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## MSVU Headlines - February 2009

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### Co-operative Education Opens a World of Opportunity for One Mount Student

Kristen Pickett's favourite pastimes include food, travelling and fun. When it came time to pursue a post-secondary education, she was looking for a university that could cater to all three interests and provide her with the right degree. This led Pickett to move from her hometown of St. John's, N.L. to Halifax, N.S. and enrol at Mount Saint Vincent University in the Tourism and Hospitality Management (Co-operative Education) program.



"I had an interest in the food and beverage industry, and how it related to tourism," explains Pickett. "I had additional interest in event planning. The Tourism and Hospitality Management program seemed like the perfect fit for me."

Since enrolling in the program four years ago, Pickett has been able to experience and learn about this dynamic field first hand, thanks to her three co-op work terms.

"Co-op prepares you for your future career as it puts you 'in the moment' with industry professionals," says Pickett. "I was constantly challenged to think on my feet and find solutions to deal with new situations. Experiencing the business and tourism community in an everyday workplace setting helped me to determine what type of career I would like to pursue; it helped me to focus my energy and studies in the right direction."

Pickett's co-op placements were spent with Holiday Inn Express as a guest service agent, Pier 21 as an event coordinator and the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism as a media relations assistant. Aside from her work placements, Pickett has been busy contributing to her blog, With Bite ([www.withbite.blogspot.com](http://www.withbite.blogspot.com)), and volunteering as the Food Chair for Titz'n Glitz Halifax, a breast cancer fundraiser.

Usually the most difficult task for students once they graduate is finding a job within their chosen industry, but this is something Pickett won't have to worry about. She was recently hired as the event coordinator with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Pickett's blog has also led to many incredible writing opportunities and a segment on [www.haligoniac.ca](http://www.haligoniac.ca), Halifax's live, online broadcaster.

Pickett graduates in May of 2009 and is already setting high expectations for herself. She plans on acquiring her Master of Food Culture and Communications at

the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Parma, Italy and eventually hopes to be a contributor to a well-read food publication or network.

"I've definitely grown as an individual since starting at the Mount and participating in the co-op program," states Pickett. "The experiences that I've had have helped me to take on new challenges and step out of my comfort zone. The program has provided me with opportunities that may not have presented themselves had I chosen a different path."