



University of Technology, Jamaica

# Co-operative Education at UTech

*"Partnering with Industry to produce work-ready graduates"*

## Co-ordinator's Pen

Welcome to another issue of *Co-operative Education at UTech*.

The Co-op Ed Unit is pleased to announce that exciting times are ahead as the winds of change are blowing!

Since the start of the academic year several initiatives are being pursued in an effort to augment the Programme.

One major initiative was the Christmas Placement Programme for Tourism & Hospitality students and this proved to be very successful.

Our website has been given a face-lift; hope you like the new look. Additionally you can now follow us on Twitter!

There are several other initiatives in the pipeline but you must stay connected.

Happy reading!

*La-Cynthia Gordon-Brydson*  
University's Co-op Ed Co-ordinator

## Fiscal Services Limited Says Yes to Co-op Ed



UTech/FSL Co-op Ed Programme's Closing Ceremony for the second cohort. The function was attended by University representatives, FSL's management team, mentors and interns.

### *Realized Benefits of the Partnership*

Mrs. Durrant expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the Programme so far, as students have impacted positively the areas to which they were assigned. These assignments included designing consolidated databases and creating mobile applications for online inquiries. Another major project was the redesign of FSL's web site. According to Grace Alvaranga, Customer Relationship Manager and Student Mentor, the specific tasks were to review the current website and develop a prototype of the new website. The technologies used were Bootstrap v 2.1.1, HTML and Java. She said that her mentee's input in the re-design of the website added value (giving a performance rating of 9 out of 10) as the project was

**F**iscal Services Ltd (FSL) is one of UTech's newest Co-op Ed employers. Its partnership with the School of Computing and Information Technology (SCIT) commenced in July 2012, and has so far seen two cohorts and a total of eight (8) students participating in the Programme. The company highly anticipates its next batch of Co-op Ed students (interns).

### *Inspired Partnership*

According to Mitsy Durrant, Human Resource Director (HRD), the company's executives were inspired to participate in the Co-op Ed programme as they saw this as an opportunity to play a proactive role in augmenting the Government's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) workforce by enhancing ICT training and application. Additionally, such a Programme was known to facilitate short-term support that would increase productivity while providing invaluable work experience for the participating Co-op Ed students (interns).

## Co-op Ed. Students Placed at FSL share their experiences



### Ques: How has the experience at Fiscal benefitted you?

DD: It has taught me proper time management as I had to meet deadlines. Also, the experience has shown me that you need to have your own initiative when tackling tasks. For example, if I was not familiar with an objective or development tool I had to do my research or ask for help. At the end of the day sitting down and waiting will not get the task completed.

### Ques: What were your expectations of the programme and were these met?

DD: My expectations were to be exposed to the professional environment within my field and have an opportunity to work on professional projects. These were met.

-Daniel Dwyer, 4th year SCIT student



### Ques: What were your expectations of the programme and were these met?

CS: Initially I thought that I would be assigned multi-media related tasks, so I was surprised when I was placed in the Operations & Support Services department. However as time progressed, I learned that with adequate research I was able to accomplish tasks that were not multi-media related. In the end my expectations changed. I learned how flexible I really could be. For to me, that is a really good "selling-point" that one has to live up to, in every job opportunity they get.

### Ques: Would you recommend this programme to any one? Why or why not?

CS: I would highly recommend this Programme to all I know. It not only provides work experience in general, but it also provides one with an environment in which to use all the knowledge and skills gained while pursuing one's degree.

Carson Smith , 3rd year SCIT student

## Fiscal Services Limited Says Yes to Co-op Ed

significant to the organization in its current rebranding and marketing exercise. She further explained, "FSL's focus is to carry out its mandate to lead the development and implementation of ICT strategies, framework and solutions for GOJ and other clients. In carrying out this mandate the website is being used as one of the major marketing tools."

### Students' Employability Skill-sets

The strongest employability skills that were displayed by students were dedication, effective communication and good time

management. Their work ethics, maturity and interpersonal skills were also highly commendable. The HRD nevertheless advised that students should ensure that they leave an indelible mark and display good work ethics and personal responsibility in the event of future employment possibilities.

### Mentorship

Mrs. Alavaranga, when asked about her role as a mentor stated, "I perceive that my role is to facilitate the student in gaining a meaningful understanding of the industry to which they are assigned. My role is to guide their experience in a manner that will be beneficial to their personal and professional development". Her advice to mentors about to participate in the programme for the first time, was that, "They should have a clear understanding of the student's interest and career. Having gained this understanding, the tasks that are assigned should be relevant to the student's area

of interest and overall professional development. The mentor should also create a working environment that encourages the student to share their thoughts and ideas."

### Co-op Ed – A Viable Employment Recruitment Model

FSL is a testament to the viability of the Co-op Ed Programme as an employment recruitment model.

Since its inception, the organization has been able to hire five of the interns from the participating universities on a full-time basis.



FSL's Mentors along with The University's Co-op Ed Co-ordinator at one of the Co-op Ed meetings

According to Ms. Durrant, the company has been able to reduce the time spent training new employees on-the-job, as these interns would have already been exposed to aspects of the institutional and occupational culture of FSL.

### Improving the Programme

Even with the lauded benefits of partnership, the company believes that there are areas for improvement in the programme. One such area is for the University to award academic credits to participating students, as currently this is noted as a non-credit voluntary experience for which a certificate is awarded.

This recommendation is well noted by the University's administrators of the Programme who have well advanced plans of making the Co-op Ed module a School elective for the next cohort of students. SCIT, however, needs the partnership of more ICT firms for programme expansion.

The University is grateful to FSL for answering the call.

## Tips on Being Professional

Apply these tips to enhance your professional image.

### Body Language

Use positive body language. Positive body language shows clients that you are happy to serve them. You can convey this by smiling and paying attention to the person. Stop doing other activities and listen to the person's concerns. Attend to those concerns or direct the person to someone who can help without sending the person on a "wild goose chase."

### Phones

Be polite, pleasant and courteous when answering the telephone. The way in which a telephone is answered conveys an image of the institution. Since there is no visual and physical contact between the caller and the person who answers the telephone, you must project courtesy despite your state of

mind. The voice should be pleasant. Instead of anger or sarcasm, warmth, sincerity and concern should be projected. Even when rushed, try to appear calm and unhurried while leading the call to a conclusion. Always be polite.

### Do your best.

Do your best. Mediocrity is unacceptable when you are capable of doing better.

### Eating

Avoid eating at your desk when dealing with the public. Lunch or snacks should be eaten privately. A person cannot eat and serve clients at the same time. If you eat onions or any other foods with strong odors, use mints or brush your teeth before attending to clients. Strong food odors are offensive to many people.

### Appearance

The personal appearance of each employee is very important because the image that is projected can affect the transaction with a client. Be sure to dress appropriately, in

keeping with the company's dress code. Be sure also to practice good personal hygiene.

Ladies, makeup which improves the appearance should be put on before the start of work. It should be applied at home or in the rest room.

Applying makeup at the desk implies that the employee has no time to pay attention to a client.



Adopted from:

<http://personalgrowth.lifetips.com/cat/57062/being-professional/index.html>

## MISSION:

During the Christmas break a number of students from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM) were placed in hotels to gain additional work experience. This was a pilot project geared at introducing partners to the possibility of accessing critical short-term support during the industry's peak period while giving students full exposure to working in a high-paced setting. This mission proved to be very beneficial to all parties concerned.

We could not complete this issue without permitting at least one student to share her experience. Below is a brief account of Susharnna Cambridge's experience. Miss. Cambridge is a final year student pursuing a BSc. in Food Service Management.

“The Christmas placement period, at the Negril Tree House, was from December 19, 2012 to January 13, 2013. My main tasks was to assist in the setting-up of the dining room for breakfast and lunch. I was also given the task of serving some of the guests, by taking their orders and cleaning up. In addition to the duties above, I assisted in the kitchen where necessary. The experience was worthwhile, as I gained many employability skills. Being that this experience was done in what is known as an extremely busy period in the hospitality industry, I was exposed to the rigors of the industry. It allowed me to be more flexible, kept me on the edge and allowed me to handle my time management skills. Having been given this experience, I would encourage my colleagues to seize the opportunity of Christmas placement when next it arrives.”



Susharnna poses for a candid shot with Negril Tree Houses' proprietor (L) and General Manager @.

## Meet the School Coordinators



### Mr. Stanford Graham

Lecturer, Co-op Ed Coordinator, SCIT

#### How long have you been a School Coordinator?

I have been a School Coordinator since 2007; approximately six years.

#### What do you like most about the job of a School Coordinator?

The opportunity to place students in business environments where they are able to hone their skills and gain an appreciation for the challenges organizations face on a daily basis. The hope is that students will develop amongst other things, a sense of responsibility and problem-solving skills.

#### What is your most challenging function as a Coordinator?

Getting organizations to embrace in a wholesome way, the concept of "nationalism" and its importance in the development of human capital. There is some amount of unwillingness amongst employers to serve as mentors to students in order to aid in the transferral of work place skill-sets and allow students to be more practical rather than only theoretical.

#### What is the most important change that you would like to make that would enhance the quality of the Co-op Ed programme in your School?

Having a University-wide Co-op Ed (Internship) Fair; converting the auditorium into an arena that would allow students to showcase their skills by means of live demonstrations to potential employers. The Fair would also provide the opportunity for on-the-spot interviews for Co-op Ed positions in companies.

#### Meet the School Coordinators cont'd...

#### Where do you envision UTech's Co-op Ed programme to be five years from now?

Having a national recognition for Co-op Ed. (1) It is envisioned that GOJ will partner with the private sector for expansion of Co-op Ed. For each private sector project, there will be at least one tertiary student on the team. (2) All organizations will be actively participating in the training of the human capital of the country.

To facilitate this expansion, seminars should be held with the mandatory participation of business leaders, the Ministry of Education and other government and public sector entities. Through dialogue a national framework will be developed. Businesses that engage in this venture should receive tax breaks or incentives.

#### What would be your closing word of advice/challenge to our Co-op Ed students?

Students should build quality relationships with professionals in their field. In addition, they should learn how to network for the exchange of ideas that can lead to projects and opportunities which are bigger than what they could do on their own.



## Bulletin Board

- **UTech's Annual Career & Job Placement Fair** is March 15, 2013. Employers wishing to interview Co-op Ed students (Interns) at the Job Fair (for immediate or summer placement) are asked to immediately contact the Co-op Ed Unit at [lgordon-brydson@utech.edu.jm](mailto:lgordon-brydson@utech.edu.jm) and copy email to [placement@utech.edu.jm](mailto:placement@utech.edu.jm). Additional information can be had at <http://www.utech.edu.jm/jobfair/index.asp>
- Our **summer placement** programme officially commences May 13 through to August 16, 2013. If you have not received an official notification please send us an email stating your needs.
- Visit our updated website Co-operative Education Webpage at: [http://www.utech.edu.jm/services/OCE/index\\_new.htm](http://www.utech.edu.jm/services/OCE/index_new.htm). Send us your feedback.
- Join our Twitter community at <https://twitter.com/UTechCoopEd>



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