

# A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IS MORE THAN JUST BOOKS!

By Nicole Wray

## GET VOLUNTEER AND WORK EXPERIENCE SO YOU CAN...



### CONNECT WITH PEERS

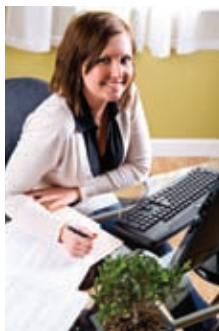
You'll encounter great networking opportunities when meeting other students who share similar interests.

When researching post-secondary education options, it's easy to become overwhelmed with thoughts of studying, books, courses, lectures and, of course, more studying. But while academics are certainly an important factor when you're researching your options, finding out about potential volunteer and work experiences that different schools offer is just as important. Mastering how to write an essay or lab report may earn you top grades, but volunteer and work experience will help make your post-secondary education even more meaningful and valuable.

**"FINDING OUT ABOUT POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER AND WORK EXPERIENCES THAT DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OFFER IS JUST AS IMPORTANT."**

### GAIN REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

You'll expose yourself to different work environments, people and responsibilities, which will help you to discover your likes and dislikes.



Finding career-related work that you enjoy after graduating from university or college can be a very competitive process. Work and volunteer experiences you gain while at school can help you pinpoint the career path you want to take. More importantly, these experiences can give you a competitive edge when you look for summer jobs as you work toward your degree, or full-time work after graduation.



### ENHANCE YOUR SKILL SET

You'll improve your "soft skills," such as social skills, leadership skills, and the ability to build relationships and work as part of a team.

Alyssa Higginson, a fourth-year Health Sciences student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, sees her volunteer and work experiences as a key part of her university education. "I've felt extremely involved, informed and purposeful while attending university due to my work and volunteer experiences," says Alyssa. "The chance to participate in various events and tasks has increased my knowledge in many areas and has given me relevant work experience for when I graduate... I will not only

be graduating with a degree, but also with invaluable work and volunteer experience.”

Alyssa encourages anyone looking into a post-secondary education to consider potential work and volunteer experiences. “I would definitely recommend looking into the different work and volunteer opportunities at various post-secondary institutions before deciding to go there,” she says. “I went on a tour of my university before attending and asked if I would be able to become a tour guide if I chose to go to UOIT. My tour guide said yes. While this wasn’t the only reason I chose the school, knowing that I could have the chance to work while going to school was something that excited me.”

## “WORK AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES YOU GAIN WHILE AT SCHOOL CAN HELP YOU DISCOVER THE CAREER PATH YOU WANT TO TAKE.”

Janice Vaughan is an Environmental Studies student at Wilfrid Laurier University. Volunteering has helped her make new friends and learn how to balance her academic, social and volunteer life. “My volunteer experiences have helped me to make many different groups of friends, which I found especially important in my first year,” Janice explains. “Also, extracurricular involvement allows me to de-stress so that I can better focus on school work.” By involving herself in various volunteer positions in her first year of university, Janice earned a spot in the co-op program, where she has been able to improve her résumé, interview skills and hands-on job skills.

## WHY POST-SECONDARY VOLUNTEER AND WORK EXPERIENCE IS IMPORTANT

- You’ll encounter great networking opportunities when meeting other students and professors who share similar interests. (This can lead to on-campus summer work opportunities!)
- In future job interviews, you’ll have excellent anecdotes to tell that can back up the skills you possess.
- You’ll improve your “soft skills,” such as social skills, leadership skills, and the ability to build relationships and work as part of a team.
- You can gain hands-on experience, which many degrees and diplomas do not offer.
- Most importantly, you’ll expose yourself to different work environments, people and responsibilities, which will help you to discover your likes and dislikes.



## BRANCH OUT & GET CREATIVE

Volunteering opportunities come in many forms. Look around your community for ways you can help. You’re sure to grow and learn new things!

## THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Alyssa Higginson (left) and Janice Vaughan (right) both feel that their extracurricular activities enriched their post-secondary education. Alyssa says she got great work experience, while Janice says she made lots of new friends while volunteering.



## IF NOTHING ELSE...

In future job interviews, you’ll have excellent anecdotes to tell that can back up the skills you possess.

## WHERE TO LOOK

- Research co-op or internship experiences that post-secondary schools may offer. (Don’t forget to look into the number of students accepted, when to apply for co-op, and what you can do to make sure you get into the co-op program.)
- Take a tour. Touring schools you’re interested in allows you to get a feel for the atmosphere and gives you an excellent chance to talk with students attending the school about potential work or volunteer opportunities.
- Find out if the school you’re interested in has a student-run newspaper or magazine. These publications tend to offer students a variety of volunteer experiences, from writing stories and photographing events to working on the business side of things.
- Most post-secondary schools have a students’ union, which may offer various work positions,

volunteer roles and leadership opportunities.

- If you would love to start your own business, look for a school that allows students to create a new club, fundraising venture or publication and supports their efforts.

Post-secondary institutions give students the resources and opportunities to grow and learn new things about themselves before entering the workforce. By choosing a college or university that offers a variety of volunteer and work opportunities, you will put yourself on the right path towards a fulfilling and valuable post-secondary education. **CO**

# THE CONTACT CENTRE INDUSTRY: MORE THAN JUST A JOB!

Are you looking for a summer job? Are you graduating soon and eager to start your career? Or are you one of the many young people already in the workforce but don't really know what else is out there? Look no further! Contact centre employers are eager to jump-start your career.

## HAVE YOU EVER...

Made airplane or train reservations? Reserved a room at a hotel or resort? Booked a hall for your hockey banquet? Called a nurse at Telehealth? Needed to call for a tow truck? Called 311 or some other regional information line? Or called 911 in an emergency? If so, welcome to the world of contact centres!

Here are a few more ways that you might use the services of a contact centre: to pay bills, order through a catalogue or shopping channel, get service for utilities (telephone, cable, gas or water), seek online financial or loan advice, buy concert or sporting event tickets, or get help when your computer breaks down. The list is endless, but you get the picture.

## WHAT IS THE CONTACT CENTRE INDUSTRY?

Every time you contact a business by phone or fax, or through chat, blog or Internet, there's a team of professionals at the other end ready to assist you. On a personal level, these professionals are developing their skills, gaining experience and building successful careers in the industry by helping people in one way or another. Four percent of all working Canadians are employed in the contact centre industry, one of the fastest-growing industries in Canada.

## WHY WORK IN A CONTACT CENTRE?

If you're not convinced by what you've learned so far, consider the wide range of career opportunities available in contact centres through corporate support services such as human resources, finance and accounting, information technology, legal, sales and marketing.

Contact centres offer training and advancement opportunities in many different sectors, including telecommunications, emergency and medical, financial, engineering, insurance, tourism, transportation and retail. Because there are so many options to choose from, working in a contact centre is perfect for young people who want to gain experience in their chosen field. The industry offers flexible work hours and, in some cases, the ability to work from your home or dorm room. The skills you learn in the contact centre industry offer you the opportunity to move to other industry sectors, in Canada or around the world.

### ADVANTAGES OF A CAREER IN THE CONTACT CENTRE INDUSTRY:

- Growth industry
- Flexible hours and days
- Salaries ranging from \$25K to \$150K per year\*
- Benefits, bonuses and rewards
- Opportunity to develop key skills that are transferable to most companies
- Ability to go anywhere in Canada or around the world
- Opportunity to gain valuable experience in a chosen career while earning money
- Opportunity to build a career in the contact centre industry!

## WHAT IS CONTACT CENTRE CANADA?

Contact Centre Canada ([www.contactcentrecanada.ca](http://www.contactcentrecanada.ca)) is a national not-for-profit organization of leaders from contact centre companies across Canada, as well as representatives from labour organizations and educational institutions.

Contact Centre Canada's mandate is "to support Canada's contact centre industry and its workforce through the development and delivery of industry-driven programs that address human resource challenges." This aim is principally achieved through consulting with

industry leaders across Canada to develop programs that will attract, develop and retain a qualified workforce in Canada. Ongoing activities focus on skill development, professional certification programs, best practices and providing up-to-date labour market information.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Explore the endless opportunities awaiting you in the world of contact centres. Visit our website ([www.contactcentrecanada.ca](http://www.contactcentrecanada.ca)) or ask your guidance counsellor for more information about one of Canada's largest growth industries. Don't hesitate—new possibilities, opportunities and experiences are waiting for you!

*\* Wage range varies depending on the occupation and the vertical sector.*

“Because there are so many options to choose from, working in a contact centre is perfect for young people who want to gain experience in their chosen field.”

