



Alumni Interviews 2012-2014

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James Bassil from AskMen

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Although it is not often said, September is a problematic month for many of us. From first year jitters to almost-graduating stress, we students harbour a generous dose of anxiety under that back-to-school cheer. But that feeling of uncertainty is exacerbated especially at the beginning of U3. What is my life plan? What am I to do after I graduate? How to make the big bucks? In other words, the future transforms into an obese elephant every time we converse with our mothers...or with ourselves. If only we knew what to do with the short time we have left to prepare our entrance into society.

James Bassil from AskMen.com says it's absolutely normal to panic a little as you near graduation; and also completely unnecessary. An alumnus since 2001, James began his career with a small publishing company run by a McGill professor and has since become the Editor-in-Chief of the most widely read men's lifestyle magazine on the web. Students like to panic about jobs as graduation nears, but looking back, the man behind the print says that he should have taken some time off after finishing university to do what he wanted.

At a towering height of around 6'4", James seems less intimidating than his stature or title suggests. He moves blithely around the office and speaks engagingly about his team's plans for their brain baby – a strategy to rein in more profit for the magazine. Everything seems to be going for him, just as his career path seems to have immaculately fallen into place after McGill. Listening to him speak of his work experience, one may note how incredibly lucky James was to have found work in the wake of a recession and 9/11. But in retrospect, James was quite shrewd. He had taken a web

publishing class at Concordia after graduation just as the .com phenomena emerged into the public sphere; and paired with his degree in English Literature, James had all the necessary tools to work in both journalism and publishing. James made his own luck.

How did he do it? James advises students to build a sense of what exactly employers are in want. A good way to stay informed is to take a good look at job sites, looking at qualifications, getting an idea of where your industry of interest is right now. And of course, the next step is to qualify – by learning what is most pertinent to your field. During the job application process, the main concern is to distinguish yourself. Employers are looking for creative people, a trait that is best perceived through demonstration. Don't be afraid to reveal your personality and your opinions in the interview process. Your employers want to know who you are and who they might be working with in the future.

But all of this career-prepping depends on the one simple detail – knowing what you want to do in life. What if we don't know what we want? Sitting in his white leather plush chair, James exclaims, 'not knowing what you want to do is a good thing!' University is a time to discover what you like and forging friendships. Build your skills around your interests and things will eventually fall into place for you. University, regardless of what year, is a time and place where you should enjoy yourself. Although you may not know it yet, McGill is preparing your red carpet entrance into the real world.

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Talking Law with Daniel Chonchol and Peter Halprin

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Walking under the florescent lights in the tiled tunnel of Peel Metro last February, I thought to myself: do I really want to go to law school? Back in May of my first year at McGill, I had quickly concluded that Law was the only way I could justify my Arts degree. Like many other BA students, I came to a fast realization that career opportunities tended to be more ambiguous for those of us who were not having an intimate affair with business and science. Law was the way to go and if I may speak candidly for a moment, that six-figure cheque had a lot to do with it.

But what if we have other vested interests? Or if we don't know whether we'll do well in the field of Law? If we are not familiar with the industry, then should we commit ourselves to it for promises of gold and the occasional fight for justice? The answer is "apply anyways". At least, that was the response I got from Daniel Chonchol, Manager of Electronic Communications at McGill's Department of Alumni Relations. He manages a team of three who work in writing, web design, and email specialization. Together, they build and strengthen McGill's global alumni network, both as a service to the students of the university, and to the school's coffers. But don't let his long career at McGill fool you.

Daniel hails from McGill Law and Columbia Journalism accompanied by diverse work experience both as a litigation lawyer and a CBC journalist. He's in his early fifties, and the reason his career took a few turns was because he wanted to be happy where he worked; the pace of life as a lawyer and journalist was too fast for him, and he likes exploring his creative potential. When asked whether he thinks he is overqualified for his job, Daniels says: "Not at all. Journalism is a no brainer and I use what I learned in law school every day. That's the beauty of it. You can work anywhere with a law degree. You can always apply it somehow." On the other hand, Peter Halprin advises students to make informed decisions before studying law. Having graduated from McGill with a degree in Political Science and IDS in 2006, Peter went on to

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York. Since then, he's been practicing primarily in commercial litigation at Anderson Kill & Olick, P.C. As a relatively recent graduate, Peter cautions that law school can be very expensive. Plus, with our current economy, new grads are facing increasing challenges in the job market. The fabled fat cheques that every law student fantasizes about are overstated. "People focus too much on the high end of the market," Peter says. "In reality that niche is accessible only to a small percentage of law graduates". In short, students need to know what they're doing before they take a plunge.

As for whether or not to take the leap? Peter believes passion is the key. With a background in debate and an appetite for public speaking, Peter had always been interested in being a lawyer. Nothing else matters if you like what you're doing; and to discover these aspirations, Peter suggests doing an internship with a law firm or working a position where law is applied to see if you enjoy the practice. If you don't know what kind of law you're interested in, don't worry. Everyone begins as a generalist – that's what the classes are for. And of course, get to know some alumni; they will be most helpful in getting a job.

So, to go into Law, or not to go into Law? Maybe that is not the question. Maybe it is better to ask: why Law? Think about what it really means to be a lawyer. Harvey Specter might look suave and powerful winning all his cases, but he also really enjoys arguing, working under pressure, and thinking outside the box. Going to law school is not necessarily a guarantee of happiness or a six-figure cheque, but a contracted promise for meticulous work. So whatever the case may be, your interests deserve serious consideration. It may be the only compass you can trust.

"I seldom end up where I wanted to go, but almost always end up where I need to be." – Douglas Adams

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Naseem Awl and International Work

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

All false modesty aside, one thought that often runs around in the nifty minds of McGill students is: “Yeah, I’m smart”. Even if one is genuinely humble—or God forbid, truly dim—one will have little difficulty in admitting that the McGill student’s level of intelligence is above average. The truth is, we believe that we have great potential to be outstanding members of society. But with the dismal job-market overtaking the new decade, the Canadian version of the American Dream looks a little blurry. The competition is hotter than ever because there are so many qualified, university-educated, people. It can be very hard to find a rewarding job that we believe we deserve.

The answer to this problem may lie in the need to widen our perspectives; that is to say, looking to international careers. Naseem Awl is a UNICEF representative working as an HIV Prevention Specialist based in Lesotho. Having graduated from McGill in Political Science and International Development in 2002, she went on to University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies to complete a Master of Science degree in International Politics. Because she grew up in West Africa, Naseem looked for work that would bring her back to these roots in a professional capacity.

For Naseem, her work at UNICEF is highly satisfying. Lesotho has the world’s third highest prevalence of HIV and she gets to manage a program through UNICEF’s offices in the country that helps adolescents and young adults gain the skills and knowledge necessary to prevent themselves from being infected. Naseem works with the government and various other organizations to

increase the people’s access to treatment and medical support. The fact that she is part of a global mission and directly affecting the health of children gives her a good feeling.

However, as rewarding as it is to work for an international organization dedicated to humanitarian work, you should also be aware of the disadvantages. Naseem says that working in marginalized communities or lower-income countries could mean “that you have to live in a challenging environment—war-affected, or a location with few amenities or comforts. Jobs in these fields can be extremely rewarding but do require some level of sacrifice; you would be away from family and friends [and] communications (including through the internet) may not be so reliable”. Nevertheless, she insists that the benefits of the job, including the salary, can make it worthwhile.

Employers for international organizations are increasingly producing job vacancies with more specialized functions, asking for very specific skills. Naseem recommends students to build up their language competencies, look into public health degrees, and take courses in statistics. Those are the more common skillsets asked for by international organizations.

University students, especially those at McGill, want to do something meaningful with their lives. We want to be a part of something that is bigger than ourselves, be somewhere where our skills matter, and which will enable us to make a mark on the world. Perhaps, international organizations are the key.

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Going into Medicine with Sherif Emil

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPSScoop Journalist

A close friend of mine, in Biochemistry & Immunology, said to me last year that she wasn't thinking about medical school. According to her, she had been stuck with technical terms galore for the past two years, and was not about to put herself through another decade of scientific jargon. She wanted to write, edit, and do something *fun*. Being a student of Medicine would undoubtedly kill that fantasy. She didn't want to slave away her youth doing something that wasn't interesting.

As the Director of Pediatric General Surgery at McGill and the Montreal Children's Hospital, as well as an Associate Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics, Dr. Emil is familiar with such concerns. When we first greeted each other, two things caught my eye: the size of his office (it was bigger than I imagined it would be) and the golden cross sitting atop his blue shirt. Being a Christian Egyptian, Dr. Emil had little hope for a career in politics in his native country, despite his avid interest in the field. Going to America to study Chemical Engineering, then, was more a choice made from practicality than it was from appeal. His life plan at age seventeen was to get a degree, return to Egypt, and work in a business.

But like all great plans, some things go awry. By his second year in university, Dr. Emil realized that he missed interacting with people, and with both his parents being physicians, Dr. Emil thought the natural route to take was Medicine. And as fortune favors the bold, Dr. Emil decided to apply to twenty-one medical schools—of which, at the time,

entrance was at a 0.16% possibility for international students. One of his two acceptance letters came from McGill, and the rest was history.

A lot of Dr. Emil's story seems nothing short of miraculous. Plus, he is a man who genuinely enjoys his job. How did it happen? After all, isn't it true that medical school and the subsequent on-call surgery hours are supposed to generate a grueling lifestyle? Dr. Emil gave me a two-word answer: "delayed gratification". He went through nine years of medical training and not all of that time was fun. But the reward received from being a doctor, from making a significant impact in the lives of others, is worth it.

As for whether or not a student can put their creative juices to work in medical school, the reply was "of course". Don't let your interests in reading, writing, or art stop you from applying to medicine. Medical schools look for well-rounded students with diverse interests, and certainly will not stop you from pursuing creative outlets. And what exactly makes a student stand out once they're in Medicine? There are three rules: 1) treat your patients as if they were kin, 2) pay your mentors forward by teaching others, and 3) always be inquisitive.

Today, Dr. Emil does a little bit of everything in his job. He operates on children, he travels globally to share medical discoveries, he teaches and mentors, and even writes articles dealing with politics for various publications. Medicine does not limit you to a textbook container; it opens new doors. You can be a woman or man of the world.

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Monica Jagielka and the Coca-Cola Company

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Although finals have come and passed, the academic marathon isn't quite over just yet. And no, I'm not referring to plunging into that new course-pack from the Bookstore. February is a particularly important month for internship recruitment. This is the period where corporations and organizations are hauling in CVs and applications. You want to look your best on paper and in person so what better way than to take some advice from someone who has recently done it all?

Monica Jagielka graduated from McGill in 2010 with a Bachelor of Commerce. She is one of four Canadian candidates chosen by Coca-Cola's University Talent Program to complete a two-year rotational program. This Coke package includes one-on-one leadership training, mentoring, and exposure to multiple sales functions. In two years, Monica effectively developed revenue-increasing strategies, sold in new brands, and managed account development. Now that her training is almost over, she'll head back to Coca-Cola's head offices in Atlanta in May. She doesn't have to worry about job security; Monica's set to step into a new role as a district sales manager.

Fortunately, Monica has a lot of advice for students on the job hunt – both for the summer and for life after graduation. The recruitment process can be very competitive. So what really helps a candidate stand out on paper? The first step is to master the cover letter and resume. For Monica, she believes that students should pay particular attention to their cover letters. It is one of the key methods your

employer comes to know you and your interest in their work. In order to enrich their knowledge of the company, Monica advises “students [to go] the company's info sessions and retain key words from them”.

Monica also encourages Arts students to explore opportunities in the corporate realm. Companies are always looking for creative and well-rounded employees; and Coca-Cola, especially, likes students with great communications, interpersonal, and leadership skills. However, as with any career choice, it is important to make some preparations. For Arts students who are looking to pursue a business career, it is important to enrich your education with some basic knowledge and experience. In fact, if you haven't already done so, a minor in Management or another equivalent program would be a great boost on your application.

There are many rich opportunities for students of all specializations in the sleek world of commerce. Consider your assets and what you can offer to the enterprise. More importantly, identify the company or the kind of company you want to work for. Monica chose Coca-Cola because reputation is important to her and Coke is an internationally recognized brand. Know what you want; and your future employer will see that you possess the drive to produce excellent results.

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Talk-Show Host Tommy Schnurmacher

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPSScoop Journalist

Surprise bubbles up when I step through the doors of Astral Media Station on Rene-Levesque. At the center of a spacious lobby was a cluster of bright, yellow couches lit up by LED lights; large clean-cut signs for each radio station owned by Virgin decorated the entire wall of the reception; and the entrance from here to the offices was separated by transparent walls of glass with a pair of sliding doors. Virgin looked like Vogue.

My rendezvous needs little introduction; every morning on CJAD Radio Tommy Schnurmacher greets Montrealers on the *Tommy Schnurmacher Show* with the latest news from around the world, and then some. A veteran of the business, Tommy has been on air for almost thirty years. He graduated from McGill's Arts Department with a major concentration in English Drama, and like many Arts students, he considered a career in Law.

So where does journalism fit in? "I started having a little crisis in class," Tommy explains. He didn't know what to do with his degree, decided he needed an advisor immediately, and walked out of lecture—as it was midway in progress—to find an answer. He ended up in the advising office, flipping through files of career descriptions. After arriving at the journalism file, Tommy knew immediately that this was what he wanted to do. The job description fit his personality; he's argumentative and he had been told he was good at it. Plus, he loves to write.

Taking a sip of his coffee, Tommy looks me the eye and says: "This is a job that requires persistence." If someone turns you down for an interview, you can't

sit there and accept rejection—even if they reject you twice or thrice. "Sometimes, you need to be creative," Tommy shrugs, "especially if you want a good story". Once at the very beginning of his career, Tommy charmed his way into the Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth when John Lennon and Yoko Ono visited Montreal. He forged a press pass and bought a box of crayons, knowing that Ono's daughter was there. Not only did he make it pass security, but also stepped up as babysitter for a week.

Persistence is now more important than ever before. Since the new millennium, journalism has been going through a period of change; some would go as far to say that it's a dying career. News updates have become instantaneous through social media, and news analyses of good quality can be found on blogs—all for free. While media moguls are scrambling to make profits, journalists must fend for themselves. In order to succeed in this field, prospective journalists need to love and feel excited about what they do—it is the key to persistence.

For those who are looking to test the waters, Tommy advises you to ask your friends about how they see you in the future. If it's journalism, then try it and find ways to network. Look for a mentor of some kind, so that you can immerse yourself in the business. If you don't know whom to ask, then try cold calling. Don't worry about rejection; persistence is the first step to becoming a good journalist.

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Our Dean of Arts, Christopher Manfredi

By Winnie Hu, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and English Literature) & CaPSScoop Journalist

Decked out in a suit and tie, Christopher Manfredi lives up to his reputation as one of the best-dressed professors on campus. However, there's no doubt that he is better known as an outspoken critic of judicial activism in the Supreme Court of Canada. Having caught his first break as a student at Claremont Graduate University, Professor Manfredi reminisces, "I could very well have gone to law school, had I not found the intersection between law and politics so interesting".

He had picked up a book one day titled *The Courts and Social Policy* by Donald L. Horowitz. It changed his life. "Horowitz talked about how well do courts address complicated social questions in policy," the Dean recalls, "It made me realize that, yes, this is relevant. And afterwards, I wanted to delve deeper into effective policy-making through the courts". Indeed, it seems that the case study Horowitz used regarding the American juvenile justice system paved the way for a young Chris Manfredi to begin his career as an academic. It sparked an interest that later allowed him to approach his professor, Ralph Rossum.

Dean Manfredi emphasizes, "It's important to for students to have a mentor. I was very lucky to have found one in Ralph." Back in 1985, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S Department of Justice had granted Mr. Rossum one million dollars to draft a model juvenile justice code, and to provide legislative training in selected states in a period of two years. As his research associate, Professor Manfredi was able to work with Mr. Rossum on juvenile justice reform, as well as conduct some of his own research. He continued to finish his PhD at Claremont, and stayed on to teach as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Government.

In hindsight, it seems that Professor Manfredi made the right choice when it came to picking grad schools. Between a choice of Duke University and Claremont, Professor Manfredi had chosen the latter based on a recommendation from one of his teachers. Plus, he says, "There were some interesting people there." When asked if he had any advice for present and prospective grad students, Professor Manfredi laughs and gives one word: curiosity. "Be open to all possibilities when it comes to research topics. Inspiration may be found in places you least expect."

In his chair as the Dean of Arts, Professor Manfredi proudly defends his students as some of the most versatile people in the job market. "The world needs people that can learn many skills. Because Arts students are trained in multiple subjects, they will not be limited to one mode of thinking. Their adaptability is what makes them hireable." As for participating in the policy-making process, Professor Manfredi encourages students to start with NGO work or to get involved with a political party. "It's a young person's game," he says, "not to mention good experience".

Currently, Dean Manfredi is working with McGill alumni to enhance the learning experience outside the classroom. He is most happily preoccupied by conversations with his students and fellow peers, whose ideas often give him inspiration for research. In fact, Professor Manfredi has teamed up with Antonia Maioni for their upcoming book; spurred by the political implications of *Chaoulli v. Québec*, Professor Manfredi will be writing about using litigation as a means to advance healthcare policy.

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Ankita Rao from Ernst & Young

By Tracy Yuen, Master of Science (Epidemiology) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Being well prepared from day one has certainly paid off for Ankita Rao. Landing a coveted position with Ernst & Young right after completing her Bachelor of Commerce in Economics and Finance at McGill University, Rao shared her take on how to get the most out of your undergraduate experience and ensure a smooth transition from university to the workforce.

“Meet with your academic advisor early on during your first year, not only to layout the necessary requirements for completing your degree, but to determine ways to distinguish yourself from the rest. Minor in a unique subject, such as foreign language, or partake in extracurricular activities outside of your department. Not only will it allow you to explore different interests, recruiters will also be able to differentiate you from all the other students with stellar grades and work experience.”

Coming from a small program of only 40 students, Rao took the initiative to organize various social events to bond with her fellow classmates. This led to an established network right out of undergrad, as they graduate and dispersed across the globe. Such close-knitted connections certainly came in handy at the start of her job search. “Reach out to your friends and family,” said Rao. “Don’t be afraid to ask for help.” Rao also stressed the importance of diversifying your network and explained how her peers have received offers from the least expected sources. Take advantage of the resources available, such as the mentorship program at CaPS, or

McGill’s connection with other world-renowned institutions by going on exchange studies. Merely, studying at different libraries within campus or at cafés in the plateau also allows you to interact with students outside of your faculty.

While it is important to emerge yourself in different social situations, always be wary of your surroundings and adjust your mannerisms accordingly. Rao cringed as she recalled common mishaps of her fellow students, from awkward conversations to inappropriate attires. Although we have heard countless times about having only few seconds to form a good first impression, students continue to attend formal functions in revealing dresses and unkempt suits. “You can’t go wrong with well-tailored pants and a blazer,” said Rao. Also, brush up on soft interpersonal skills as forming a lasting connection with the right person can make your career.

As for those in the midst of job search, don’t get discouraged by the rejections. Having graduated at a difficult period of financial and employment instability, Rao recounted tales of students undergoing multiple rounds of interviews for positions that did not exist and dealing with nepotism in the hiring process. However, being flexible in terms of job location and perseverance got her through. “There are many opportunities out there,” said Rao. “Don’t be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone.”

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Jonathan Moyal and Advice I Wish I Had When I Was a Student

By Tracy Yuen, Master of Science (Epidemiology) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Finding a fulfilling career that caters to all your interests often seems impossible. For Jonathan Moyal, MBA McGill University 2009, he found his niche in the non-profit art sector. However, his journey was not easy. With his background performing in amateur theater and producing music concerts, his passion for the arts had no place in the formal business world. His keen business sense eventually led him to his current position at the Segal Centre, one of the leading multilingual performing arts centre in Quebec and across Canada. Situated in one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Montreal, the Segal Centre has a long history of facilitating cultural dialogues and bringing communities together by showcasing original performances such as Yiddish theater and Macbeth in Haitian Creole. Moyal's position as the Director of Development reflects the creative endeavors of the center. With only 6% of their annual budget being funded by the government, he devises new ways to secure support from individuals and corporate donors.

Based on his own experiences and the lack of guidance he received, Moyal is eager to share his newfound knowledge with young professionals and students. On his time off, he participates in CaPS Mentor program and mentors students with offbeat interests from the Desautels Faculty of Management at McGill University and encourages them to pursue rewarding careers in the non-profit sector.

“[The] non-profit world is in a boom to look for more diverse people,” explained Moyal. “For creative people with a business sense.” As a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, he receives job notifications for positions across Canada and US on a daily basis. Other than directly responding to postings, he also encouraged taking a proactive role. “Find a place you’d love to work at and get involved however possible,” said Moyal. Whether you’re aiming to land a formal paid position or to volunteer on the board of directors, understand the objectives of the company well before contacting them. Focus on building a mutually beneficial relationship, by emphasizing the unique qualities that you can offer and how they complement what the company currently lacks.

Of the numerous interns that the Segal Centre take on each year, the ones who receive job offers in the end are the ones who follow-up and follow-through. “[I’m] most impressed with students who get in touch outside of normal forms of communications,” said Moyal. “People who don’t follow the rules strictly.” Before you rush off to rehearse a song-and-dance number, however, bear in mind that it is ultimately about building and maintaining a relationship. “Hand written thank-you notes,” suggested Moyal. “Personal touches are always fantastic.”

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From Employee to Entrepreneur: Neil Cuggy, Co-Founder of MTL Capital

By Zoha Azhar, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Economics and Political Science) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

On one of arguably the chilliest days in Montreal, I met with Neil Cuggy to pick his brain about his work in Entrepreneurship and Investment Banking, and the transition from school life to the workplace. Neil is the co-founder of MTL Capital here in Montreal. He graduated from McGill University in 2010 with a Bachelors Degree in Commerce. He was kind enough to dedicate his Saturday morning to speak with me, and had some interesting things to share.

After the necessary introductions and sips of morning coffee, I asked Neil if he thought that there were any skills that he learnt or developed at McGill which are proving to be valuable at this stage in his life. He then very decisively answered with one word: communication. "Speaking in front of the class, be it presentations or case studies, was very helpful," he told me. "Discussing something in front of an audience can be intimidating at first, but it helps build up confidence."

It is no wonder Neil values the communication skills he developed at McGill; employers in every field value effective communication and many jobs require strong communication skills. Socially, too, people with enhanced communication skills usually have better interpersonal relationships, which make for a better work environment.

We then got talking about the transition from university into the workplace, which is absolutely fearful for some and perfectly pleasant for others. Fortunately for Neil, his passage was very smooth and devoid of any rough patches. I then asked if there was something that he hadn't realized before he started working that might have caught him off-guard. He thought about it for a second or two and then replied that as a young graduate the idea of total self-sufficiency and the notion of a steady stream of income were in hindsight a bit romantic. It takes a bit of time to get to that stage and most young graduates do not realize this. He continued

and added that although graduation opens up a whole world of possibilities, it also adds as much responsibility to your shoulders; "There's no next 'natural' step; you're done with middle school, then high school, and before long, you're finished with university. Then you realize that you've gotten a job and you've got to plan the next 60 years of your life yourself."

Neil is also a part of the CaPS Mentor Program at McGill which is designed to connect current McGill students with McGill alumni to assist students in achieving their highest potential as they explore career options. I asked him what he thought of the program and how he thought it was being received. He told me that he wished he had known more about this offering when he was in university because interactions with the alumni were fairly limited around his time at McGill. He believes it is a great opportunity for current students. One suggestion he has for students planning to engage in this program is that they should widen their objectives. He remarked "students come in with a specific focus, hoping that we can get them in touch with people who may offer them a job, but discount the advice we give them." The advice mentors like Neil can offer may prove priceless for students because it comes from their own first-hand experiences.

Neil Cuggy is an extremely approachable gentleman, and I had a lovely conversation with him. For the final question I asked him that now that he's gone from the role of employee to employer, what he looks for in a candidate and potential employee. He told me that the ideal candidate needs to be focused, driven and tenacious and he would like to see eagerness - "a twinkle in their eyes." And in the same vein of things, I would like to congratulate Mr. Cuggy on a positively bright beginning, and lots of luck on his future ventures.

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Jonathan Ferrari: Co-Founder of MTL Capital

By Zoha Azhar, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Economics and Political Science) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Jonathan Ferrari is the co-founder of MTL Capital here in Montreal. For the December CaPS Scoop I interviewed his partner Neil Cuggy. Jonathan has an energetic and dynamic personality and likes working with people with the same passion and drive. He graduated from McGill University with a Bachelors degree in Commerce in 2010. He sat down with me recently and talked about his university and work experiences over a cup of coffee.

The morning began with a handshake. And introductions, of course. Followed by an imperative commentary on the Canadian weather. I began by asking him how he got his first job because he had mentioned that he did not have one lined up right after graduation like some others had. He told me that he had to take a proactive approach which meant contacting people and meeting with them personally to talk about the particular firm and possible employment. He said, "You can find out people's contact information on LinkedIn, or the company website, or by reference by a peer, and arrange to meet with them to discuss your options." He mentioned how he came to know of a vacancy before anyone else because the person he was having lunch with told him he would be leaving soon and that Jonathan should send his CV in. Such methods of informal recruitment can give you exclusive access to very valuable information and land you a job.

We then chitchatted about his university days and exchanged tales and I got around to asking him what valuable skill he took away from McGill. He replied and said that having the knowledge and technical skill related to his field gave him a boost of confidence. He said, "Knowing that you can get to the root of the problem or solve a case study on your own gives you so much confidence." And that confidence is infectious, because I think a bit of it seeped into me when he wasn't looking. He added, "Friends, too, I met some of my best friends at McGill, and we still maintain that network in our professional lives as well."

I asked Jonathan what was different now than when he was in university, and if the transition to the workplace affected him in anyway. He revealed that feedback and how it is given is a lot different in each of the two settings: "Feedback in university generally highlighted areas in which you succeeded rather than where you fell through." Probably for motivational purposes and gentle encouragement, I suppose. He continued, "Feedback at work generally involves a lot of lightly sugarcoated criticism- they usually tell you areas you can improve in and where you went wrong." I guess that's their way of subtly hinting that you're not in Kansas anymore.

Another aspect that is very different in the two environments is the contrast of theoretical versus practical applications. The way in which theory translates into real-life situations and brings about real-life consequences is very different than how it is studied in the classroom. He mentioned, "The internships I took part in over my university years really helped in this regard- they helped bridge the gap between the two worlds because I gained some practical experience before I officially entered the workforce."

With the interview coming to a close, I asked him that now he's an employer instead of an employee, what he feels is essential to maintaining a healthy relationship with his staff. He responded, "Knowing that you don't know everything." He remarked that it is always a humbling experience, and that you need to be open to new ideas and different thoughts. I ended by asking him what he feels is vital to maintaining his career. He revealed that he retains the unrelenting drive to discover- to keep asking the question, "What's next?" That question has forever been furthering mankind's progress on the timeline of exploration, revealing new ideas and thoughts and innovation. We sincerely hope that Mr. Ferrari finds the same inspiration that drives him and a successful beginning to his new adventure.

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New York based attorney – Peter Halprin

By Zoha Azhar, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Economics and Political Science) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

As a fellow Arts student, I can safely say that the idea of a possible career in Law has occupied our minds at least once throughout our undergraduate years. This month, Peter Halprin, an attorney based in New York, offers a glimpse into the high paced world of insurance recovery and commercial litigation. He graduated from McGill in 2006, with a Bachelor of Arts, and entered law school straight after. For those of us still interested in pursuing a career in this field, Peter Halprin shares his experiences, and offers some counsel for those who are still undecided.

There are endless reasons for studying law and theory, and they can open up myriad opportunities in the legal profession. The study of Law is said to be one of the oldest academic fields in the world, and is associated with a prestige of its own. For Peter Halprin, his calling towards this field channeled everything he was passionate about: law, policy and writing. “It fused my interests and there is always a new, exciting and unique challenge to confront,” he explained. I imagine the constant thrill of it all keeps the gears churning.

Now that we’ve covered the why, let’s discuss the how. The one quite obvious route is through law school, of course. Mr. Halprin decided to attend law school in America right after graduating from McGill, and even managed to squeeze in a summer of travel in between. He pursued internships throughout his time as a law student and was able to secure a job right after acquiring his Law degree. I asked him if he was given a chance to do it all again, would he do anything differently, to which he chuckled and said, “I would probably have liked to fit in an entire year of travel between graduation and law school, but other than that I am pretty comfortable with where I stand right now.”

Undergraduate years are considered stepping stones toward a bright future, so I was interested in finding out how Mr. Halprin’s time at McGill helped him in this regard. “The beauty of McGill,” he said, “is that there is no hand holding.” I suspect the entire student population would stand to agree with that statement. “I learned to work extremely hard, I learnt how to research and I learnt how to write persuasively,” he continued; all the tools vital for a bright career in almost everything, not just Law. The other valuable aspect was the presence of international, cosmopolitan people that contributed to a vibrant and diverse student population. According to Mr. Halprin, surrounding yourself in such a community “opens up new ways of thinking and forces you to consider other views on a certain subject when faced with a problem.”

To finish up, I inquired if there was any advice Mr. Halprin would like to offer students hoping to enter a legal profession, and here is what he shared: “Do what you are really passionate about. Some Arts students feel that a Law degree is an advanced Arts degree, but this is not true, it is very much vocational. To that end, if you are unsure, you should try your other passions. Every experience is valuable.” He further added that the world has evolved into such a multidisciplinary environment that one is required to wear many different hats, and that’s how different life experiences can help develop various skill sets in that regard.

A career in Law is definitely rewarding, but demands a lot of hard work and effort. If your passions truly lie in this field, you should definitely give it a go! “Where there is a will there is a lawsuit!”

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The Colorful Journey of a Flavorist – Tanya Bradley

By Zoha Azhar, U3 Bachelor of Arts (Economics and Political Science) & CaPS Scoop Journalist

Food for thought: what are some potential avenues to explore when thinking of a career in the food industry? Be it a restaurateur, a dietician, a pâtissier, or even a health inspector, the possibilities are endless. Tanya Bradley, for example, literally tickles taste buds for a living. She is a Junior Flavourist at Novotaste Corporation Inc. here in Montreal, charged with flavor research and development among various other duties.

Although it seems quite absurd to ask someone why he or she wanted to become a flavorist of all things (like it's not the best thing in the world), I asked Ms. Bradley where her reasoning lay. "After graduation I really never knew what I wanted to do. I never really knew this field existed. When I discovered it, I loved how it employed a diverse range of tasks, and it was a perfect match to my nutrition and product formulation background."

Apart from flavor development, Ms. Bradley is also involved in research and development, quality control and market research. She likes the fact that even though she spends time at the lab, she is able to partake in other versatile functions at work. I then inquired what exactly a flavourist does, to which she replied, "On a daily basis, we normally deal with the food industry mostly, but sometimes we deal with cosmetic companies as well. We also help people with dietary restrictions, for example by adjusting sodium levels in certain products." Ms. Bradley is quite adventurous with her flavor creations, but prefers to keep them seasonal; "I have invented a new combination called 'longanberry' which blends in the flavors of grape and lychee, and another more seasonal one which

fuses together flavors of blueberry, cinnamon and coffee." What a wonderful pick-me-up.

So how did Ms. Bradley end up in this position? After a Bachelors of Science in Biochemistry, she pursued a Masters Degree in Nutrition. "There was definitely a really strong focus on studies. The Masters degree was the best decision I could make because it advances you not only academically, but also professionally. It feels like you are in the workplace already." I asked how her experience at McGill helped find her first position, to which she answered, "There was a lot of support among the staff. My supervisors were excellent mentors and supporters who really encouraged me and pointed me in the right direction. CaPS also gave me a lot of advice and had a lot of resources I made use of at my time there." I then asked whether there was something that she would do differently given the chance to do it all again; "I would do a lot more networking, because that is how you meet great people who can help you out professionally."

To finish up, I asked her if there was any advice she would like to give students who are wanting to pursue a career in the food industry: "There are two things; first, you should try to take advantage of all the resources CaPS have to offer because they really do help, and second, there are a lot of free events that students do not know about but those that they should look into. Supplier's Night is one such event that takes place every year, and this year it is in April. It hosts a lot of local businesses and it is possible to land a job or internship by speaking with them." As easy as apple pie.

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