

5 TO WATCH

CANADA'S SPORTS BUSINESS AWARDS

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Kirill Sakharov's internship at the Hockey Hall of Fame sets him up for success as a sport and event marketing professional. THOMAS BOLLMANN

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SCORES A WINNING CAREER GOAL

George Brown College's work integrated learning program helps those hoping to break into their chosen industry gain job experience

WHEN KIRILL SAKHAROV, AN INTERNATIONAL student from Russia in George Brown College's Centre for Business' Sport & Event Marketing program, applied for an internship at the Hockey Hall of Fame, he was breaking new ground.

"We'd never had an intern in the special events and hospitality department before," notes Aaron Stocco, manager of the department.

But Sakharov, originally from Russia, did not come in cold. He had volunteered to help at the special events held at the venue after hours.

"The supervisor of the work term program offered us the opportunity to volunteer at the beginning of the course," he recalls. "After two months they hired me on a part-time basis to do customer service during regular hours."

Having that foot in the door gave

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Ian Austin
Dean of George Brown College's Centre for Business

Sakharov the opportunity to apply for an internship. Like many international students, he recognized that gaining Canadian work experience was essential. During his internship, it was his responsibility to sell the events at the venue, which hosts more than 200 a year. Sakharov was involved in communicating with potential clients, event planning and co-ordination.

Now that his internship is finished, Sakharov is completing his last semester, while working at the Hockey Hall of Fame in guest services.

"Kirill has a great work ethic, he stands out. We wanted to give him a chance with the internship and he taught us that an intern is a valuable asset," explains Stocco.

The experience was beneficial to both of them.

"You search for people who have

drive and passion for the role," says Stocco. "With the George Brown program, the screening has been done already. Its students care, want to make a difference and come with a professional attitude. Hiring them makes my job easier."

The key to success for Sport & Event Marketing program graduates is the work integrated learning they take part in.

"Work term experience, field education and entrepreneurial assignments allow students more opportunities to have a wider angled perspective of the challenges, opportunities and possibilities that exist in industries, corporate enterprises and other organizations," explains Ian Austin, Dean of George Brown College's Centre for Business.

This approach enables students to think more broadly about the world

of work and develop better ideas about how to position themselves for employment opportunities. It also gives them a more coherent understanding of career pathways.

Along with work term placements, students are able to learn from a speakers' series that features presentations from alumni and other top-notch players in the field. Case studies focusing on real-life companies are also offered.

Brendan Fyfe is an independent sports business consultant, a graduate from the class of '97 and the Co-chair of the 5 to Watch, an event that recognizes five Canadian sports business professionals under 40 who have achieved remarkable success.

"My work placements were fun, not work, and I learned a lot," he recalls of his first placement with the Vanier Cup at SkyDome and his second at Landmark Sport Group.

Fyfe, who landed his first job with Molson Breweries in event management right out of school, says he enjoys speaking to students regularly about his experiences.

"It's good to show them what I have learned. It's a bit like the circle of life," he says

CHASING EXCELLENCE

Bursary from 5 to Watch allows a student to pursue a life-long dream in sports marketing

A light went on for George Brown College student Alexander Peat while he was volunteering at last year's 5 to Watch awards event.

"It was great to see the five industry winners, but when I saw the student bursary winners I knew I wanted to get one, too," says Peat, who is in the one-year Sport & Event Marketing program at the college's



Basketball fan Alexander Peat was pleased to be a recipient of a student bursary from 5 to Watch.

Centre for Business.

By pushing himself to excel, his wish came true. In April, he learned he was the recipient of the TSN Award of Excellence, which came with a cheque for \$2,500.

"I'm putting the money towards my OSAP debt," says Peat. "Receiving it was a real relief."

The award is about more than the money, though.

"Having that brand aligned with my name and having the students and faculty cheering me on was huge," he says.

Peat, who grew up in London, Ont., did his undergraduate degree at Western University, majoring in criminology. A life-long soccer player,

sports was in his blood. After a year bartending to pay off student loans, he decided to enroll in the George Brown program.

"I was surrounded by motivated people and taught by professors who were as much mentors as they were teachers," he says.

During his work term placement with MediaCom, Peat got hands-on experience in media planning. "It was good exposure and I learned about analytics and optimization," he says.

Upon graduation, he landed a job as junior programmatic analyst at Eyereturn, a digital marketing company. He credits his basketball blog, started last year at his professors' encouragement, with getting him the job. "My

boss took a look at it and could see I understood statistics and analytical thinking."

The six bursaries funded by 5 to Watch are awarded to students with a strong academic record and a financial need. "Together with our donor-partners, the Foundation works to ensure that no student is denied a post-secondary education because of financial constraints," explains Cindy Gouveia, President, George Brown College Foundation, which oversees the bursaries.

When asked how he feels about the award and the program in general, Peat doesn't miss a beat: "It's the best thing that ever happened to me."

George Brown College Foundation is championing student success through the Success at Work campaign. The \$60-million private fundraiser supports the college's expansion vision and increases scholarships and bursaries. If you wish to make a donation, visit georgebrown.ca/giving.



SPORTS BUSINESS ENTREPRENEUR CROSSES THE FINISH LINE FIRST

Kim Smither wins this year's prestigious 5 to Watch Alumni Achievement Award for her professional acumen and devotion to giving back

Kim Smither is a powerhouse sports business entrepreneur whose career accomplishments are nothing short of remarkable.

After graduating from George Brown College's Sport & Event Marketing program in 1995, she worked with the Canadian Olympic Committee, helmed her own sports marketing agency and developed global sports strategies for leading companies in the UK and United States.

Life came full circle earlier this year when Smither became Vice-president of ProSpeakers.com, a company founded by her friend

and former George Brown College classmate, Heather MacLean. The company, a top speaker agency, recently signed a deal to represent 31 NHL coaches.

Smither, who has an undergraduate degree in physical and health education from the University of Toronto, credits the George Brown program with allowing her to break into the industry. "I grew up in Welland, Ontario, and didn't know anyone in the business. The work term really was a door opener."

Her internship with Marketing magazine, plus in-class instruction at George Brown on financial, digital

and global aspects of the sports business set the foundation for her career.

"Once you take the program, you are part of a community. Good networking is pivotal to success," she adds.

Kathy Dumanski, Chair of George Brown College's School of Marketing, Centre for Business and Co-chair of 5 to Watch 2018 agrees. "We have an incredible alumni group that is very engaged with the college and giving back to students. It's a growing circle that provides value added for the program."

Feeling connected to peers in the



Kim Smither was chosen to receive the 5 to Watch Alumni Achievement Award in recognition of her remarkable success and devotion to mentoring others in the industry.

industry is important to Smither. She remembers a time when that was lacking, especially for women. That's why she devotes her time to giving back and encouraging others.

"I've mentored men, but I really like to support women because getting ahead in a male-dominated industry can be tough," she says. "I always advise [women] to surround themselves with individuals who can help them up, not hold them down."

Receiving the Alumni Achievement Award is a happy homecoming for her: "It is humbling and flattering," says Smither. "I'm extremely happy to be honoured this way."

For more information about the Sport & Event Marketing program, visit georgebrown.ca/B400.

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