

As part of our ongoing support of Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Partners of Canada Inc. is proud to bring you a special feature informal interview with three students at the new School of Pharmacy at Waterloo University.



From left to right:  
Jeannine Oliver, Emily Lamantia, Heather Foley

# The future is in good hands.

**The first graduates of Waterloo's new School of Pharmacy are full of energy and ideas. And they just can't wait to get started...**

In the fall of 2007, construction began on a brand new Pharmacy school at the University of Waterloo, a school that would represent the future of Pharmacy education in North America. At the time, wearing hardhats and enduring a biting December wind, we stood on the construction site and spoke to Dr. Jake Thiessen about his vision for the school, which was due to be completed in 2009.

Flash forward to early June, 2010. Sitting in a comfortable conference room on an upper floor of the newly finished school, we are

speaking to three of the 3rd Year students who will be the first graduates of this ground-breaking new facility, in August 2011. All three are passionate about science. In fact, each has already earned a science degree — Heather Foley holds a Biomedical Biology degree from Laurentian University; Emily Lamantia has a degree in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology from the University of Waterloo; and Jeannine Oliver is a graduate from the University of Guelph Nutritional and Nutraceutical Sciences program. Jeannine, Emily and Heather have come here, to the School of Pharmacy in Waterloo, to spend a further 44 months becoming professional Pharmacists.

We asked them what had drawn them to Pharmacy as a vocation, and why they had chosen to pursue their dream at Waterloo's brand new School of Pharmacy.

## Q: What's it like to be this school's very first graduating class?

**Jeannine:** It's empowering to know that we're leading the school, and that many of us are going to go out and lead the profession. There can only be one first graduating class, and we do feel a responsibility to set the standard.

**Heather:** We actually spent the first year of our course in the basement of an Engineering building on the main campus because the school in Kitchener wasn't finished yet, so it was great to finally get here. Our professors never miss an opportunity to remind us that we are the Vanguards. It feels very special to be the first.

## Q: Do you feel you're getting a special Pharmacy education at this school?

**Emily:** Yes, 100%. This is one of only two co-op schools in North America, so we will have 16 months of clinical rotation throughout our 44 months here. There's also an intense business program that's part of this course, which is very unique. We really feel we'll be ready to go out on our first day of work and make a difference.

**Jeannine:** And with some of the legislative changes that are going on, the school is preparing us for the expansion of our role as professional Pharmacists. Today and in the future, Pharmacists will be an equal part of an inter-professional team, working with nurses, physicians and social workers to better help patients. The school is absolutely preparing us for that.

**Heather:** I came into Pharmacy thinking it would be a rewarding job, but now that I'm here I see that it is a phenomenal career choice -- it has completely surpassed my expectations. What we're learning just blows me away, and what we're going to be able to do as Pharmacists is incredible.

## Q: This is a Co-op program. Is that one of the reasons you chose this school over others you could have attended?

**Emily:** For me, that was a big selling feature. If you're not going to get any experience in your profession until after you graduate...well, that doesn't make any sense. Here I can do four months of co-op work in four different clinical areas. I can have work experiences in a community pharmacy, a hospital, or in industry. The options are endless.

**Heather:** Co-op was huge in my decision too, because it creates opportunities. A lot of Co-op employers say at the end of a co-op work term 'the door is always open for you here when you finish school'. This is the only pharmacy school in Canada that offers co-op, and that's one of the things that makes it so unique.

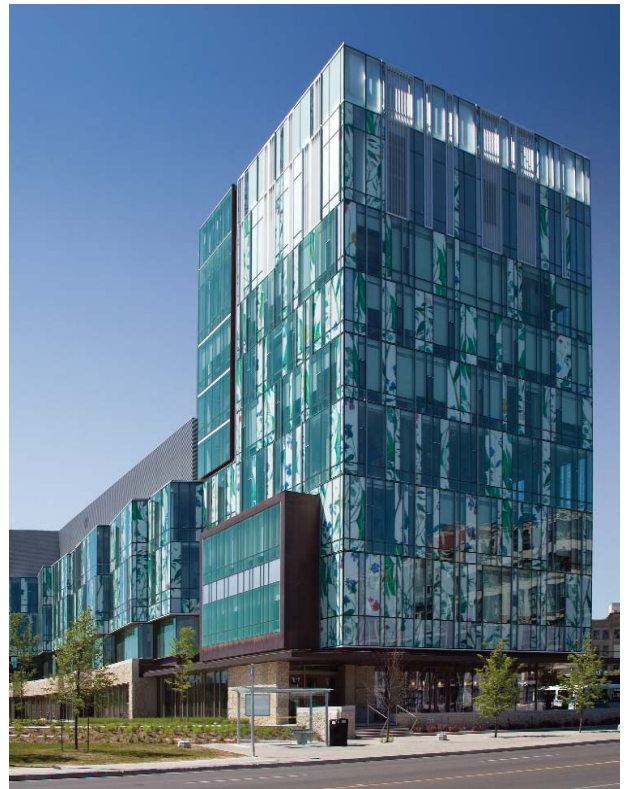
**Jeannine:** I was also attracted by the chance to be one of the first graduates of the school. Where else can you have an experience like that?

## Q: What co-op rotations have you done, and what experiences have you had?

**Jeannine:** My first co-op rotation I worked in a hospital, and even had the chance to go to Denver Colorado for a week-long conference on sterile preparation of IV compounds. I've also worked at a community pharmacy, and a long-term care pharmacy as a part of an inter-professional team.

**Emily:** My first co-op term I worked at a retail chain in a technician role — speaking with patients and learning the computer system. My second term I was at an independent pharmacy, and my last one I worked in a hospital, and realized that I might actually want a career in a hospital pharmacy. You play a much bigger clinical role, interacting with doctors, and really making a difference in people's lives.

**Heather:** My first job was in a teaching hospital in London. That was very motivating because you're working in such a huge facility with highly skilled people. I shadowed the pharmacist on the implementation of medication reconciliation, took part in meetings with upper management, and was also involved in the High Alert Medication Task Force. My other co-ops were in a large chain pharmacy and a small health centre in South Western Ontario. What an incredible experience!



The School of Pharmacy at Waterloo University

## Q: Does the school help you find these co-op opportunities?

**Emily:** Yes, they post a long list of co-op jobs and you apply for them. There's a ranking system where employers make their first pick, and potential employees make their first pick, and then they put together the best fit.

**Jeannine:** You also have the chance to set up your own work terms, so if you have a personal connection somewhere you can set up a job on your own.

## Q: How much has your co-op experience helped you decide where you'd like to spend your career? Did you discover interests you didn't know you had?

**Emily:** Absolutely! I didn't think I'd be interested in hospital pharmacy, but now I would consider doing a residency and working in a hospital.

**Jeannine:** I thought I wanted to work in retail, but after my last co-op, long term care is my new direction.

**Heather:** I'm more confused than ever now! But I'm super excited, because I know that whatever I end up doing I'm going to love it. And there are so many things you can do at once, you have the opportunity to do it all in your career if you want to.

## Q: Talk about the admission process to get in to the school. What was it like?

**Jeannine:** It was unique because part of the admission process here is a panel interview that gave us a chance to prove we're well rounded individuals, which is what they're looking for. Our grades got us the interview, but then it was up to us to demonstrate why we deserve to be in this great program.

**Emily:** We were given 10 minutes to tell the panel something about ourselves as people. We all had to come up with a unique idea about how to present ourselves. You were allowed to bring in props, so people brought in guitars and sang; I brought in a scrapbook about my life.

**Heather:** I loved it. It was a chance to interact with the panel and make them laugh and let them see parts of me that they wouldn't have seen otherwise. I remember thinking afterwards "That was so much fun!" I really got to show who I am, and I think that's so important.

## Q: A big part of your course is learning about business management, the business side of pharmacy, right?

**Heather:** It's more than just pharmacy business, it's about business as a whole, almost like an MBA. We're learning about income statements and financial planning, marketing and advertising, personal finance, how to pay off our student loans, what a GIC is and things like that. The practical side of finance as well as the corporate side.

**Jeannine:** We're doing business plans and taking a look at the market and how we can gain a competitive advantage. It's like all the secrets of life that can help us be successful.

## Q: Is this business orientation unique to the School of Pharmacy?

**Emily:** It's very unique. I've heard doctors and pharmacists say "I wish I'd had this kind of information."

**Jeannine:** I've talked to students from other schools across Canada, and of course they're learning about Pharmacy, but not many of them are learning business. With the current legislative changes, having both pharmacy and business knowledge is an asset.

**Heather:** The school surveyed Pharmacists across the country and asked them 'what can we teach at this school that you wish you had learned?', and the biggest thing was Business. That's why our professors are so passionate about it. We can speak medical jargon until we're blue in the face, but we also need to know the language of business.

## Q: What's the classroom experience like here?

**Heather:** It's a demanding program; very fast paced, but it's great.

**Emily:** Expectations are high — they have to be — and the challenge for us is to meet them.

**Jeannine:** The way they're educating us is really preparing us for the future. It's not like you walk into a course and you learn med chem one day, pharmacology the next day, and something else the next — you learn an entire disease state at once. I think our program really addresses the lifelong learning and ongoing education that Pharmacy requires.

## Q: Is there anything you'd change about the program?

**Heather:** Anything we would change we are changing, because the professors are constantly asking us what they should do differently. It's challenging for us being the first class of a brand new program, but we know that we're making a difference for the students who come after us.

**Emily:** Professors welcome comments and constructive suggestions. Some of our professors have even put surveys on a web page where they're constantly asking for feedback and asking whether we think the material is relevant so they can improve it.

## Q: What else is life like here at the school?

**Heather:** We're our own little campus. We have a strong student council, a yearbook, a social committee, and some students are involved in the national Pharmacy organization. We even have all the different sports teams — soccer, basketball, softball, and a hockey team called *The Remedy*. Hey, it all fosters team spirit, and we're very close-knit and supportive of each other.

**Emily:** We do tons of group work, so you have to be able to work together, and that creates a bond and removes the competitiveness.

## Q: What would you tell someone who was thinking of applying here?

**Heather:** My best advice is that if they're looking at Pharmacy and healthcare as a profession, and if they want to help people and make a difference, they should go to our website and become educated about what the pre-requisites are. Then early on in high school they should be working towards them.

**Emily:** Do your research, know why you want to be a Pharmacist, and learn about the profession...

**Jeannine:** Also, they should talk to as many Pharmacists as they can, maybe take a part time job in a pharmacy, and discover what the opportunities really are.

## Q: As the first graduates of the school, do you feel you're under a microscope?

**Jeannine:** Absolutely. I think we'll be scrutinized in the workplace, to see how we do.

**Heather:** Right. Everyone is waiting to see the kind of pharmacists Waterloo is going to graduate. They all have high hopes, and we're going to live up to them and surpass them.

**Emily:** I have no doubt about that...no doubt at all.

*Pharmaceutical Partners of Canada is proud to bring you informative articles like this one as part of our ongoing support of Pharmacy. For more information about The University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy please visit <http://www.pharmacy.uwaterloo.ca/prospective>.*



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