COMMUNICATION STUDIES BOOSTED AT MOUNT ROYAL

The Calgary Connector Program is a conduit for talent in the city that might otherwise go untapped. The program is a simple, effective way for immigrants and recent graduates to build or expand their professional networks by giving them access to businesspeople and professionals from both the private and public sector.

“Talent is a key driver to helping companies grow and succeed in Calgary,” says Jeannette Sutherland, manager of workforce and productivity at Calgary Economic Development.

“However, there are pools of talent in Calgary, such as new graduates and internationally trained professionals, whose skills and education aren’t being utilized as they haven’t been able to make connections in their chosen professional fields.”

Calgary Economic Development partnered with the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council and Bow Valley College to introduce this program to help the unconnected overcome this obstacle.

“The partnership works well as all three organizations have deep knowledge in terms of assessment, employment gaps and the need for industry and talent to connect,” says Sutherland.

During the first several months of the program, the goal was to provide connections to newcomers that were internationally trained professionals, but thanks to some additional funding support from both the provincial and federal governments, there is now an opportunity to support post-secondary graduates, international students and aboriginal graduates as well.

“All the major post-secondary institutions in Calgary are now participating in the program as an additional support to their adult students and alumni,” says Sutherland.

Sutherland says that those who volunteer as connectors receive Media Studies (RMS). The RMS major joins MRU communication buzzwords such as majorities in public relations, information design and journalism.

What sets this program apart is its comprehensiveness, says Iris Ratushniak, associate professor in the program.

“We prepare people for work in front of the microphone and the camera as well as behind the scenes in broadcast advertising, journalism, corporate productions, live events and various types of creative programming,” he says.

“Our new major in broadcast media studies will be the only four-year program in Western Canada and the second one in the country.”

The unique blend of coursework will include hands-on technical training as well as higher-level learning that explores topics such as law, ethics and inter-cultural communication.

A four-year program gives us the opportunity to take a more in-depth look at how the world is changing and will also better equip university students to make decisions that impact not only what people are learning, seeing and reading, but how and when they are receiving that information,” says Marc Chikinda, dean at the Centre for Communication Studies.

Ratushniak points out that since the school has been involved in broadcasting education for more than 50 years, the department has had ample opportunity to build strong relationships within industry, keeping the school well-tuned to industry trends and requirements.

“Our program enables students to develop the necessary skills to produce quality content and adapt to change,” says Ratushniak.

Get in on the action. Calgary has the highest per capita concentration of small businesses and head offices in Canada.

Consortium Program builds professional networks

VIDEO

The Gray Family Eau Claire YMCA provides programming for children and families who need it the most.

Gray Family Eau Claire YMCA

Corporative Calgary

Corporate Calgary has an important role to play in downtown YMCA, helping fund programs and initiatives that provide programming for children and families.

Nick Wiggins says it felt like the right time to give back to the YMCA.

Being based downtown, it’s easier to notice the impact of the current economic situation,” says Wiggins. “These are tough times for many, and the YMCA is no immune from this. That’s our community. Our neighbors, friends and families are impacted.”

With the YMCA, this is another chance for us to show leadership, says Wiggins. “One of our core values at Corporate Calgary is to be leaders in the community. Corporate Calgary is not immune from the challenges we face. As leaders we choose to step up and be leaders when they are needed.”

The YMCA is not immune from tough times and difficult people; Wiggins says it is an ideal activity to participate in because it’s more accessible than ever. “Engaging in activities with your team is good for the individual, good for the team and good for the organization,” says Wiggins. “One of our core values is to be an organization that is not just profitable but good for society.”

This is another chance for us to show leadership,” says Wiggins.

The programming is designed to be as accessible, engaging and flexible as possible. Since groups will come with their own preferences, offering a variety of options has been a priority.

“The outdoor activities such as dodgeball, basketball or yoga class are designed for those who want to work out with colleagues in a boot camp or relax with a fitness class,” says Wiggins. “If people want to engage but aren’t up for an intense workout, we have our brain fitness, yoga or business class. The point is not to stress, it’s to feel good. And those who engage with us in this way also receive a letter of reference for themselves and their families. This is our way of giving back to corporate Calgary.”

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