I think we’ve all been able to identify with Grumpy Cat at some point in our lives: we resist and dread change at the same time that we crave it and are excited by it.

Certainly I’ve experienced that tension very acutely over the past year as I made the agonising decision to leave my previous position and community in Sudbury; but as painful as that was, it also felt intolerable to pass up the exciting possibilities of returning to Hamilton and my alma mater to take up the position of Assistant Dean of the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) Program. It was a risk, but a calculated one, and I’m delighted (and relieved) to say that my experiences over the last 7 months have left me feeling confident in my decision and very optimistic about the future.

Our lives are all stories of continuous transition, big and small. Like me, first year students and graduating students are in the throes of huge transitions, making and grappling with the consequences of big decisions. Of course, not all transitions are so dramatic – for all of us, each day is a transition in which we are evolving, growing, stretching, learning, and becoming slightly different people than we were the day before. These more subtle transitions may seem inconsequential in isolation, but their cumulative effect is enormous, imperceptibly positioning us for those more momentous shifts. It’s my joy and privilege to be part of the BHSc Community and join all of you as we make these journeys and transitions together!

Stacey Ritz
Assistant Dean, BHSc (Honours) Program
Community News

The Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) Program Scholarship was established in 2004 by students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends. This particular scholarship is awarded to a BHSc (Honours) student who has made significant and meaningful volunteer contributions to the Hamilton and McMaster University communities.

In 2015 we were fortunate to award three scholarships. The scholarship recipients for 2015 were Mei Lin Chen, Class of 2016; Kai Wu, Class of 2016; and Julie Yu, Class of 2016.

Julie Yu has found that one of her greatest joys is service and advocacy in the McMaster and Hamilton communities. She began volunteering with McMaster Arts for Children in second year of university, pursuing her passion for working with children and her love for art. She has served at multiple sites in Hamilton including the Good Shepherd Family Center and MSU Daycare engaging in weekly arts and crafts activities for children in the community. Julie’s experience motivated her to become a program coordinator which provides her an opportunity to establish new crafts, teach new volunteers, and help to foster the creativity and healthy development of the children she works with.

This experience has shaped her desire to work with children, prompting her to continue volunteering with the Hamilton Extend A-Family Program, a community service program that provides respite, social activities, and development for families with children who have special needs.

By introducing us to various health care professionals, the second year HABITS course (HHT SCI 2J03) is an important introduction to interprofessional education (IPE) in the BHSc (Honours) Program. This learning is directly reflective of the mission statement of McMaster’s Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), which reads: “Within a culture of innovation, exploration and collaboration, we lead by challenging what is and embracing what could be.” IPE is fundamental to building long-term collaborative partnerships between professional, and essential to stimulating innovation. As such, IPE is truly central to the core values of the FHS and has been implemented in the early discovery of disciplines in recent years.

The Center for Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE), defines interprofessional education as “occasions when two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and quality of care.” This quote poignantly emphasizes the importance of IPE, in the context of health care. Most fundamentally, IPE facilitates an understanding between health care professionals. A mutual respect for and understanding of different roles in the process of delivering health care services builds better health care teams that are ultimately working towards the same goal. An interprofessional education may increase the value that health care professionals place on the input of other occupations, and increase collaborative decision-making processes. As an innovative community, McMaster’s FHS was the first faculty in Canada to house programs in medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and midwifery together under one faculty roof. The addition of Canada’s first Physician Assistant Program in 2004, further increased the faculty’s diversity. Moreover, setting the BHSc (Honours) Program within a faculty of professional programs exposes undergraduate students to the values of IPE, collaboration and respect early on in their academic careers, and provides them with unique opportunities for engagement with students in professional programs.

In 2004, the faculty revamped the interprofessional education curriculum, by developing a large number different of IPE activities in both academic and clinical settings to be held throughout the school year. The activities are administered through the Program for Interprofessional Practice Education and Research (PIPER), and aim to develop four core competencies of IPE: (1) understanding one’s own professional role and that of others: (2) involving other professionals in patient care; (3) collaboration, goal setting, shared decision-making, problem-solving and conflict resolution; (4) communication, providing and responding to feedback, respect and flexibility. IPE activities are categorized into three levels of increasing intensity: Exposure, Immersion and Mastery, and each student in a FHS professional program must choose a minimum of one IPE activity from each category during their degree program. The freedom of choice gives students the opportunity to participate in activities that are most relevant and meaningful, thus increasing the impact and value of the learning that occurs through these activities. As the only non-professional degree program in the FHS, we believe that students should be introduced to the value of IPE early in their careers, so that they may be better prepared to recognize that delivering health care is a collaborative process and to develop necessary skills to enhance cooperation. Furthermore, for those interested in multiple professional avenues, an IPE event may be an opportunity to improve our understanding of the professions that we are considering, and to practice this type of learning environment. It is our responsibility to take advantage of these opportunities to enhance our learning and education.
EXCHANGING STORIES ON EXCHANGE: A GLIMPSE INTO MACABROAD

by Ashley Lam & Sofía Zhang-Jiang, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2018

Every year, the McMaster Exchange Program facilitates over 300 student exchanges between McMaster University and over 70 partner universities around the world. Students from any faculty can apply for a semester or full year abroad at the institution of their choice, while retaining their status as a student at McMaster University. Most students study abroad during their third year of undergraduate studies. Exchange students pay the same amount of tuition to McMaster while abroad, although expenses such as transportation, accommodation, food, and insurance are paid separately.

Going on exchange provides students with the wonderful opportunity to broaden their global perspective, form lifelong friendships, and immerse themselves in foreign cultures and lifestyles. BHSc students can apply to one of three international exchange agreements: Co-op and I-TERM, the Trans-Atlantic Science Student Exchange Program (TASSEP), or the KILLAM Fellowship Program. MacAbroad offers opportunities abroad in all continents, while TASSEP and KILLAM allow students to study in Europe and the United States, respectively.

BHSc alums Katrina Radassao and BHSc students Christina New, Frank Chen and Allana Simon share their experiences about the MacAbroad exchange program below.

Katrina Radassao, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2015

Time of exchange: Winter 2015

Location of exchange: University of Limerick; Limerick, Ireland

Why did you decide to participate in the exchange program?

I decided to go on exchange to challenge myself and explore new countries and cultures. The exchange program was an excellent opportunity to do this while fulfilling some of my elective courses.

What is the most important thing that you took away from the experience?

I think what I gained most from my experience on exchange was adaptability and independence. When you put yourself in a new environment, you are forced out of your comfort zone. I think this is valuable for so many reasons as you are able to develop a variety of inter- and intra-personal skills in a short period of time. It’s like the first day of university: one week in first year — new, exciting and frightening — but on a whole other level. Through the exchange program, you learn to learn with varying teaching styles and are evaluated in unique ways not typically seen in Western education (e.g. 100% examinations). Also, being on your own in a new place, you are in full control of your experience. You get what you put into it. If you are open to making new friends, put yourself out there and you will! If you are willing to embrace the culture, you can! Explore and be open to every experience.

How did your studies abroad differ from your time at Mac?

My classes abroad were more lecture style, however, some utilized small group activities during lecture. Didactic learning is something not typically seen in health sciences courses. I think the biggest difference, however, were the evaluations used. Of my four courses abroad, two had 100% final exams. This was quite daunting at first but challenges you to manage your time throughout the term and self-study.

Overall, would you recommend the exchange program?

Absolutely! Christina New, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2016

Time of exchange: Winter 2015

Location: University of Limerick; Limerick, Ireland

Why did you decide to participate in the exchange program?

I applied for the opportunity to attend an amazing exchange to France back in high school. But in all honesty, I never really considered a university exchange (and I didn’t believe I had enough time to complete one) until a friend of mine told me he was applying to study overseas in England, and I thought… well that sounds fun!

What were your expectations before travelling abroad? Did your experiences differ from your expectations?

For many months leading up to my exchange I had no expectations whatsoever. I think I had a sense of denial that it was actually going to work out and I was truly going to fly off to Ireland for 4 months. Several weeks before my departure date, I remember getting a little bubble of excitement and nervousness that grew and grew as my exchange drew nearer. And then, I finally began to think about the new people I would meet, the beautiful places I would explore, and the exciting courses I would take at my new University abroad. But, I can honestly tell you that all of my expectations fell immensely short of my reality.

I met some of the kindest and most generous people I have ever known, in my life. I got involved with my school abroad and tried things that were completely out of my comfort zone: windsurfing, rock-climbing, cave-exploring and more! I traveled to all the corners of Ireland, and was amazed and awestruck by the natural beauty of the rolling green countryside. I took Irish dancing lessons and performed in front of my school. I planted trees in the University orchard. And perhaps most importantly, I experienced a deep sense of personal growth, independence, and mental wellness that I never could have foreseen. I became relaxed and carefree; I stopped worrying so much about grades and deadlines and began to live for its small pleasures. It was a truly eye-opening experience and I have tried to keep that Irish mindset and carefree way of living ever since.

If you could go on exchange again, where would you go and why?

I don’t think I would go anywhere else! I was surprised, astounded, and inspired no matter where I ended up. That’s the beauty of travel.

Overall, would you recommend the exchange program?

Yes. Allana Simon, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017

Time of exchange: Fall 2015 & Winter 2016

Why did you decide to participate in the exchange program?

The McMaster Exchange Program is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students in the BHSc program. It is an opportunity to discover the world, meet new people, embrace different cultures, gain independence and confidence, and to grow in an interdisciplinary, multi-faceted way.

After all, adventure is out there!

Frank Chen, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2016

Location of exchange: University of Warwick; Coventry, England

Time of exchange: Fall 2015 & Winter 2016

Why did you decide to participate in the exchange program?

After all, adventure is out there!

Frank Chen, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2016

Location of exchange: University of Warwick; Coventry, England

Time of exchange: Fall 2015 & Winter 2016

Why did you decide to participate in the exchange program?

I primarily wanted a new experience. It’s good to escape the research and teaching routine in my grad school/research culture, and I wanted to see what other options were available. I talked to a lot of people, and everyone that I met who went on exchange loved it. It’s a personal challenge too, starting over in another country, navigating your way through, and so on.

What is the most important thing that you took away from the experience?

Being okay with uncertainty. Travelling gives you perspective on life from meeting so many different people with different backgrounds. It’s fun and enlightening to hear their stories. Life changes so much that it’s impossible to even map out the next 2 or 3 years, which are also very short in a long lifetime, so it’s not always negative if things don’t go as planned. Just work hard and have faith that everything will work out in the end.

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The current BHSc student’s relationship with both Facebook (FB) and LearnLink (LL) is evidence of the fact that multitasking is possible: scrolling through your newsfeed and the recent posts on BHSc’s Student’s Only as well as the group meeting times on FB as you reread your TAs instructions in the course LL folder is a reality my laptop’s RAM (memory) has learned to accept. I am not the only one experiencing this—students, and scaffolding assistants, are able to work on practical skills such as referencing and critical appraisal of literature through creating annotated abstracts and discussing with lecturers during Q & A periods at the end of every class. Finally, in true BHSc fashion, the course will culminate in a group report and presentation that challenges the students to apply the foundational knowledge they have gleaned in the course. The instructional format of the course is the group research paper and presentation, where students choose an article from the popular press reporting on some immunological concept. With the article as the focal point, students are challenged to deconstruct, assess, and ultimately come to a conclusion about whether the article’s reporting is immunologically justified, using principles that have been learned in class. The importance of this assignment extends far beyond an immunological context: “We know there’s a large proportion of students in [Fundamentals of Immunology] that will not go into grad school immunology. So if they can actually read a newspaper article and then interpret it, then we’ve achieved something.” Students enrolled in 303 can look forward to learning the language of immunology and understanding underlying concepts of E- and B-cell function within the innate and adaptive immune systems. As in 1DT3, lectures are delivered by multiple members of the MIRC. An advantageous set up because it allows content to be taught by individuals whose research focus directly coincides. Another strength of this course is the weekly tutorial sessions. Dr. Stämpfli remarks, “Those tutorials are one of the reasons the success of the course because the TAs are TAs that do research, they do their PhD’s or Master’s in immunology, so they actually know immunology, are excited about immunology.”

Many students have taken immunology courses at McMaster University and agree that immunological concepts are indispensable in an academic setting, as well as in daily life. The course also provides valuable exposure to immunological concepts that one will inevitably encounter in a variety of career paths. “Frankly it doesn’t really matter in which direction you go—if you go into food medicine you do not need to know 1DT3! If you go into research, you either end up in immunology or you will be using reagents relating to immunology for detection [...] Even in daily life, the very simple question—should you get vaccinated or not?—underlies many immunology related-questions.” While acknowledging his bias as an immunologist, Dr. Stämpfli believes, “I still wonder if and how the Instant Messaging icon on the front page of LL works and how one goes about searching through the myriad land known as ‘Archives’.”

I do not think I am alone in thinking that navigating LL can sometimes be akin to finding a needle buried deep in a dark forest. My fellow BHSc transfer students and I have routinely voiced frustration over LL while my non-transfer friends and upper year peer tutors seem to enjoy a rather healthy relationship with the software. “In our class, members have made it clear that navigating LL can sometimes be akin to finding a needle buried deep in a dark forest. My fellow BHSc transfer students and I have routinely voiced frustration over LL while my non-transfer friends and upper year peer tutors seem to enjoy a rather healthy relationship with the software.”

The following excerpt is from a hypothetical, imaginary and non-existent screenplay from the BHSc Musical. ACT I Scene 1

Set in student dorm

Enter enthusiastic first year BHSc student from Stage Right. He ruffles through the various paraphernalia he has collected over Welcome Week until suddenly he comes across the BHSc button that reads: LL is my FB. Confusion reads on the face of the first year student. What is LL? Will it replace FB? What does this all mean? Only time will tell.

Exit, Stage Left

End Scene

In the spirit of full disclosure, I should confess: I do not consider LL to be my FB. In fact, when I first transferred into the BHSc Program, I avoided the LL icon on my laptop like the plague. I had no idea what I was doing. It has taken me months to decipher what the grey highlighted text on LL messages was, and several more months to find the unseen, spell check, and history functions on LL. emails that my classmates kept bringing during group meetings. It felt like LL just arrived at a Harry Potter movie set without reading any of the novels beforehand and everyone around me was using words like Muggle-born, Dark Lord, and Expelliarmus in their everyday vernacular. I still wonder if and how the Instant Messaging icon on the front page of LL works and how one goes about searching through the mythical land known as ‘Archives’.

I have written this piece to propose an intervention. Organizing mandatory information sessions for first years and transfers could really help bridge this gap. In addition, the LL admirers and those of us who do not know how to use it. If such a session already exists, perhaps as a community we could work on making them more advertised. If we can facilitate an informed transition from FB to LL, the advice and conversations that end up lost on a class FB page can benefit students in the years to follow.

From an administrative point of view, I think a well understood and well utilized instant messaging (IMing) system within LL would greatly alter the student’s relationship with the software. Opening your inbox to find 30 new messages of your group members using LL to organize a meeting time is likely to have someone grabbing at their hair (or hijab) in frustration. A well-vetted IMing aspect might make the transition from FB to LL easier for a new generation of BHSc students, and that in turn could make them more willing to learn the plethora of resources available to them.
Biomedical Graphics (HTH SCI 3EE3)

The Biomedical Graphics course, put simply, is a visual arts course for students in health sciences. The course is taught by Carlin O’Connell and Jennifer Belanger from the Education Program in Anatomy. BHSc students that choose to take the course, embark on a journey to combine their knowledge in anatomy and physiology with elements of visual art and design. The course explores the fundamentals of visual literacy, design concepts, and software (Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator). These topics and lessons are examined within interactive and engaging lectures and practical coursework provided in dedicated laboratory time. A significant emphasis of the course and overarching theme is of creating and understanding productive scientific communication through visual graphics using the concepts and skills learned in class. Moreover, to properly and effectively communicate scientific information through a visual illustration requires an understanding of design concepts, the material itself, and the intended audience. A diverse assortment of unique assignments and projects provides for an engaged and deeply creative research and learning experience.

As a past student in 3EE3, learning the theoretical background for graphic design proves to be extremely intriguing and eye-opening as a student in the health sciences, as we are often consumers of illustrations and graphical representations of scientific knowledge that is carefully crafted and created for the sake of our knowledge and understanding as students and learners. Even more exciting is to learn about such concepts and skills in creative and outcome-driven approaches for teaching and learning. To be able to employ such concepts and skills to actually solve problems based on anatomy content learned in previous years and content introduced more deeply within the course itself. This course provides an unparalleled balance between professor instruction and student-directed education.

Furthermore, the opportunity and privilege of accessing the many resources available within the Education Program in Anatomy including human cadaveric specimens is humbling. Although the material may seem complex and challenging, the course provides a rewarding and exciting educational experience to BHSc students distinctly different from other courses. The exploration and understanding of the human body is central to the field of health sciences, making it an essential educational component for the BHSc student. Dr. Bruce Wainman states that, “The body in health and illness is the one unifying theme within all of health care and thus anatomy and physiology is the most central of all the health sciences.”

Students in 2F03, students explore the principal organ systems including: the nervous, integument, musculoskeletal, and endocrine systems. The course is taught by Dr. Harry Chandrakumaran, and Dr. Cale Zavitz. Many different types of learning are introduced, including lectures, team-based learning (TBL) exercises, and inquiry-style group environments and evaluation methods providing for a strong team-based learning experience with the most modern of physiological equipment and cadaveric specimens. It is unique and uniquely challenging, course.

Harry Chandrakumaran, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2016 and teaching assistant, finds that, “The Education Program in Anatomy is the most honest implementation of the core principles of the BHSc Program, including interdisciplinary collaboration, problem-based learning and course feedback and evaluation. The department has a proud record of innovation and inter-professional education for students from a wide range of disciplines including midwifery, engineering, nursing, and medicine. The courses offer an unparalleled balance between professor instruction and student-directed education.”

Human Physiology and Anatomy I/II (HTH SCI 2F03/2F3F)

The Human Physiology and Anatomy I/II courses provide introduction to and overview of the breadth and depth of anatomy and physiology knowledge through stimulating lectures, interactive laboratory time, and group tutorial presentations that allow students to dive deeper into the concepts and material. In 2F03, students explore the principal organ systems including: the nervous, integument, musculoskeletal, and endocrine systems. The 2F3F course lets students examine the cardiovascular, respiratory, nervous, integument, musculoskeletal, and endocrine systems. The tutorial experience with the most modern of physiological equipment and cadaveric specimens. It is unique and uniquely challenging, course.

Bruce Wainman, states that, “The body in health and illness is the one unifying theme within all of health care and thus anatomy and physiology is the most central of all the health sciences.”

Anatomy is the most important to reflect and appreciate that such unique, rare, and important to reflect and appreciate that such unique, rare, and important to reflect and appreciate that such unique, rare, and important to reflect and appreciate that such unique, rare, and important to reflect and appreciate that such unique, rare, and important human body is central to the field of health sciences, making it an essential educational component for the BHSc student. Dr. Bruce Wainman states that, “The body in health and illness is the one unifying theme within all of health care and thus anatomy and physiology is the most central of all the health sciences.”

The course itself is also an avenue for BHSc students to become more creative and artistic in the field of health sciences which has limited opportunities in the classroom setting to explore the visual arts. This is a unique course offered within the BHSc program that allows students to explore scientific communication and the visual arts through creative avenues that are underexplored in the hard sciences.

Human Pathophysiology (HTH SCI 4K03)

The Human Pathophysiology course is an investigation into disease systems and a space for students to critically think and develop the skills and content learned in previous years and content introduced more deeply within the course itself. This course dives further into details of various body systems including, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, renal, and endocrine systems. The lectures provide a review of the proper functioning systems and place a strong emphasis on the pathological mechanisms and signs of disease systems. The course is taught by Dr. Thomas Hawke, both teaches and invites guest speakers to lecture on specific and relevant parts of the course. The students work in groups of passionate instructors, with amazing opportunities for our education – to challenge and encourage us to explore and take risks in areas of study we are interested in and passionate about prioritizing in our own learning.

Biomedical Graphics (HTH SCI 3EE3)

The course requires students to critically think and work in groups to provide diagnoses of clinical case study examples directly relevant to their studies. In 3EE3, students are offered the opportunity to explore their own pathway modules with a topic of their choosing. The course offers students an opportunity to explore their own pathway modules with a topic of their choosing. The course offers students an opportunity to explore their own pathway modules with a topic of their choosing.
Pathoanatomy (HTH SCI 4G03)

The Pathoanatomy course, taught by Dr. Tom Jackson, allows students to explore the anatomy, surgical approach, and etiology of pathologies from the context of an anatomical system. The course provides students the opportunity to prepare an educational surgical specimen from human materials, creating a practical, memorable, and valuable experience for students to develop their knowledge and passion for anatomy. The opportunity of working with human materials and incorporating group problem-based learning experiences, works to greatly benefit students in understanding anatomy and pathology by directly seeing the relevance to anatomy course content. The course emphasizes a balance of the knowledge of body systems, the skills involved with physically preparing a surgical specimen, and acknowledging and appreciating the privilege of working with human materials and building a deep sense of respect for the human body. The laboratory based anatomy course is also embedded within lectures providing students with flexibility and the opportunity to take responsibility and control of their learning and interests in anatomy. Dr. Tom Jackson states that, “In this course, students are encouraged to follow their interests and afforded as much freedom as possible to do so.” The course offers dedicated laboratory time to provide students with the opportunity to acquire and practice dissection skills – keeping in mind the final product of the course is an electronic teaching module that students can refer to throughout the term. It is something we all must continually keep in mind as we enter a profession of healthcare, regardless of the path we choose. Our patients will have stories. Our clients will have stories.” The exposure to these types of educational resources and opportunities mentioned previously within the variety of anatomy courses offered allows BHSc students to explore the anatomy, surgical, and pathophysiological aspects and fundamentals of infectious diseases.

Each year, pathoanatomy students create museum quality structures that is very difficult to acquire from books alone. Creating a prosection gives the students an opportunity to learn in Anatomy, believes that, “The teaching faculty constantly work closely with staff and students in the Education Program in Anatomy, has demonstrated excellence in Anatomy”.

Andrew Perrella, also understands that, “This course is a staple of the health sciences program simply because it does what all effective BHSc courses do: integrates a bit of X, a bit of Y, with an understanding that when you go at it and fill in the gaps of understanding.” This course integrates students’ knowledge and practical skills in anatomy elegantly to allow them to further advance their understanding and build a strong appreciation for surgical specimens.

The multitude of diverse learning opportunities in anatomy, offered within the BHSc Program should be embraced and explored, and certainly not taken for granted. As these courses offer exceptional experiences and valuable unique educational opportunities for BHSc students. Dr. Thomas Hawke states that, “We really benefit from the diversity of educational opportunities that the Anatomy Education Program and McMaster itself have to offer.” Additionally, there are lessons from these anatomy courses that transcend all, which is a deep respect for the human body and cadaveric specimens for the purposes of educating BHSc students. Referring to the Pathoanatomy course, Andrew Perrella finds that, “The importance of respect is strongly emphasized by the professor and prosecution assistants throughout the term. It is something we all must continually keep in mind as we enter a profession of healthcare, regardless of the path we choose. Our patients will have stories.” The exposure to these types of educational resources and opportunities mentioned previously within the variety of anatomy courses offered are truly one of a kind and greatly commendable on the part of the Education Program in Anatomy and the BHSc Program. We, as BHSc students, are truly lucky to have the instructors that we do. Since instructors often acknowledge and take into consideration our goals and future directions as students and as professionals – instructors are always re-evaluating the value of these courses to our education as students and future professionals. Dr. Tom Jackson stated that, “Pathology is one of the pillars of medicine. The fundamental concepts that I introduce form the basis for future study and the practice of clinical medicine.” And Dr. Thomas Hawke finds that, “As an educator in the medical school, I am also able to take core concepts in anatomy and physiology (that we teach medical students) and translate it to 4K03. This makes the material relevant and translatable to the goals of many of the students.” Visibly, instructors often transfer and apply their past experiences to their role as instructors in a way that provides value to BHSc students. Referring to the Human Physiology and Anatomy I/II courses, Harry Chandrakumaran, who has worked closely with staff and students in the Education Program in Anatomy, believes that, “The teaching faculty constantly refines the course design in response to student-generated feedback, a dynamic process that has produced considerable reform to the course structure. It is unsurprising to see faculty members in the lab assisting students well into the allowed time. The staff on their part ensure that the educational needs of the program can be met by maintaining the lab facilities, preparing specimens to meet the specific educational goals of their students and offering direct support to students. I have nothing but gratitude for the department, a sentiment I know to be shared by many of my peers.” It cannot be understated, how fortunate and lucky we are as BHSc students to be in a position to be offered and to have access to intensely dedicated instructors and rewarding educational experiences. As a fellow student in the BHSc Program, I am extremely appreciative for these opportunities offered by the BHSc Program and the Education Program in Anatomy, which is only a small glimpse into the passion and dedication that exists within the BHSc community.
I entered the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) Program, probably much like many of my classmates, with the intent of pursuing a career in human medicine. However, as I navigated through the wide variety of courses offered and was encouraged by many BHSc faculty to pursue a variety of personal interests, I started to realize there were so many other potential career paths available and the BHSc Program really allowed me to personalize my educational experience.

I started the BHSc Program as a pretty shy and quiet individual. I still remember one of my first Health Sci days when Del [Harnish] told us that “hiding” in the BHSc Program wasn’t possible, and I remember being terrified in my first Inquiry session as I quickly realized Del’s words would be very true! Luckily, the Health Sci atmosphere was always very supportive and my peers were a constant inspiration for what we could accomplish both inside and outside of the classroom.

I made the decision to move home and commute for my third year. There were multiple factors that led me to this decision, but I’m very grateful that the BHSc Program afforded me the flexibility to be able to do this. A big advantage (and surprise!) is that this decision had a significant impact on my career path. I adopted a puppy after moving home and unfortunately she became very sick within the first week. She was treated by our local veterinarian, an emergency clinic and ultimately by the fantastic specialty team at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC). This experience opened my eyes to the wide skillset needed to be a veterinarian – not only are they a “GP” for routine/preventative care, but they also act as a pharmacist, surgeon, dentist, an internist, etc., depending on the case and the problem. I started pursuing a variety of volunteer activities to develop my application for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) Program at OVC, but I truly believe my experiences and skills from the BHSc Program made a significant contribution to my application being successful.

After attaining my DVM degree, I completed an internship and then a three-year residency to become a board-certified veterinary cardiologist. I was initially drawn to cardiology in my first year at OVC because our cardiologist taught using a problem-based approach. I quickly realized my perspective on learning had changed during my BHSc years as I was excited about this, rather than feeling scared and frustrated like I had in my first year Inquiry class and like how many of my peers felt when it was initially explained. One of the other factors that drew me to the specialty of cardiology was the strong role of interdisciplinary care. There is a constant challenge to provide high-level care for my patients, and much of what I am able to provide for my patients is based on human medical knowledge – from interpretation of echocardiograms, to Holter analysis and anti-thrombotic therapy and even transvenous pacemaker implantations. There are only rare veterinary-based prospective randomized controlled trials (predominantly retrospective studies), so I am consistently referencing human studies and guidelines and using my critical appraisal skills to evaluate the literature that is available. This is particularly true when I am asked to assess and treat less common species such as meerkats, dolphins, tree kangaroos, etc.

There are so many skills that I learned as a Health Sci that I can continue to use on a daily basis – independent learning and evaluation of resources to explore various treatment options for my patients; self-reflection both personally and professionally for continual growth; communication skills in one-on-one interactions with owners to small and large group interactions with veterinary students, residents and local family veterinarians; and probably most importantly, time management to allow for work-life balance.

As I’ve been writing this and reflecting back on my time in Health Sci, I feel so honoured to be an alumna of such an amazing program, and grateful to be a part of such an inspiring group of people. I have yet to come across anyone that shares such a passion for his or her undergraduate degree (aside from fellow Health Sci’s!).

If I had it all to do over again, I would have strongly considered staying for my fourth year – especially with all of the amazing classes that are available now! My best piece of advice for current or future Health Sci’s would be to find what inspires you, take advantage of the opportunity to personalize your BHSc experience, and view every day and every experience as a learning opportunity. There are a lot of very interesting and inspiring people – learn from them, but do not compare yourself to them, create your own story to share with the world.

I’m not recommending this method necessarily to Bachelor of Health Sciences students, but I generally approach major life decisions thinking about what I will regret the most by not doing…if that makes any sense at all. The result has been a career that looks completely different than what I might have envisioned back in 2001 when I started the BHSc Program, but I couldn’t be happier with my current work. I applied to medical school almost as an afterthought and then took the plunge enrolling in the charter class of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine when the opportunity arose. After that, the decision to pursue a residency in pediatrics was based purely on passion and interest. I almost got caught up in chasing after an urban, academic sub-specialty career but in retrospect that would have been a very poor fit. It is my Program Director, Del [Harnish], who helped me to hit the reset button and get back to my roots. I happily landed back in my hometown of Sault Ste. Marie working as a general consulting pediatrician with a mixed hospital and ambulatory practice. Being in a small city allows me to practice the full scope of pediatrics from developmental care all the way to intensive care, and really feel like a valued resource to my community. I draw so much energy and fulfillment from the amazing kids and families I get to meet on a daily basis, and the days really just zoom by. I fully recognize that opportunities don’t just create themselves and I give full credit to my family, friends, teachers, and mentors along the way for their guidance and support.

Up until BHSc: I measured success by memorizing the right information and ticking the right boxes when it counted. It had never occurred to me that I could decide what information was important to know, what skills were important to have, and how I measured up to my own goals. At one point in fourth year a small group of the other factors that Del [Harnish] consumed with complaints about a particular course. In response he challenged us to design a new one, so we did. In the “real world” beyond BHSc, life is always more fulfilling when I make my own sandbox rather than play in someone else’s.

In terms of advice I would say two things. First of all, undergraduate education is a rare opportunity in life to pursue genuine interests and round yourself out. There is plenty of time otherwise to learn the things you will eventually be paid for. As an undergrad, learning is literally your job. And the course calendar is a virtual menu of accessible knowledge and expertise you actually have the time for. Rarely will this fall into your lap later in life. I think if I could go back I would learn Italian or take some political science or play the violin. Following from that, stay in BHSc for the fourth year. It was the most formative year of my life: I was finally mature enough for everything to sink in, and I wasn’t restricted to a particular career path.

Second, don’t be afraid to stick your neck out and engage in constructive conflict. I never intended to be an agent of change from the outset, but quite by accident wound up being a spokesperson for my class and that spiraled over time into eventually serving as the president of a 5,000 member professional association and sitting at the boardroom table of the Canadian Medical Association and the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada. If you can articulate an opposing viewpoint respectfully, even from the wrong end of a power imbalance, you end up farther ahead.

I continue to be amazed at the incredible power of students to get important things done. On balance you have miles more idealism, energy, and determination than anyone your senior.

This quote from Nellie McClung - who accomplished something rather significant - is my favourite because I often get entangled in worry about negative judgments. Reminding myself of these words can be marvelously un-paralyzing:

~Nellie McClung

“Never retract, never explain, never apologize. Just get the thing done and let them howl.”

-Nellie McClung
ALUMNA PROFILE: LINDA NGUYEN
BHSc (HONOURS) CLASS OF 2015, CHILD HEALTH SPECIALIZATION
FACTORIES OF HEALTH SCIENCES VACEDICTORIAN, SPRING 2015 CONVOCATION

Compiled by: Sarah Cino, BHSc (Honours) 2017 & Emily Cino, BHSc (Honours) 2018

As we progress through the BHSc Program, we begin to think about our further educational and career ambitions. For many, the decision about what to pursue after BHSc can be a difficult one. We had the opportunity to speak with Linda Nguyen about her decision to pursue graduate studies, as well as her experience as the Valedictorian for the Faculty of Health Sciences Spring 2015 Convocation.

Since graduating from the BHSc (Honours) Program, what have you been up to?

Since graduating from the BHSc Program, Child Health Specialization, I decided to enter into the Masters in Rehabilitation Science Program at McMaster University. I am currently in my first year in the Masters program and recently finished my first year. My graduate thesis supervisor is Dr. Jan Willem Gorter.

Why did you choose this graduate program?

I was part of the first cohort of the Child Health Specialization and have always had an interest in acquiring knowledge about child health and contributing to the research field in this area. In my fourth year, I conducted my honors thesis project under the supervision of Dr. Ronit Mesterman (pediatric neurologist) and Dr. Jan Willem Gorter (pediatric psychiatrist) about goal setting in children and adolescents diagnosed with cerebral palsy who receive botulinum toxin treatment. At the end of my Masters graduate program, I am hoping to pursue a PhD degree and become a researcher in the field of childhood disability.

We understand that you were the Valedictorian for the Faculty of Health Sciences Spring 2015 Convocation. What was this experience like for you?

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been selected as the Valedictorian for the Faculty of Health Sciences, Class of 2015. This was an amazing opportunity that I will always remember.

On Convocation Day, I was feeling nervous about presenting a speech in front of a large audience. I never would have thought that I would be selected as the Valedictorian. In my first year of the BHSc Program, I rarely spoke in my Inquiry class. I am usually pretty quiet, but the BHSc Program has helped me personally grow over the years. The numerous group projects, presentations, and Inquiry courses contributed to my ability to work with my peers and voice my ideas. In my upper years of the BHSc Program, I also became more involved with the community such as volunteering as a mentor for children and youth.

While I was standing in front of that podium, it was a little nerve-wracking because I was also sharing my story of overcoming my own personal challenges throughout university. English was my second language, so I am usually self-conscious of my ability to speak and communicate in English. However, I recognized that I was speaking on behalf of my graduating class, and we all overcame many personal and academic challenges. We should be proud of what we have accomplished over the years, and celebrate our successes together. Throughout my speech, I was thinking about how I was able to become the person I am today with the support of my family and community, which is a similar experience that I am sure that most of my peers had as well. I hope that even after graduation, my peers will continue to grow, learn, and share new knowledge.

What advice would you give to current BHSc students trying to decide whether to pursue a graduate degree?

My advice for current BHSc students on whether to pursue a graduate degree is to think about their interests. For me, it took a lot of thought in making my decision to pursue graduate school because I was unsure which field of research I was interested in at the time. The research work conducted in graduate school takes up a lot of time and effort. When you are interested in your field of work, the work you accomplish becomes meaningful and important to you. I would take advantage of the opportunities to become involved in research, such as volunteering with a supervisor or taking Inquiry projects courses (i.e. 3H03, 4A09, 4B06) in the BHSc Program. Aking advantage of the projects and assignments in academic courses would also provide an opportunity to explore your interests. Personally, I became interested in the topic of cerebral palsy when it was assigned as a group project in my third year Inquiry Child Health class. After reading about the management of cerebral palsy in children and adolescents, I took the initiative to contact researchers with expertise in this field to be my undergraduate thesis supervisor. After working on my fourth year thesis project, my interest in this population continued to grow, which led to my decision to pursue a graduate degree. Every student is different, but my main message is for students to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them personally. I became interested in pursuing a graduate degree. Sometimes, a simple interest in a topic can become your passion and motivation to pursue further learning.
Community People

University in the Department of Animal Sciences, Katja learned about cloning, genome studies and identifying single-nucleotide polymorphisms. Upon graduating in 2000, she moved to Boston and joined an endocrinology research team at Harvard Medical School to investigate the relationship between the gonadotropin hormone releasing receptor and fertility in women. As part of this research, she was able to develop therapy platforms and acquire a greater understanding of drug discovery and medicinal chemistry. “My progression in my career bounces around a lot, but the common theme I was interested in science,” Katja remarks as she reflects on her diverse experiences in scientific research.

Later, Katja moved to Canada and joined a McMaster research group investigating the development of a dendritic cell-based vaccine against viral infections. A few years later, she started her PhD in stem cell research, admitting that it was “one of the greatest accomplishments of her life.” Her doctoral work focused on characterizing the immortal germ cell formed from skin cells using porcine models. Upon completion of her PhD in 2009, Katja sought opportunities for postdoctoral fellowships. “I was not sold on being faculty or a professor because I never really knew what I wanted to be when I was growing up. Logically, if you want to go on and start your own lab, you would continue in the same field of research, keep building on it, and become very focused and knowledgeable about one subject matter. But that did not sit well with me at the time.”

Starting her postdoctoral fellowship with Gurmeet Singh at McMaster University, Katja investigated the role of prolactin in the metabolism of breast cancer cells. Her unique and diverse research experiences proved to be invaluable to the research team, as she combined her passion for endocrinology, reproductive biology, and stem cell research. Throughout her postdoctoral work, the direction of Katja’s research has taken a few diversions building on it, and become very focused and knowledgeable about one subject matter. But that did not sit well with me at the time.”

Reflecting on her path both before and after the BHSc Program, Narmeen emphasizes that although it is easy in retrospect to form a cohesive narrative from her experiences, she had also grappled with the uncertainty to which many BHSc students can relate. Even her decision to attend the BHSc Program sprang from seemingly serendipitous circumstances. She unabashedly admits to being the classic overachiever in high school. After graduating from her close-knit high school in Dallas, Texas, she had intended on attending as by Lehigh University. However, when she had the opportunity to tour these universities, she found them far from the warm and inviting learning environment that she had grown accustomed to in her hometown and in her university. She attended the McMaster. Here, she fell in love with both the campus and the people. She recalls simply wandering into the BHSc office and being able to strike up a conversation with members of the BHSc team. The philosophy underlying BHScs and its implementation into the curriculum immediately resonated with her. By graduation, she was delighted to accept an offer to enter the BHSc Program, which was, in fact, the only program she applied to pursue.

Narmeen describes herself as, more than anything, stumbling into the Global Health Specialization of the BHSc Program. Her family came from Pakistan and whenever she visited, she would receive a warm reminder of the disparities in these experiences. She stresses that these experiences translate over to her work. “Learning that there is a large portion of the world that is 6 billion people, but that so many people struggle in a larger population. Initially, I considered a career path in medicine. Yet, exercising the self-awareness that BHSc aims to cultivate in its students, she realized by second year that this was not her best-suited career path. Fortunately, the Global Health Specialization happened to be introduced that year. Throwing caution to the wind, she, without knowing much about the field, joined the first cohort of the Global Health Specialization, which was fortunate that as her interest in the Global Health grew, so did the range of courses offered through the specialization. These courses proved formative as the interdisciplinary and macro-approach to health helped her realize a future in global health.

After graduating from BHSc, Narmeen completed a Masters in International Health at Harvard University. Her experience with the International Health affairs and policy intern at John & Johnson and project manager at Incentives for Global Health, she solidified her interest in bridging public and private sectors and her capacity to navigate between the Global Health Strategies, a for-profit consulting company that works with non-profit organizations, falls squarely within that domain. Whether facilitating in-class discussion or crafting innovative assessments that help with global health, Katja reflects on how she has been able to make her own [career], Katja elaborates. From our insights into her philosophy on life, you simply cannot go wrong with keeping your options open. We look forward to seeing Katja around the dogmas taught in courses, Katja reflects. Over the past decade, many novel discoveries such as epigenetics and microRNAs have emerged and transformed our understanding of the cell. From her teachings, Katja aims to inspire students to continue learning cellular and molecular biology beyond the course, which she stresses, presents only a snapshot of this field of work.

For Katja, one of the most striking features of the course was that “it was the most hands-on approach I had.” The teaching methodology outside the class consisted of the traditional lectures and multiple choice tests most people associate with science majors. Other than the occasional onsite trip in her animal science courses, Katja has never participated in a hands-on experiment. In the next, she is working on a multidisciplinary team to learn, carry on motivational discussions after class or in meetings encouraging engagement with her students, she can be found out in the hallways as well, including skydiving and learning how to shoot a target. She recalls simply wandering into the BHSc office and being able to strike up a conversation with members of the BHSc team. The philosophy underlying BHScs and its implementation into the curriculum immediately resonated with her. By graduation, she was delighted to accept an offer to enter the BHSc Program, which was, in fact, the only program she applied to pursue. Narmeen describes herself as, more than anything, stumbling into the Global Health Specialization of the BHSc Program. Her family came from Pakistan and whenever she visited, she would receive a warm reminder of the disparities in these experiences. She stresses that these experiences translate over to her work. “Learning that there is a large portion of the world that is 6 billion people, but that so many people struggle in a larger population. Initially, I considered a career path in medicine. Yet, exercising the self-awareness that BHSc aims to cultivate in its students, she realized by second year that this was not her best-suited career path. Fortunately, the Global Health Specialization happened to be introduced that year. Throwing caution to the wind, she, without knowing much about the field, joined the first cohort of the Global Health Specialization, which was fortunate that as her interest in the Global Health grew, so did the range of courses offered through the specialization. These courses proved formative as the interdisciplinary and macro-approach to health helped her realize a future in global health.

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I grew up in a rural area just outside of Kitchener. Initially, I really wanted to go into medicine, specifically at McMaster, so I did my undergraduate degree here. I did my major in biology and my minor in philosophy. Del was actually my instructor for second year cell biology and fourth year virology! I applied for medicine the first year I was eligible; I got interviews and was waitlisted, but I did not actually get in. So I came back to do a fourth year, and did my thesis with Manel Jordana. I had a really really fantastic experience working in his lab and I realized that I didn’t want to go into medicine right away, if at all. Instead, I wanted to pursue an academic path. After I finished my PhD I had a few months before starting my post-doc during which I had the opportunity to teach in the BHSc program, facilitating first year inquiry and teaching in the 4Y03 “Science, Culture, and Identity” course. To me, BHSc was a very energizing community of teachers and scholars that I definitely wanted to be a part of!

Then I went to UCLA to do a post-doctoral fellowship looking at the effects of air pollution on allergy, and although I was educated myself in astronomy, meteorology, history, and many other subjects. Right now, he’s planning his next book, learning how to cook for himself, and wants to travel and try new cuisines. I hope I always have that thirst to stretch myself, try new things and learn more like he does.

Were there any specific lessons in undergrad that influenced your transitions?

Like many BHSc students, I came into my undergrad with a very specific aspiration - medicine. Something that I learned from my experience of the med school application process, not getting in and coming back to finish my degree, was that sometimes those moments in their immediate experience feel like a failure and are actually opportunities to reorient and consider new possibilities that are sometimes much better than you had hoped for.

Could you describe your journey to the position you are in today?

I discovered my passion for medicine the first year I was eligible, I got interviews and was waitlisted, but I did not actually get in. So I came back to do a fourth year, and did my thesis with Manel Jordana. I had a really fantastic experience working in his lab and I realized that I didn’t want to go into medicine right away, if at all. Instead, I wanted to pursue an academic path. After I finished my PhD I had a few months before starting my post-doc during which I had the opportunity to teach in the BHSc program, facilitating first year inquiry and teaching in the 4Y03 “Science, Culture, and Identity” course. To me, BHSc was a very energizing community of teachers and scholars that I definitely wanted to be a part of!

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What was your experience like working with Professor Del in the lab? Another thing that I learned was the value of doing course work in something other than your major. My minor in philosophy has really influenced me as a scientist and as an educator. It gives me alternative perspectives from which to view my work. At the time it was just a decision to follow something I was interested in, but it has proven to be extremely valuable. And I think that is true of anything that we have that kind of affinity for; it is worth pursuing even if we can’t imagine at the time what purpose it might serve.

Could you describe your personal academic interests?

My own interests include gender in health and science, as well as critical pedagogy. While I was doing my PhD, I realized that health and medical research hadn’t generally done a good job of accounting for gender and sex; I really felt passionate about this issue as a feminist. In response, I started doing some theoretical work on what it meant to meaningfully address sex and gender in laboratory-based research, and that’s been a big part of my scholarship in the last few years.

Critical pedagogy is important to me as an educator. It is an approach that recognizes that it is not about what we know per se, but, it is more about what we do with what we know, and even how we understand what knowledge is. Critical pedagogy connects knowledge and power. Henry Giroux, a professor here at McMaster, describes the goal of critical pedagogy as “producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable and willing to make social judgments and act in a socially responsible way.” I like to challenge people to think about not only what to do with knowledge but also whose interests will be served by your knowledge and your actions. This approach helps us to be more responsible and accountable for our actions and achieve things that we think are really worthwhile.

Where We Stand: Class Matters – bell hooks

What is your vision for the BHSc program, and for yourself in this new role?

My vision is to identify and pick up on the things that are so core to our identity and ensure that those stay prioritized and central, while thinking about how we can take things to the next level. In my perspective, those core things include inquiry, the emphasis we have on student centeredness, and of course, interdisciplinary education. I have my own ideas of course, based on my own expertise and experience, and there is really good energy and ideas among the instructors in the program, and I see my role as tapping into all of that insight and experience regarding what we want to do next, collectively.

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What’s your biggest advice to our generation?

Having goals is important because it helps to orient you to what is important to you, but try not to be slavish to them. When we’re too single-minded in pursuit of a goal we tend to invest our energy in what we think will get us to that goal, and miss out on opportunities to grow and develop as people, and risk letting a lot of worthwhile things pass us by as a result. I think it’s captured well by Joseph Campbell, who said, “We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” If you orient yourself to a goal that has resonance for you, and build toward it, then even if you don’t achieve the goal itself you will position yourself well to take up opportunities you might never have imagined existed that are more exciting and fulfilling than the original goal.
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ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE: APPLIED DRAMA WITH HARTLEY

Compiled by: Sarah Saliba, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017 & Tiffany Goe, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2018

Most BHSc students are familiar with Hartley Jaffe’s coveted courses, HTH SCI 2AE3 - Artistic Explorations of Community Issues, and 3CC3 - Theatre for Development. However, not all of us know about the research that goes on within this field. We sat down with Hartley to talk about research in the field of health humanities, how BHSc students have been involved, and his own journey within the field.

How would you describe your research?

The biggest umbrella term for my research is the field of health humanities, but more specifically the merging of applied drama and health science education. My work looks at how theatre and the arts can be used to develop core skills, communication, empathy, perspective and collaboration - how theatre could be used to help develop personal identity. As I’ve navigated through the field, I’ve looked at the same way that one might interprets a poem. This is a different process that requires a different type of approach. To address the burnout conversation, theatre and improv can be used to curb the discomfort with uncertainty. Developing comfort with ambiguity can reduce the stress of feeling as though something is wrong if one is unsure. Ultimately, arts can help build well-being and resiliency with our healthcare workers.

What are you currently working on?

I just finished a two-year project at Baycrest Hospital. The focus was using theatre as a way to develop inter-professional competencies within interdisciplinary healthcare teams. Currently, the majority of the health humanities research on applied drama is centered within medical students, but much less in the clinical sphere. I, in conjunction with another arts-based educator, developed a one day workshop for healthcare teams to examine how theatre and improv can foster an understanding of group dynamics. It is built on four key competencies: communication, collaboration, empathy and perspective, and power and status. The intention is to continue every six months with a one-hour workshop to sustain continued engagement in play. Another one of my interests is looking at physician and medical student burnout. Lastly, my work also researches the benefit of offering humanities courses, HTH SCI 2AE3 - Artistic Explorations of Community Issues, and 3CC3 - Theatre for Development. Development comfort with ambiguity can reduce the stress of feeling as though something is wrong if one is unsure. Ultimately, arts can help build well-being and resiliency with our healthcare workers.

Have there been any findings that have resonated with you?

Traditionally a question that is frequently posed has been, “what can the arts offer the healthcare?” I think one thing that has stood out to me is the question, what can “healthcare offer the arts?” I’ve started to contemplate what art can learn from health, instead of the other way around. How theatre could be used as a way to help that performance? Then I started thinking about how theatre can be used to enhance the skills needed for any job. The key phrase I keep coming back to is that “theatre skills are life skills”. Any skill that you would need to be a good healthcare professional is also one that would serve you as a lawyer, teacher, bus driver, or anything else. The question is how can we use theatre to enhance the performance of those professional roles?

What are some challenges that you’ve faced within this field?

So everything came together when I thought about the fact that if medicine is a performance, how would it be performed? How could theatre be used as a way to help that performance? Then I started thinking about how theatre can be used to enhance the skills needed for any job. The key phrase I keep coming back to is that “theatre skills are life skills”. Any skill that you would need to be a good healthcare professional is also one that would serve you as a lawyer, teacher, bus driver, or anything else. The question is how can we use theatre to enhance the performance of those professional roles?

I’ll touch upon three challenges.

First, money. Even though there is now more funding for this field than there ever was, it is still challenging. Oftentimes many people love the concept, but the phrase that we hear quite often is, “Can you do this for free?” There seems to be a belief held by some that artists work for free because there is a perception among some that there is no expertise in the arts and/or artists will work for the exposure.

Second, proof of concept and evaluation. Health is often evaluated by quantitative measures that may not be as pertinent to the arts. One of the best models that exist was created by Alan Bleakley, who developed a new medical school curriculum at Plymouth University that embeds the humanities as a core component in medical education and uses rubrics from the Faculty of Arts for evaluation. The program understands that the arts should be evaluated from that lens.

Third, legitimacy. This is certainly not universal as many health science programs have a humanities component/advocate, but there can be a questioning of one’s status or credentials. Since artists don’t necessarily hold different degrees, their artistic expertise can sometimes be perceived as less useful.

How has this research impacted you personally and professionally?

This work has motivated me to keep moving forward. First, seeing the students engage with a theatre course or experience fulfills my fire; I love working with BHSc students and this program. Second, whenever I tell someone what I do or where I work, the person replies, “Oh I know a doctor who could use your help!” Lastly, from my experiences our health care professionals are struggling with burnout. And this proves that this work needs to be done. The fact is that everybody, no matter who you are, will encounter the healthcare system at some point. Thus we need to create a culture of care that prepares the healthcare team. In sum, the work has also shown me there is still a lot to be done; the fun is to figure out how best to implement these changes.

Looking to the future is there anything specific you want to see done within the field?

I want to disseminate the information - to promote it within the community, at a university level and a society level. At the university level, building health humanities into the curriculum is a goal that I’ve already touched upon. At a clinical level, a lot of the training programs exist as a “one and done”, but I want to promote a sustainable model. In part, we must establish a “train the trainer” model - training people in the space so that the work can continue even when the trainer is not there. This way it would be built into the culture rather than having it just be one off thing that people do. And in terms of what I want to do, I would like to keep creating art that encourages dialogue and reflection, don’t we all?

Medical School to offer the program Performing Medicine, which trains medical students using theatre. Suzy Wilson, director of the Clod Ensemble, remarks that medical students spend a lot of time doing things to other people’s bodies, without gathering an understanding of their own. If we refer back to the idea of medicine as a performance, this program uses that framework to consider how body language, tone and gesture influence patient care, in terms of patient interaction. Ultimately, it explores how one can care for patients better. This was my first introduction to the merging of the two fields in health humanities.

The biggest umbrella term for my research is the field of health humanities, but more specifically the merging of applied drama and health science education. My work looks at how theatre and the arts can be used to develop core skills, communication, empathy, perspective and collaboration - how theatre could be used to help develop personal identity. As I’ve navigated through the field, I’ve looked at the same way that one might interprets a poem. This is a different process that requires a different type of approach. To address the burnout conversation, theatre and improv can be used to curb the discomfort with uncertainty. Developing comfort with ambiguity can reduce the stress of feeling as though something is wrong if one is unsure. Ultimately, arts can help build well-being and resiliency with our healthcare workers.

What are you currently working on?

I just finished a two-year project at Baycrest Hospital. The focus was using theatre as a way to develop inter-professional competencies within interdisciplinary healthcare teams. Currently, the majority of the health humanities research on applied drama is centered within medical students, but much less in the clinical sphere. I, in conjunction with another arts-based educator, developed a one day workshop for healthcare teams to examine how theatre and improv can foster an understanding of group dynamics. It is built on four key competencies: communication, collaboration, empathy and perspective, and power and status. The intention is to continue every six months with a one-hour workshop to sustain continued engagement in play. Another one of my interests is looking at physician and medical student burnout. Lastly, my work also researches the benefit of offering humanities courses, HTH SCI 2AE3 - Artistic Explorations of Community Issues, and 3CC3 - Theatre for Development. Development comfort with ambiguity can reduce the stress of feeling as though something is wrong if one is unsure. Ultimately, arts can help build well-being and resiliency with our healthcare workers.

Have there been any findings that have resonated with you?

Traditionally a question that is frequently posed has been, “what can the arts offer the healthcare?” I think one thing that has stood out to me is the question, what can “healthcare offer the arts?” I’ve started to contemplate what art can learn from health, instead of the other way around. How theatre could be used as a way to help that performance? Then I started thinking about how theatre can be used to enhance the skills needed for any job. The key phrase I keep coming back to is that “theatre skills are life skills”. Any skill that you would need to be a good healthcare professional is also one that would serve you as a lawyer, teacher, bus driver, or anything else. The question is how can we use theatre to enhance the performance of those professional roles?

What are some challenges that you’ve faced within this field?

So everything came together when I thought about the fact that if medicine is a performance, how would it be performed? How could theatre be used as a way to help that performance? Then I started thinking about how theatre can be used to enhance the skills needed for any job. The key phrase I keep coming back to is that “theatre skills are life skills”. Any skill that you would need to be a good healthcare professional is also one that would serve you as a lawyer, teacher, bus driver, or anything else. The question is how can we use theatre to enhance the performance of those professional roles?

I’ll touch upon three challenges.

First, money. Even though there is now more funding for this field than there ever was, it is still challenging. Oftentimes many people love the concept, but the phrase that we hear quite often is, “Can you do this for free?” There seems to be a belief held by some that artists work for free because there is a perception among some that there is no expertise in the arts and/or artists will work for the exposure.

Second, proof of concept and evaluation. Health is often evaluated by quantitative measures that may not be as pertinent to the arts. One of the best models that exist was created by Alan Bleakley, who developed a new medical school curriculum at Plymouth University that embeds the humanities as a core component in medical education and uses rubrics from the Faculty of Arts for evaluation. The program understands that the arts should be evaluated from that lens.

Third, legitimacy. This is certainly not universal as many health science programs have a humanities component/advocate, but there can be a questioning of one’s status or credentials. Since artists don’t necessarily hold different degrees, their artistic expertise can sometimes be perceived as less useful.

How has this research impacted you personally and professionally?

This work has motivated me to keep moving forward. First, seeing the students engage with a theatre course or experience fulfills my fire; I love working with BHSc students and this program. Second, whenever I tell someone what I do or where I work, the person replies, “Oh I know a doctor who could use your help!” Lastly, from my experiences our health care professionals are struggling with burnout. And this proves that this work needs to be done. The fact is that everybody, no matter who you are, will encounter the healthcare system at some point. Thus we need to create a culture of care that prepares the healthcare team. In sum, the work has also shown me there is still a lot to be done; the fun is to figure out how best to implement these changes.

Looking to the future is there anything specific you want to see done within the field?

I want to disseminate the information - to promote it within the community, at a university level and a society level. At the university level, building health humanities into the curriculum is a goal that I’ve already touched upon. At a clinical level, a lot of the training programs exist as a “one and done”, but I want to promote a sustainable model. In part, we must establish a “train the trainer” model - training people in the space so that the work can continue even when the trainer is not there. This way it would be built into the culture rather than having it just be one off thing that people do. And in terms of what I want to do, I would like to keep creating art that encourages dialogue and reflection, don’t we all?
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DEBUNKING THE PROJECT COURSES
By: Sarah Cino, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017 & Emily Cino, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2018

Every student in the BHSc (Honours) Program is required to complete a project course during their time in the program, yet project courses may seem daunting for many students. To elucidate some of the facts and myths about BHSc project courses, we spoke with BHSc office staff, Ghazaleh and Andrea. We also spoke with two BHSc students to gain an understanding of their firsthand experience with project courses.

The first step in the process of completing a project course is choosing a topic. Although this step can be overwhelming, Andrea points out that “choosing a topic of research and securing a supervisor is all part of the learning process for project courses.” She also encourages students to use project courses as an opportunity to explore topics that are of personal interest. After choosing a topic, the next step is finding a supervisor. According to Ghazaleh, Level II students should begin searching for a HTH SCI 3H03 supervisor in the spring of second year, and Level III students should begin searching for a thesis and/or senior project supervisor in the spring of third year. She also adds that “the longer you wait, the less opportunities will be available.”

However, it is still possible to secure a supervisor closer to the start of the project course, though it is important to be mindful of the process of ethics approval, which can take weeks to occur. If you need help with your project course, look first for resources on LearnLink in your respective project course folder, which can be found at: Courses > BHSc (Honours) Program > BHSc Project- Thesis Courses. If, after visiting this folder, your questions still remain unanswered, Andrea and Ghazaleh explain that they are always happy to help.

Andrea and Ghazaleh also shared some common misconceptions that students have about project courses, explaining that project courses are much more flexible than students often believe. Although 100 hours is the general minimum number of hours for a 3-unit project course, this minimum is flexible, and many students work beyond this 100-hour limit. However, if the time spent on the project is significantly beyond this minimum number of hours, additional units can be added to the project course, including HTH SCI 4D03, 4W03, and 4B06. The time-frame for completion of project courses is also flexible; for example, 3H03 can extend beyond a single semester, and project courses can be completed over the summer. Project courses can also be completed outside of McMaster or even outside of the Hamilton community. Something to consider when choosing a project outside of McMaster or Hamilton is convenience; if you are commuting, commute time will not count towards your hours. Working on a project far from the study’s main location is also possible, but communication barriers should be taken into consideration.

We also spoke with a few students to understand their unique project course experiences. Lisa Ros-Choi, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017, and Ashley Eom, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2018, share experiences that demonstrate the flexibility of BHSc’s project courses, as well as the breadth of experiences students can have.

Lisa Ros-Choi, a third year mainstream student, completed HTH SCI 3H03 research in chemical engineering at York University under the supervision of Dr. William Pietro, where she was responsible for designing and fabricating a reactor that would synthesize specific novel nanoparticles through a reduction mechanism. She mentions that “[she] was intimidated at first, since there was a huge learning curve to the project.” Nevertheless, Lisa says that she appreciated the opportunity to try something completely different from what she had been learning in her coursework.

Ashley Eom, a second year mainstream student, completed her HTH SCI 3H03 during her second year with Dr. Alison Fox-Robichaud at the Thrombosis and Atherosclerosis Research Institute at the David Braley Research Institute. Her research project involved work in a wet lab, as well as piloting a clinical research study. She was able to work on projects ranging from DNA isolation and Protein C ELISA to helping with applications to the Research Ethics Board, and she admits that it has been rewarding to experience these interconnected aspects of the research process in the lab. Ashley goes on to advise students that wet lab research is not as isolated and as individualized as many believe. She mentions that labs are very collaborative environments; you may learn about other lab members’ studies, shadow their lab work, or help with other experiments in additional ways. Ashley states, “it is a very mutually-dependent environment that fosters peer collaboration and self-directed learning - the essence of BHSc.”

From speaking with all of these individuals, it is evident that project courses are extremely flexible and serve as an excellent opportunity to explore your personal interests.

HEALTH SCIENCES MUSICAL 2016
By: Namita Deodhare, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2016

Nine years ago, a group of creative Health Sciences students formed a space for students with a passion for music or theatre to share and play within an artistic realm. Since then the Health Sciences Musical (HSM) has grown into a very prominent and tight knit community within the BHSc (Honours) Program, with close to 100 students participating as part of the executive team, cast, chorus, band, choreography team, musical arrangement team, stage and props crew, promotional team, and writing committee. The entire production is run by students, from writing the full script, to fundraising, to bringing the whole production to its feet. Over the course of the year, these students put a significant amount of hours into making this show happen. Being able to portray common community themes through extravagant musical numbers, HSM has become one of the most anticipated student-run events in the program. Every year it has a profound impact on both the BHSc and greater Hamilton community, as all profits go to a local charity as well as to the BHSc scholarship. This year the profits supported Art Forms, a program that provides Hamilton youth who are “on the fringe” with opportunities to explore a full array of creative pursuits - similar to how HSM has allowed our students to indulge in and explore their creative sides. The show takes place during the spring every year; we welcome students, staff, friends, alumni, parents, and residents of the McMaster and Hamilton community to sing and dance with us as we take a journey into an alternate world.
As much as it is a cliché, we are often told that our four years of undergrad is not just about academics. In fact, students can make their time memorable and enjoyable by partaking in pursuits outside of the classroom. From Welcome Week Faculty Night to Formal to the Variety Show, the Bachelor of Health Science Society (BHSS)’s Social Coordinators and Social Committee, events come alive. I sat down with Kim and Evan, this year’s Social Coordinators, to discuss their planning and running the event, rather than relying on just one method.

Kim: I definitely think that’s one of the main outcomes I like as well— the chance to go to different places in Hamilton and visit different venues.

Evan: Similar to Kim, I did a lot of event planning in high school, and I was involved in many of the events— especially those in the social aspect— so I wanted to continue that in university. I also wanted to get involved in something that is less on the academic side of things, and something that would be more about connecting people, rather than thinking about the BHSS students, giving us feedback. But we would love to hear from others. For example, if someone would like to see an event happen, we would love to hear suggestions that could be considered for next year.

What do you think is the best part of planning social events?

Evan: I agree. That way, students are more inclined to talk to us, and ask us questions about the events and about ways in which they can get involved. Students this year associated Kim and I with the events that were going on, and so they were willing to come forward and ask us questions in a face-to-face setting.

Kim: Unfortunately, it’s mostly our Social Committee, comprised of a small group of individuals from every year, going as feedback. But we would love to hear from others. For example, if someone would like to see an event happen, we would love to hear suggestions that could be considered for next year.

What are your favourite events this year?

Kim: I wouldn’t say the events directly promoted mental health, though it was a very different and very intimate event.

Evan: The Formal was actually very nice this year, because it gave students a chance to hang out with a lot of facilitators and faculty that we don’t often see. It was a really nice way to see everyone having fun and enjoying the results and effort we put into the planning.

What do you think is the best part of planning social events?

Kim: I think it’s the when it comes to events— especially those in the social aspect— so I wanted to continue that in university. I also wanted to get involved in something that is less on the academic side of things, and something that would be more about connecting people, rather than thinking about the BHSS students, giving us feedback. But we would love to hear from others. For example, if someone would like to see an event happen, we would love to hear suggestions that could be considered for next year.

What is the last time you thought about how you communicate on a daily basis? Was it after an argument with a friend? A misunderstanding, misunderstanding with a professor? A memorable interview experience? Unfortunately, communication skills are often taken for granted and people do not think about their strengths and weaknesses in communicating nearly enough, which is funny because it is a skill we have to use every day of our lives. Luckily for us, communication skills are considered a worthwhile investment by McMaster University, especially in the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) Program and other health professional programs.

As one of the few undergraduate programs that places emphasis on the teaching of communications, the HTH SCI 3S03: Communication Skills course was pioneered in 2003 by Carl deLottinville. We had the opportunity to talk to Carl about the course’s development, his role as a facilitator, and his thoughts on the importance of communication skills.

Carl: Training as a social worker exposed him to many patient interactions through which he gained much of his knowledge and experience in communication skills. In HTH SCI 3S03: Communication Skills, students have the opportunity to interview standardized patients with diverse demographics and personal narratives. Students are taught to interview with an evidence-based framework with specific tasks to focus on, and are given tailored feedback from a small group of peers, peer tutors, and instructors.

The goal is to establish a trusting relationship with the patient, understand the patient’s perspective and problems, and reach an agreement. The workshop facilitators encourage students to use evidence-based frameworks to develop these skills. The combination of learning through research, feedback, and practice allows the students to get a glimpse into how effective communication looks and sounds. The course was developed to help students understand which are encouraging to take risks without the fear of negatively impacting real patients. In fact, instead of stating that students may make “mistakes”, Carl prefers to see these as “learning opportunities’, in which students are given exposure to the value of developing good communication skills and building on their skill sets.

Communication is such an integral part of our lives, and so prevalent in everything we do, that we may not even think about what it encompasses. We asked Carl if he could define communication in just one sentence. He left us with this: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — Maya Angelou.

Authors: Valerie Cui and Ye Rin (Yehah) See, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017
DEMYSTIFYING INQUIRY

Interview with Margaret Secord, HTH SCI 1E06 Inquiry Facilitator and Course Coordinator
By Steven Cho, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2018

If there is one thing that every BHSc student struggles with in first year, it would be inquiry.

Many first year students are puzzled by the tutorial rooms with circularly arranged seats, and they are often frustrated and confused by the “strange” questions, ranging from “How do you feel” to “What do you think?”. Even as they ask questions to upper years or facilitators in hopes to finding the “answer”, students are typically told, “We can’t tell you” or “You’ll find out later!” As a result, students resort to speculating, making misguided assumptions that shape their perception of inquiry. Observing this trend every year, I interviewed Margaret Secord, a HTH Sci 1E06 (Inquiry) facilitator and Course Coordinator, to clarify misconceptions and to address questions that students may have.

How do students typically react to inquiry in first year?

“We go through phases. In the very beginning, total bewilderment. And then frustration, once the reality starts to set in that we are not giving them answers. For some students, usually around [March], they start to better understand the significance. Especially as they start working on UNSIN projects, they begin to understand the value of peer collaboration, learning how to do the research and on UNSIN projects, they begin to understand the value of peer collaboration, learning how to do the research and make the research and...”

Why do facilitators and the office refrain from revealing identification, problem solving, professional communication, peer collaboration, peer/personal evaluation).”

What kind of trend do you observe in students as they progress through the years in terms of how they perceive inquiry?

“Rules are currency. Students need the grades in order to move on to the next level. No matter what that level is, they need the grades. I wish we didn’t have grades. I really do. But at this point, we are in isolation. The rest of the world requires you as students to have grades.”

Inquiry is supposed to teach students real life situations. However, some students wonder if in real life, people would ask them “Are you comfortable?” How do the facilitators feel about this?

“They might ask you. But what we are hoping is that when students graduate and go out there, they do some of that in their groups. Students do it in their clubs across campus. I’ve had many conversations with students about taking this in their club scenarios. Especially in fourth year (peer tutors), they are more acutely aware and it’s much harder for them to...”

Is there any advice you would give to first year students in respect to the difficulties or confusions they may face in inquiry?

“Have the faith and the courage to work through it. To own it. And we tend to bring in structure or have the strong magnetic pull to bring in structure when it’s not there. I think the other piece is just their natural tendency because it’s sort of...”

How did facilitators design inquiry in the beginning?

“We worked as a group. When we first started, there were 6 or 8 of us in the very first year. We used to meet every week at 7am on Thursday mornings. We didn’t have a plan. We just went with what the students brought us. After that first year, we had a retreat and we sat down together. We asked, ‘What do we want the students to really look like at the end of their fourth year?’ We used inquiry to develop inquiry. That’s why we value this method of teaching and skill development. We have to practice what we preach. I’ve been doing this since...”

In inquiry, students are told that they will be evaluated differently. Yet, they are fixated about the grade they would receive. Where does this tendency come from?

“Grades are currency. Students need the grades in order to move on to the next level. No matter what that level is, they need the grades. I wish we didn’t have grades. I really do. But at this point, we are in isolation. The rest of the world requires you as students to have grades.”

What kind of trend do you observe in students as they progress through the years in terms of how they perceive inquiry?

“Especially in fourth year, especially when they become peer tutors, it starts to make sense to them. Not right away. But they eventually start to see the pedagogy and they start to understand the value of what the course has to offer. Some people recognize it earlier. But it gets reinforced even more in fourth year.”

Why do you think students tend to compare their inquiry class to that of other’s? How would this help or impede the shaping of their own inquiry experience?

“This issue is complex, but personally, I think part of it revolves around the fact that there is uncertainty in this course. And we tend to bring in structure or have the strong magnetic pull to bring in structure when it’s not there. I think the other piece is just their natural tendency because it’s sort of...”

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Interview with Maxwell Tran, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017

By Stephanie Cheon and Valerie Cui, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017

BHSc students are no strangers when it comes to engaging in the community. Maxwell Tran, BHSc (Honours), Class of 2017 is the founder and executive director of Ink Movement, a non-profit organization that is run by youth, for youth. Curious to learn more about his journey, we asked Max to share his experiences and advice for those who aspire to make a difference in their community.

What is Ink Movement?

Ink Movement aims to promote creative expression among youth by organizing book publishing projects, workshops, conferences, and other innovative approaches to experiential arts education. As well, it helps emerging artists find, and showcase, their unique voice. To date, Ink Movement Canada has published four books featuring the writing and art of local youth. Ink Movement has expanded to three cities (Mississauga, Hamilton, and Montreal), raised over $22,000, and developed over 20 community partnerships. Here in Hamilton, Ink Movement is partnered with McMaster University, Hamilton Arts Council, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, Bryan Prince, and others.

What first sparked your interest in starting Ink Movement?

I was motivated to start Ink Movement because I loved writing; while I was in high school in Mississauga, I wrote poems, short stories, essays, and anything and everything. Writing was a catharsis for me. It was an outlet for me to reflect on what happened during the day, understand the events around me, explore my thoughts, and dream up new possibilities. I talked to a couple of friends who also understood the power of the arts, essentially lamenting the lack of opportunities. If you were a student interested in business, you could join DECA (Demonstrating Excellence Celebrating Achievement), enter a case competition; if you were in STEM, you could enter SHAD (Summer High School Academy), apply to Summer Company; if you were in Art, you had no way to showcase your skills, and energy to contribute to the organization, for which I am very thankful.

What do you do when you’re lost and have no idea where you are? You ask someone who might be able to point you in the right direction. That’s fairly apt analogy, because with no concrete plan of action, we simply asked everyone we could to help guide us. For example, I sent out emails to eleven City Councillors in Mississauga, explaining Ink Movement and the plan for the book. I said, we’re a group of motivated high school students wanting to organize this project for the community, but we don’t have any money to make it happen. Can you please help?

Only one Councillor responded, but that was all we needed. He connected us to the City of Mississauga’s Culture Division. With them we partnered to produce the inaugural Mississauga Youth Anthology. Now, I say that in one line, but that book was the culmination of hundreds of hours of hard work from a dedicated team of editors, graphic designers, and volunteers. Afterwards, we had a launch party at the Art Gallery of Mississauga where we invited all thirty of the contributors. There were book readings, signings, and it was a celebration. It was truly a great night. The artists were so happy to be there, immensely grateful for the opportunity that we had provided them. They were mingling with the media, signing books for newborn fans, talking to each other – I was just grateful for the opportunity to share in their success.

For once, the spotlight was on the artists.

To what or whom would you attribute Ink Movement’s success?

I would attribute much of Ink Movement’s success to my family, friends, mentors, community partners, and Ink Movement’s volunteers. Many of my friends have joined the Ink Movement team at some point or come out to our events, which I’m really appreciative of. I would also like to name some of the mentors that have supported my growth, including Kingsley Huntington from SHAD/McMaster; Mahshid Sarsangi from the Peel District School Board; Paola Polletto, Carmen Ford, and Kathryn Garland from the City of Mississauga’s Culture Division, Tina Chu (formerly at the Art Gallery of Mississauga); Heather Brissenden (formerly at the Mississauga Arts Council); Stephanie High from the Hamilton Arts Council; and Margaret and Sarah Glen from the BHSc (Honours) Program. They have all changed my perspective on leadership, the arts, and/or life in some way, shape, or form.

What do you envision the future to be for Ink Movement?

I would love to work for Ink Movement to expand across the country for more chapters to spring up from coast to coast. With that being said, my perspective on expansion has changed a lot in the past couple of years. I used to push for it. Now, I think there has to be a desire from the community to bring Ink Movement there. There are many communities that lack sufficient art programming for youth and would benefit from having a group like Ink Movement. But, we shouldn’t impose our perception of community needs on the community. I’ve also learned that there shouldn’t be a rush to scale (probably different for a startup). I want Ink Movement to scale at a pace that we are comfortable with. There’s no point of expanding to a new location if we aren’t ready to fully invest in and support the growth of that chapter. I realize that this answer may not fully address the question, but in short, I envision growth for Ink Movement at a rate that we can accommodate.

Can Ink Movement provide me with opportunities to engage the community?

There are lots of different ways to get involved with Ink Movement. First off, I would say to follow us on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) because we are constantly sharing opportunities in the arts that youth may benefit from. Whenever we have events or workshops that we are looking for volunteers, we collect submissions for a new book, for example, we advertise on social media. There are external postings, too, including job postings, publication opportunities, events. etc. If you’re not on social media, you can join the mailing list on our website at www.inkmovement.org. Secondly, we’re always looking for dedicated volunteers. In the summer, we will be recruiting for our executive team in Hamilton. If you’re interested, we will be releasing the news on our website and social media. We would love for you to join the movement.

What have you learned from this experience?

That’s a tough question to answer, because what haven’t I learned from this experience? I have learned a lot about leadership, for one. A positive side effect from starting Ink Movement is that it has provided a lot of leadership opportunities for students. I’ve been privileged to mentor and witness the growth of many young leaders, some of whom have already gone on to do incredible things outside of Ink Movement. Through the people I’ve worked with, I’ve learned that leadership comes in many different forms. You don’t need to be the most vocal person to be a strong leader. You don’t need to have the answer to every question, which is something that I’ve learned about my own leadership. I would say the common thread between all of the leaders within the organization is a commitment to the cause, commitment to the people, and a willingness to learn. The lessons of other things besides leadership that I’ve learned, but I’ll leave it at that for now because clearly I talk too much.

What impact can students have in the community? Do you have any advice for students who want to engage more with their community?

A huge impact. I think the impact students can have, and do have, in the community is often understated. We are a part of the community. This means that when we notice problems in our community, we should take action to address them. It also means that we’re uniquely positioned to address issues that we face as youth. I might be naive but I don’t think anything is impossible – when we join forces with each other and with other members of the community, we can tackle any problem we set our minds to. My advice to students who want to engage more with their community is to simply participate in the community. Talk to your neighbours. Talk to other people in the community, whether it’s at school, at the community center, etc. Go to community meetings. Volunteer. Play sports in the community. Read the local news. Once you feel a sense of connection to the community, I think you’ll have a better idea of local perspectives and issues, which will inform how you might want to engage. I would also highly recommend taking HHSC SCI 3DD3 – Engaging the City!

Max’s involvement in Ink Movement is just one of the ways Health Sciences students are contributing to the community. We hope that his story inspires those of you who want to do something around the city, be it volunteering, starting a business, or conducting community research, to go out there and leave your mark.
The 2015 publication of the BHSc newsletter introduced the MentorMatch program to our community: a collaboration between the BHSc (Honours) Program and the Student Success Centre. MentorMatch is a unique program that provides formal mentorship to students. The mentees are Level III BHSc students who are matched with a recent BHSc alum with whom the mentee shares similar career and academic interests. The mentor serves as a role model who collaborates with their mentee on what they might encounter in their field of interest, provides them with the opportunity to make real-world connections and explore career possibilities. In this article, we share the testimonials of some of the mentees and mentors who have taken part in the program.

I became involved in the MentorMatch Program after learning about the new initiative in third year. I was interested in participating, because I was approaching graduation and was interested in medicine, and felt that having the chance to connect with someone who had once been in my shoes would be beneficial. I was matched with a lovely family physician who had just finished her residency. She took a non-traditional path to medical school, so it was great hearing about her journey and stories from her medical school and residency career. This was a unique perspective for me. I had previously chatted with students who transitioned directly from BHSc to medical school. I also appreciated learning about her experiences in residency and the beginning stages of practicing as a licensed MD. Most often, the exciting and rewarding pieces of medicine are highlighted. However, my mentor talked about the current difficulties establishing a family medicine practice in Ontario and the extensive amount of work she brings home. It was important for me to hear about both the pros and cons of pursuing this type of career which made me think about all of the different roles that it encompasses. I would recommend MentorMatch to other students as a way to gain a different perspective on their current career considerations and to learn about someone else’s journey, which can be full of twists and turns, which led them to their current career.

-Megan Schlorff, Mentee

“Being a mentor in the MentorMatch Program was far more than sharing useful strategies to a learner; it was opening myself up to new perspectives, understanding how to tailor resources to a given context, and learning about one another. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of my mentoring experience was realizing how much there was to learn from my mentee and how they approached some of the same challenges I approached, but very differently.”

- Arnav Agarwal, Mentor

“I decided to become a mentor because the job market for nurses is so tight that I wanted to be able to help a fellow graduate obtain the tools to get them employment. I was excited to receive emails and skype with my mentee because it allowed me to share their successes. I would recommend it. It was rewarding and allows you to give something back to the Mac community.”

- Danielle Butler, Mentor

As a third year BHSc student, I was faced with many difficult choices for my future. Having a mentor to reach out to for insight on career choices, how to approach decision making, and how to deal with uncertainty was incredibly valuable. My experiences with MentorMatch have also encouraged me to continue developing my own mentorship skills.

-Matthew Jessome, Mentee

“I wanted to become a mentor to give back to the BHSc Program and to connect with a current student. My mentees impacted me by giving me with a chance to reflect on the strategies I use to achieve my goals. I would definitely recommend this program to BHSc alumni who would like to connect with a current BHSc student and give back to our program.”

- Ilya Mukovozov, Mentor