

University of Technology, Jamaica

Co-operative Education at UTech

“Partnering with Industry to produce work-ready graduates”

Co-ordinator’s Note

The Co-op Ed Unit and School Coordinators continue to work collaboratively and diligently to promote the value of Co-operative Education in the development of our country’s human resources.

We are happy for the new partnerships forged in recent months as well as for the continued commitment demonstrated by our longstanding employers who seek to engage students in cycles throughout the year.

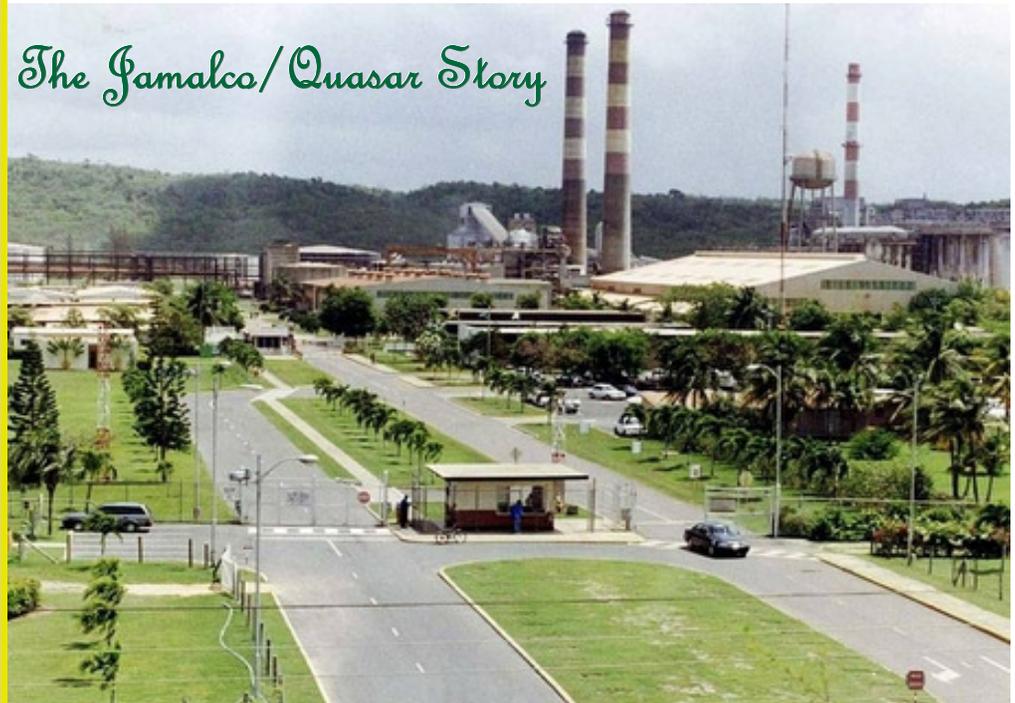
This summer our employers’ evaluation of the placement experience was very good, which speaks to the improvements in the quality of our programme. We believe that this can only get better! Placement for the Christmas period is now our focus, so we encourage employers to come on board during this period.

Finally, we encourage employers to stay tuned for more information on UTech’s Career and Job Placement Fair to be held in March 2014. This Fair will introduce the added component of students’ demonstration of skills and competencies, and the opportunity to engage some of these students for Co-op Ed engagements. Let’s make this a date!

La-Cresha Gordon-Brydson
University Co-op Ed Co-ordinator

SUSTAINED PARTNERSHIPS:

The Jamalco/Quasar Story



The University of Technology, Jamaica’s courses of study are modeled on the English polytechnic system which emphasizes work-based learning as a very significant aspect of students’ learning. Consequently, Co-operative Education is an essential part of the UTech brand, which requires sustained industry partnerships to guarantee its survival.

Over the years, UTech has entered into partnerships with many companies for the purpose of providing its students with prime opportunities to gain relevant career-influenced experiences in the most professional work settings. Jamalco is one such company which has had long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship with the University, engaging students in various disciplines namely Engineering, Electrical and Mechanical Technology, Business and more recently in the area of Computing.

The Jamalco/Quasar Story continued



Mr. Gobind Dansinghani
Quasar Site Services
Manager and student mentor

Brief History

Located in Halse Hall, Clarendon, Jamalco first commenced operations in 1959 as Alcoa Minerals of Jamaica, a Canadian owned company. In 1988, the Government of Jamaica acquired a 50 percent share in the operations resulting in its present name Jamalco.

Quasar means **Q**uality **A**utomation **S**ervices in **A**lumina **R**efining and is the partnership between Alcoa Inc. and Honeywell Inc. Jamalco is one seven Alcoa Refineries worldwide that have adopted this model. Mr.

Gobind Dansinghani is the Site Services Manager representing Honeywell and a champion for the Co-op Ed programme, a role which he takes very seriously.

Co-op students assigned to Quasar work alongside Mr. Dansinghani in the Process Control Department which is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the Jamalco's process control system. Consequently, students who are engaged by Quasar come mainly from the Chemical and Electrical Engineering disciplines.

The Partnership

While the University's relationship with Jamalco extends beyond a decade, partnership with Quasar spans approximately five (5) years. Mr. Dansinghani states that the decision for initial and continued partnership with the programme lies in the fact that UTech is seen as "the original engineering institution in Jamaica, and now produces most of the engineering talent."

Mr. Dansinghani further stated that the promising partnership between UTech and Quasar can be expected to continue in the future as the students that have been placed with the company over the years have been able to adjust and adapt to the organization's environment and policies. Managers and supervisors at Jamalco have been constantly impressed with

the work attitudes of the Co-op Ed students. They boast that the students are more than capable of accomplishing any tasks they are mandated to complete.

Supervision

Mr. Dansinghani stressed the importance of proper supervision of Co-op Ed students. He stated that being a supervisor/mentor is a very important role as such a person is automatically responsible to inspire and motivate interns. This is best achieved on the job and his team takes pride in doing just that.

Mr. Dansinghani noted that while UTech exposed students to the knowledge and skills required in a particular field, it is the employer who exposes them to the working world which is very different. Both experiences are vital to producing work-ready individuals. The Co-op Ed Programme is therefore very relevant and important.

Employment

With the excellent performance and dedication of the student interns over the years of partnership, UTech students come highly recommended for permanent employment. According to Mr. Dansinghani, the contribution the students have made to the company while on Co-op Ed has far exceeded expectations and as a result several engineers have been hired since the partnership commenced.

Mr. Dansinghani is very optimistic about the future of the Co-op Ed programme which he says has proven to be beneficial to both students and partnering companies over the years. He predicts that the programme will continue to grow from strength to strength.

The Jamalco/Quasar Story — A Student's perspective



Yanique Beckford
Chemical Engineering
Graduate

Yanique Beckford was assigned to Quasar during the period June to August 2013 to complete a total 400 industrial hours.

The Co-op Ed Unit was pleased when Miss Beckford gladly consented to share her experience at the company

and so an interview was conducted. Below are Miss Beckford's responses to the questions that were asked.

G.P: **What were your expectations of the Co-op Ed programme and were any of them met?**

Y.B: I expected the Programme to provide me with practical and professional exposure to a chemical engineering work environment. My expectations were met because I did my industrial hours at Jamalco and I worked in the Process Control Department which was exactly what I studied. I was able to apply the knowledge and skills that I gained from the courses I studied and I was able to acquire new competencies as a result of my interactions with Chemical Engineers working in that department.

G.P: **What preparation was done before you went on work experience?**

Y.B: I was given information regarding where I would be working and who would be my supervisor from the Co-op Ed Unit. I received a formal introductory letter as well as other documents that I was to take to my supervisor.

G.P: **What was the main duties you had to perform?**

YB: The main duties I had to perform included:

- ◇ Monitoring and maintaining the performance of the existing process control scheme in an assigned operating area of the refinery.
- ◇ Providing technical input and support to production to avoid problems and/or for Problem-solving.
- ◇ Documenting operating procedures for Process Control Systems.

GP: **How did you adjust to the work environment while on work experience?**

YB: At first I found it difficult commuting from Portmore to Clarendon and having to wake early in the mornings. It was also challenging adjusting to the heavy gear I had to wear while on site as the company took safety very seriously. However, overtime I got used to it all.

GP: **How beneficial was work experience to you?**

YB: It was very beneficial to me as I acquired and improved on skills such as problem-solving, leadership, organizational, social, communication and the ability to work with a team.

GP: **What advice would you give to students who have not yet done Co-op Ed?**

YB: I would advise students to work hard and to the best of their ability once they have started the Co-op Ed experience because the possibility exists that they might be offered a permanent position. Also, whatever is learnt in class, will be utilized in the working environment. Finally, leave a good lasting impression that will make your employers remember you and even want you back.

KPMG embarks on a new Partnership with UTech through the Co-operative Education Programme

The University of Technology, Jamaica's Co-op Ed Unit has embarked on a new partnership with KPMG through the Co-op Ed programme. This is a bid to satisfy its never-ending mission of providing its students with valuable work experience and an opportunity to hone their employability skill-sets.

The Co-op Ed programme also provides UTech with an avenue to formalize and broaden the partnership between the University and industry. It thus facilitates a greater understanding of employers' needs and provides a channel through which those needs may be addressed.

KPMG's Co-op Ed partnership is one which the University is excited about as it presents an opportunity for the Co-op Ed module to be formalized for Accounting students. This is possible because of the firm's commitment to offer work experience in cycles over a sustained period.

The commencement of the Programme is scheduled for January 2014. KPMG has recruited nineteen (19) Co-op Ed students for the first cohort and they will be engaged for three months. In preparation for their engagement the students were invited to participate in an Audit Foundation Training held during the period August 12-19, 2013.

Benefits to KPMG

KPMG states its reason for participating in the programme as being to provide students with an opportunity to be exposed in the practical aspects of work in auditing, accounting, finance and related subjects with the expectation that they will be interested in using the experience to inform their career choices in completing their studies.

The firm has also acknowledged that there are significant benefits to be derived from its participation in the programme. These are as follows:

- ◇ The programme will result in a pool of trained, work-ready entry-level recruits who could be engaged as needed during the firm's busy periods.
- ◇ Recruitment of staff will shift from inexperienced to experienced hires.
- ◇ The programme enhances KPMG's long standing

relationship to with the UTech accounting course of study and the University in general.

- ◇ Lastly, the programme is a vehicle for KPMG to nurture Jamaica's accountancy profession.

The firm has also identified benefits to participating students and the University community as outlined below.

Benefits to Student Participants

- ◇ Students will be able to acquire practical, organizational and technical experience.
- ◇ The opportunity of improving their financial status and earn credits while learning will be made available to students.
- ◇ Students will have the opportunities of being mentored and to engage in professional networking.
- ◇ Students will be able to gain invaluable work experience that may assist them in finding fulltime employment.
- ◇ Students will be exposed to the use of cutting edge technology.

Benefits to UTech

- ◇ The partnership will enhance the professional value of UTech's Accounting course of study.
- ◇ The programme will allow for timely feedback to the School regarding the relevance of the curriculum to the business environment, thus enhancing graduates work-place preparedness.
- ◇ The "employability" of the students in the Accounting programme will be increased.
- ◇ UTech's Accounting course of study will be differentiated from other tertiary institutions.

KPMG in Jamaica is one of the largest operating professional services practices on the island. The firm provides a broad range of audit, tax and advisory services.



Final year Accounting students who participated in Audit training in August, in preparation for their January 2014 Co-op Ed engagement.

INTERVIEWS WITH TWO STUDENTS SELECTED FOR PLACEMENT AT

KPMG



Xavian Williams

Is the Co-op Ed opportunity at KPMG aligned with your career goal? If yes, in what way?

XW: Yes, this opportunity is directly aligned with my career objectives. It is my hope to become a certified public accountant and this placement opportunity at KPMG will allow me to get a first-hand view of what the profession is all about. It will allow for me to expand my professional network and become more marketable as a university graduate.



Kharis Howard

What are your expectations being in this programme and having the opportunity to gain professional work experience at KPMG?

KH: I am very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the Co-op Ed programme. I have already completed one week's training at KPMG and have learnt a lot already. I expect that this programme will allow me to develop my skills as an Accounting major, giving me the opportunity to use what I have learnt and am still learning at UTech. This programme is a great start for many students including me, who have little to no work experience. Therefore, I expect to learn much from being in the actual workforce prior to leaving UTech and at such a prestigious company. Additionally, I believe that this opportunity can open the door to becoming a part of the company permanently.

CAREER CORNER

Traits of a Valuable Employee

1. Character-driven:

As an employee, you are representing the organization. Your conduct and how you present yourself when interacting with customers and co-workers, and the quality of your work, reflects directly on it. Employers want employees who are upstanding, trustworthy, honest and truthful in his dealings with others.

2. Multi-skilled:

Upgrading yourself will not only improve your value but also your worth as an employee within an organization. This can be achieved in any of the following ways:

- Strive to be the very best at what you do.
- Broaden the areas of different tasks you can perform.
- Have more than one skill set.
- Enhance and improve the skills you already possess.

3. Reliable:

Listen carefully to instructions. It shows respect for superior, which will not go unnoticed. This will also assure him/her that you take your duties seriously and can handle further instructions.

4. Proactive:

Managers notice a self-motivated worker and will seek him out for advancement. Those who productively use their time are more likely to be given increased responsibility, even a promotion.



DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF
 TEAM PLAYER
 POSITIVE ATTITUDE
 DETAIL-ORIENTED

5. Dedication:

A valuable employee shows his dedication by consistently exceeding his employer's expectations and willingly taking on any task. Be a worker who does more than is expected, not just the bare minimum.

6. Self-disciplined:

A good employee is one who stays on track. He does not allow modern technology, such as the Internet or his cell phone to distract him. He focuses his attention on his work.

Adopted: <http://realtruth.org/articles/100108-004-society.html>

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Benjamin Franklin



Here are just some of our 2012-2013 Academic Year Industry Partners. We are extremely proud to have you on board.

1. Caribbean Cement Company
2. Jamaica Bauxite Limited
3. Jamaica Private Power Company Limited
4. Manchester Co-operative Credit Union
5. Media Interactive Limited
6. Main Event Entertainment
7. N.O. Whyte and Associates
8. Parang Industries Limited
9. Petrojam Limited
10. Port Authority of Jamaica
11. Pro Communications Limited
12. Redbones Blues Café
13. Spectrum Management Authority
14. South Beach Café

Acknowledgment



Special thanks to Miss Gail Pennant, for compiling this issue of **Co-op Ed at UTech**.

Miss Pennant is herself a Co-op Ed student, assigned to the Co-op Education Unit since last semester. She is currently a final year student pursuing at B.Ed in Business and Computer Studies.

Meet the School Co-ordinators



Miss Gelefer Bartley School of Technical and Vocational Education (SOTAVE)

Meet SOTAVE's Co-op Ed (Work Experience) coordinator, Ms. Gelefer Bartley. She is full-time lecturer in the School of Technical and Vocational Education, Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies, Below are the responses obtained from an interview conducted with Ms. Bartley.

GP: Ms. Bartley, how long have you been a School Coordinator?

GB: I have been the coordinator for the School's Summer Post Graduate course of study for seven years and six months for full-time B.Ed programme.

GP: What do you find most challenging about being a School Coordinator?

GB: It is an overwhelming task to ensure that all the students in the different courses of study in the School are placed. The competition from other institutions for Co-op Ed placement has greatly increased over the years, hence the difficulty.

GP: And what do you find most rewarding?

GB: When the students return to School and tell how much they have learnt from the industry experience. I am particularly please when teaching a module and students can relate/apply what they have learnt in the workplace to enhance learning.

GP: What do you think could be done to enhance the Co-op Ed programme?

GB: The University's Co-op Ed Unit needs additional resources such as staffing and a budget to facilitate its activities.

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

GB: I envision that the module will be administered through the Co-op Ed Unit and that this Unit will be fully staffed and equipped to take over the administrative responsibilities for Co-op Ed placement. The lecturers therefore will not be so involved in the administrative process.

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

GB: Pay attention to the notices regarding seminars put on by the Career and Placement Unit as this provides additional preparation/training for performance on the job.

(Interviewer: Gail Pennant)