakeholders are invited to present or be a part of the discussions on *Work-Integrated Education for the 21st century Workforce*. For more information email: [info@acheacaribbean.org](mailto:info@acheacaribbean.org)



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