

NEWS RELEASE for 2013 Co-op Students of the Year Awards

**“OUTSTANDING CO-OP STUDENTS EARN NATIONAL RECOGNITION”**

Toronto, ON, March 17, 2014 – The Canadian Association for Co-operative Education ([CAFCE](#)) announces the 2013 Co-op Students of the Year: **Alex Chen** from the University of British Columbia and **Kristen Leigh Metz** from Sheridan College.

Rising to the top, from a field of 29 nominees, Alex and Kristen embodied all the attributes of an outstanding co-op student – a significant impact in their co-op placement, high academic performance, commitment to enhancing the profile of co-operative education at their post-secondary institution, and making a difference in their communities.

Alex Chen is a fourth-year Bachelor of Arts student studying International Relations and French at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Alex completed two work terms with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada in Ottawa, from January to August 2013, as a Junior Officer in the Northeast Asia Division. He has previously studied abroad, at the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po Paris), and completed a work term as a Communications Assistant for the UBC Centre for Arts Student Services. Alex is passionate about Canadian foreign policy and is extremely interested in the relationship between Canada and Asia-Pacific. On campus, Alex is involved with the UBC Debate Society, serves as Editor for the UBC Journal of International Affairs, and maintains a 4.33 GPA. He speaks English, French and Mandarin fluently and is currently learning Spanish and German. He is a UBC Westbrook Scholar and Premier Award recipient, the highest undergraduate recognition at UBC.

Eugenie Cormier-Lassonde, Program Manager – Korean Peninsula and Mongolia, at Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, wrote that “Alex took care of ministerial correspondence ... prepared speeches and presentations, produced briefing notes for senior management and the Ministers ... and helped with logistics for various large bilateral events. His enthusiasm, interpersonal skills, adaptability and ability to work with all staff members of the team, was very beneficial to our Department. Alex showed a level of professionalism that is comparable to the best graduate students we have hired.”

Alex credits the UBC Arts co-op program for providing exceptional opportunities that allowed him to apply his education, develop his strengths, build his network and discover a career that he loves!



Kristen Leigh Metz is in the final year of the Software Development and Network Engineering Program at Sheridan College. Her deep-seated interest in programming began as a hobby but became her career focus in 2007 when she applied to the Computer Programmer program at Sheridan College, where she eventually branched into the Computer Systems Technology – Software Development and Network Engineering Co-op program to take advantage of the lucrative co-op placements it offered.

In support of Kristen's nomination, Rado Jovic, Section Head of the Customer Information Management Team at Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), wrote that Kristen provided development and support related to IESO's intranet and corporate web sites, and "at the end of the project Kristen presented the results to the manager of the Project Management Office and to the Vice President of IT." The web tools she designed and implemented resulted in increased productivity and continue to be actively used by the Project Management Office. Rado further stated that Kristen "would be a great addition to the IESO or any organization."

Lori Elliott, Director of Career Education at Sheridan College, applauded Kristen for "her tremendous academic achievements," with a GPA of 3.99, and awards including the Sandra Hodder Technology and Innovations Award, the Xerox Award of Excellence in Computer Programming, and the Award of Excellence in General Education." Lori further praises Kristen for coaching other Co-op students as they prepare for interviews with IESO and states "students really appreciate getting her insider perspective." Kristen is also involved in the community as a member of KNOW IT, Lime Connect Canada, and has volunteered for the Animal Hospital of Lakeport and the Women's Shelter of Adrian. Kristen states "it seems natural to give back" and so participates in fundraisers for the Lion's Foundation of Canada Dog Guides ...where she received her Dog Guide.

You see, Kristen received her acceptance letter to the Co-op program at Sheridan while in a coma, and woke months later unable to walk and with a permanent loss of sight due to a sudden and serious illness. Kristen, through sheer determination, creativity and tenacity walked again, followed through with her education plan and completed her Co-op work term with a variety of aids and a new perspective on life.



In addition to receiving a \$500 cash award from CAFCE, with a certificate to commemorate their achievements, Alex Chen and Kristen Leigh Metz will each receive the \$500 Emery-Dufault Award. The Emery-Dufault Award was established by CAFCE in 2003 in recognition of the contributions of two of the founding fathers of co-operative education in Canada, Dr. Charles Leslie (Les) Emery and Professor George Joseph Dufault. Les Emery first introduced the idea of co-operative education to Waterloo College Association Faculties, the forerunner of the University of Waterloo. His proposal and subsequent work led to the establishment of the first co-operative education program in Canada. George Dufault set up and headed the department of Co-ordination during its first year (from 1957 to 1958) at Waterloo College Associate Faculties. This was the forerunner of the current Co-operative Education and Career Action department at the University of Waterloo.

Each year CAFCE recognizes outstanding co-op student achievement at the college and university level. Co-op offices across Canada will be celebrating this and other co-op initiatives during National Co-operative Education Week, March 17-21, 2014. Currently there are 78 CAFCE member institutions across Canada and the U.S. representing over 80,000 students.

Honourable mentions were awarded to **Danielle Hyeyoon Jeong** from Simon Fraser University (Bachelor of Science, Honours, Biomedical Physiology), and **Hargurdeep Singh** from Sheridan College (Mechanical Engineering Technology – Design & Drafting Co-op).

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Denise Olah

Chair, CAFCE Co-op Students of the Year Awards Selection Committee (2013)

416.491.5050 | [Denise.Olah@senecacollege.ca](mailto:Denise.Olah@senecacollege.ca)