Those who come to the School do so to learn, and our new programs and offerings have allowed us to reach out to new audiences. This fall, we launched Information Systems Courses for Indigenous People, providing those in remote locations the means to learn online. At the same time, local professionals are mastering new skills in project management and management consulting with our new professional development certificates, and Quebec health care professionals taking our online language courses continue to provide rave reviews.

Those who learn with us soon discover that the School also provides the opportunity to connect. Students and alumni meet with industry leaders in class and at networking events, our programs welcome students from around the world, and Vivre McGill en français, a project spearheaded by SCS staff, has become an online hub for francophones across all of McGill.

As a result of the education they gain and the connections they make, our students are given the power to elevate – their competencies, their careers, and their capital. It’s why learners come to the School, and we’re proud to share their stories and highlight their accomplishments.

Together, we will continue to deliver on our promise to learn, connect and elevate. 

Message from the Dean

LEARN.
CONNECT.
ELEVATE.

OUR NEW TAGLINE PLACES ALL THE SCHOOL OFFERS OUR LEARNERS AND PARTNERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT. THIS ISSUE DOES THE SAME.

APPRENDRE. S’ENGAGER. GRANDIR. NOTRE NOUVEAU SLOGAN MET EN VALEUR TOUT CE QUE L’ÉCOLE PEUT OFFRIR À NOS APPRENANTS ET PARTENAIRES, ET CETTE PUBLICATION REMPLIT LE MÊME RÔLE.

DR. JUDITH POTTER
Dean of Continuing Studies
Doyenne de l’éducation permanente

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Ceux qui fréquentent l’École le font pour apprendre, et nos programmes et services récemment renouvelés nous ont permis d’attirer de nouveaux publics. Cet automne, nous avons lancé le cours de Système d’information pour les peuples autochtones, qui permet d’offrir aux personnes en milieux éloignés des moyens d’apprendre en ligne. En parallèle, les professionnels acquièrent de nouvelles compétences en gestion de projet ainsi qu’en consultation en gestion grâce à nos nouveaux certificats de perfectionnement professionnel, et les professionnels de la santé qui suivent notre cours de langues en ligne continuent de nous envoyer des commentaires élogieux.

Ceux qui apprennent avec nous découvrent assez rapidement que l’École leur offre la possibilité de réseauter. Les étudiants et les diplômés ont l’occasion de rencontrer les ténors de l’industrie, en classe et dans le cadre d’événements de réseautage. Notre campus accueille des étudiants de partout dans le monde, et le projet Vivre McGill en français, mis sur pied par le personnel de l’École d’éducation permanente, est devenu une importante plateforme en ligne pour les francophones de McGill.

Par conséquent, nous offrons à nos étudiants la possibilité de grandir, plus précisément : d’élargir leurs compétences, de faire progresser leur carrière et de valoriser leurs acquis. Voilà pourquoi les apprenants fréquentent l’École, et nous sommes fiers de partager leurs histoires et de souligner leurs réussites. Ils sont présents aux côtés de notre administration, de nos chargés de cours et de nos partenaires.

Ensemble, nous continuerons à tenir notre promesse d’offrir un milieu pour apprendre, s’engager et grandir.
“TOGETHER, WE WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER ON OUR PROMISE TO LEARN, CONNECT AND ELEVATE.”

« ENSEMBLE, NOUS CONTINUERONS À TENIR NOTRE PROMESSE D’OFFRIR UN MILIEU POUR APPRENDRE, S’ENGAGER ET GRANDIR. »

DR. JUDITH POTTER
Dean of Continuing Studies
Doyenne de l’éducation permanente
ONLINE LEARNING

THE SCHOOL IS ABOVE ALL ELSE A LEARNING INSTITUTION WHOSE MISSION IS TO RESPOND TO THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ITS STUDENTS. TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY, THE SCHOOL HAS PLACED A FOCUS ON INNOVATIVE ONLINE PROGRAMMING.

Two such offerings have launched this fall: a program in Information Systems for Indigenous People in Northern Quebec, and English language courses for Quebec health care professionals. Both offerings make the School’s learning opportunities available to those living throughout the province of Quebec.

“We wanted to offer a learning solution that was flexible and accessible to everyone,” says Effie Dracopoulos, Associate Director of Language and Intercultural Communication. “That’s why we turned to online learning. Our clientele includes nurses, social workers and frontline health care administrators, and they don’t have much time.”

As a result, Language and Intercultural Communication, in partnership with the School’s Instructor Services and Educational Technologies unit, created customized online courses and virtual classes to meet the needs of their clientele. These courses allow students from across the province to attend classes that were tailored to both their profession and their language level. “Teaching virtual classes was a first for us, so we had to adapt our teaching methods” says Dracopoulos. “We wanted to make sure our virtual classes were as dynamic and collaborative as our in-class courses, and that students had the opportunity to participate in group discussions. We also recorded our lessons, so we could review and modify our techniques. And it worked!”

Feedback from the program’s pilot phase reported that 97 per cent of participants said they would definitely recommend it to their colleagues. “We are so happy. We were able to deliver what we had promised and create a program that met their needs head on.” As a result, Dracopoulos is confident that the School has “developed expertise in the design, development and delivery of customized online language programming. We’ve broken new ground in offering virtual face-to-face classes.”

Meanwhile, the School recently launched the Online Courses for Northern Aboriginals in Canada project, which has received equally positive reviews. The School has offered online business courses for some time. After receiving a multi-year grant from Aboriginal Affairs and
Northern Development Canada (AANDC), the School was able to expand its offerings to include courses in information technology. The new program covers information systems and data processing technology, focusing on skills that are in high demand across northern Quebec. Topics include operating systems administration, system security, and mobile application development.

The first course offered was Introduction to Computer Information Systems, taught by instructor Graham Thorpe. “This course touches on both theory and practical applications,” says Thorpe, who has over 20 years of teaching experience. “We cover things such as data and knowledge management, networking, relational database operations, business intelligence, and social computing.” Thorpe worked to ensure that the material was tailored to the various communities in which the students live and work. “I find it exciting that McGill is offering this course to remote learners,” says Thorpe, “and it’s interesting for me personally to deliver it online. It’s challenging, but it’s working well.”

One of his students is Eugene Nicholas, a member of the Kanesatake Mohawk community in Kanesatake, Que., who is currently living in St-Mathias-sur-Richelieu, Que. “I’m a graduate from another institution, and I enrolled because I wanted to refresh my knowledge,” says Nicholas. So far the online course has been “an awesome experience. It’s a convenient way of learning, and a great way to meet my needs for education, work and family life. You can learn and participate with an instructor in the comfort of your home – you can never be late for class, and it eliminates travel issues.” Nicholas has already had the opportunity to apply what he’s learned in class, and would strongly recommend the course to others. “It’s an awesome experience, and the convenient technology brings classes to your residence.”

Whether in class or online, the School is empowering people near and far to learn practical skills, make new connections, and elevate their lives.

The Professional Development Certificate in Management Consulting that was launched this fall was designed to meet the industry’s consistent growth. With over 25 years of experience as a consultant, instructor Pierre Lainey’s knowledge has grown along with it. Inna Popova, the School’s Director of Non-Credit Programs, Career and Professional Development, is only half-joking when she claims he may have taught half of Montreal’s management consultants. “He’s a great teacher, and very well-respected in his milieu. People love working with him.” We asked for his thoughts on the School’s Professional Development Certificate in Management Consulting.

**What are your first impressions of the program?**

My first impressions are very positive. Twenty years ago, when I was looking to become certified, it was difficult to find courses in Montreal; I had to take classes all over the place. But now McGill is offering a five-course professional development certificate. It’s very hands-on, very practical, and it was developed with CMC-Canada.

**Who are your students? Is there a common thread among them, or is it a diverse group?**

It’s very diverse! I have two students with PhDs, someone with a degree in gender studies, and people who work in information technology, finance, and the non-profit sector. They are all interested in becoming consultants in their fields. That kind of diversity makes it interesting for everyone in the program, because they learn from each other’s area of expertise.

**How is the program preparing students for success?**

We teach our students to become highly effective consultants – to lead change, adapt behaviour, and make ethical decisions. We work in small teams – because consultants always work in teams – to dissect case studies, use the best tools, and learn from failed assignments, so that we can avoid making the same mistakes.

The program also prepares students for the CMC exam. It’s a three-hour oral exam, and I am an examiner! We expect them to know about consulting, ethics, change management, project management – all topics students learn about in the program – and they have to answer to our satisfaction.

**What are the emerging trends in the field of management consulting?**

The first is that I believe there will be a growing number of small firms. Big consulting firms will always be out there, but there are a lot of companies that would rather work with a small firm than a big one. Small firms are more flexible, less expensive, and I find it’s much easier to work with them. They’re eager to learn from their clients, and as a result it creates a real partnership.

The second trend is the number of industries that are expected to use management consulting. Health care, energy and pharmaceutical firms are expected to hire consultants, and I think the timing is good for our students. Whether you’re focused on strategy, change management, information technology, or another area of expertise, there are a lot of opportunities out there.

Overall, I see our role evolving. When I became a consultant, businesses were looking for experts to tell them what to do. Now, they’re looking for someone willing to work with them as a partner. Our job is to help them identify the problem and work with them to develop a solution.
The NU experience at McGill goes beyond simply attending classes; students also have the opportunity to make local connections. “They do volunteer work in Montreal, take part in community programs, and have two excursions to Quebec City and Ottawa.”

The project is still in the pilot phase, but there is potential to expand the program and make it a reoccurring project. This would mean expanding the number of students and possibly developing a third stream, likely in the humanities. That’s good news for Dr. Mineau; his mission for Faculty Partnerships and the NU program are one and the same: “to provide the McGill experience to international students.”

Although McGill regularly welcomes international students, “at four months, it’s the School’s longest study abroad program, and the first of this magnitude.”

As the idea of undergraduate students earning international experience continues to gain traction, one American institution is leading the pack. Northeastern University (NU) in Boston, Mass. offers first-year undergraduates the opportunity to spend their first semester in Australia, England, Greece, Ireland and, as of this fall, Canada. McGill University is their newest partner, and as a result over 40 participants are now studying alongside McGill students this fall.

“Sending freshman students abroad is pretty bold,” says Guy Mineau, Director of Faculty Partnerships and Summer Studies at the School. “It’s turned into Northeastern’s flagship program, and it’s truly innovative.”

Northeastern approached McGill last spring regarding a potential partnership. Participants are carefully selected based on strong academics and leadership experience. “They’re looking for leaders,” says Dr. Mineau. “Many students have already lived abroad with their parents or started their own businesses — about half are U.S. citizens, and the other half are international.”

The NU experience at McGill goes beyond simply attending classes; students also have the opportunity to make local connections. “The NU experience at McGill goes beyond simply attending classes; students also have the opportunity to make local connections.”

Students participating in the McGill program, known as N.U. in Canada, comprise two streams — business and science. Business students are studying calculus and economics at the School, writing courses at the McGill Writing Centre, and economics and Canadian history courses in the Faculty of Arts. Those in the science stream are enrolled in chemistry, biology, math, and mathematics for science provided by the Faculty of Science, and a Canadian history class. Several are also taking the School’s French courses. As a result of taking these courses, they study side-by-side with McGill students, who make up one of the most international student bodies in Canada.

Although McGill regularly welcomes international students, “at four months, it’s the School’s longest study abroad program, and the first of this magnitude. Studying abroad is becoming a major trend, so we’ve got to be ready to offer this type of programming: a full semester of transcript credits.”

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The NU program
Barbara Seal has seen first-hand the power of education. As a citizenship court judge, she often meets newcomers who are waiting to become Canadians. “Presiding over the swearing-in ceremony for new Canadians is the ultimate pleasure,” says Seal. “You get to know them and hear their stories. People come here from other countries for a better life; some did not have the opportunity to receive the education they want so badly. There are so many stories, and they’ve really touched me.”

Seal was looking for a way to help, so she and her husband Donald W. Seal became the generous sponsors of an endowed scholarship at the School, where many of the learners are newcomers to Canada.

“For me to be able to help them better their lives by establishing a scholarship – it was really a gift for me.”

Barbara and Donald Seal

Denys Pishchalov, a student in the Diploma in Accounting program. He arrived in Montreal from the Ukraine, where he earned 10 years of experience working in finance and accounting. He also intends to take the Graduate Certificate in Professional Accounting.

Earning the scholarship was “a mark of distinction for me,” says Pishchalov. “It means I’m doing well, and that’s very important. The gift was a great support for me because I devote all my spare time to studying.”

Pishchalov enrolled in his studies because “I like numbers, and I want to find a job in finance; that’s how I will be able to find self-fulfillment. Having a diploma from McGill, one of the best post-secondary institutions in the world, will help me.”

“I think the School of Continuing Studies is doing a wonderful job,” Seal affirms. “I know it’s been a stepping stone for many new Canadians, and those born here as well. I’m grateful, I’m happy, and I’m very honoured to be part of it.”

“The most recent recipient of the SCS-Seal Scholarship for Newcomers to Canada is Denys Pishchalov, a student in the Diploma in Accounting program. He arrived in Montreal from the Ukraine, where he earned 10 years of experience working in finance and accounting. He also intends to take the Graduate Certificate in Professional Accounting.

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Barbara and Donald Seal

Denys Pishchalov

GIVING BACK
MEET THE FACES OF THE
School of Continuing Studies

IF THE FACES FEATURED IN THE SCHOOL’S NEW MARKETING CAMPAIGN LOOK FAMILIAR, THERE’S A REASON. THEY’RE ALL EITHER CURRENT STUDENTS OR ALUMNI OF THE SCHOOL, SO YOU MAY HAVE PASSED THEM IN THE HALLS OR SAT NEXT TO THEM IN CLASS.

“It was important for us to feature our students and alumni,” says Elana Trager, the School’s Senior Marketing and Communications Advisor. “They all have such interesting journeys, and people can relate to that.”

Developed in collaboration with Montreal creative agency Akufen, the campaign’s tagline – Learn. Connect. Elevate. – captures the experience of all those who come to the School – from the time they enter a classroom until they reach their goal.

The School’s focus is to provide a dynamic education – whether it’s for professional development, personal enrichment, or simply for the joy of it. And the connections our learners make along the way are equally important; their instructors are experts, their classmates bring a global perspective, and they have the opportunity to meet guest speakers, attend networking events, and meet with academic and career advisors. Ultimately, the goal is to elevate: their education, their confidence, or their career. Continued on page 10
DIEYNABA CISSÉ
English for Professional Communication

“I wanted to continue my studies in public relations and communications, and I wanted to do it in English at McGill. I enrolled in the part-time English program because I really wanted to be fluent and make sure that I was prepared to begin my masters.”

EMILIE Nketiah
Diploma in Human Resources Management

“I enrolled in the Diploma in Human Resources because there was a gap I wanted to fill, and I chose McGill based on its reputation.”

KATHERINE-MARIE ALBISI
Diploma in Public Relations and Communications Management

“I was interested in the PR program because I’m a blogger. As a result I’ve been invited to many PR events, and I was interested in finding out more about what it’s like to be on the other side.”

WILL BALDEH-VAINQUEUR
Comprehensive Project Management

“I enrolled in the Comprehensive Project Management course because I wanted a better perspective on how to develop projects, as well as the business aspects of this area. I got what I wanted, and more [...]”
DIEYNABA CISSÉ  
English for Professional Communication

“I started my bachelor’s degree in Winnipeg and finished it at the University of Sherbrooke. I wanted to continue my studies in public relations and communications, and I wanted to do it in English at McGill. I enrolled in the part-time English program because I really wanted to be fluent and make sure that I was prepared to begin my master’s.

“It’s a lot of work but I got what I wanted from the course, and much more. I really felt more confident with my English, and more confident in general [...]”

It’s a lot of work but I got what I wanted from the course, and much more. I really felt more confident with my English, and more confident in general that I could begin head-on, without second-guessing myself. I completely recommend the course—I actually have friends taking the class!

Being a part of the School’s marketing campaign is awesome! I had people coming up to me asking about it—how cool is that! It’s an honour, and I feel really proud.”

EMILIE NKTIAH  
Diploma in Human Resources Management

“Taking part in the School’s marketing campaign felt great! It was a way to give back to my University.

“The professors are knowledgeable practitioners, but I didn’t expect them to be as warm as they are, and to take so much time for the students.”

I enrolled in the Diploma in Human Resources because there was a gap I wanted to fill, and I chose McGill based on its reputation. I came, I saw, and I conquered—and I definitely got what I wanted. The professors are knowledgeable practitioners, but I didn’t expect them to be as warm as they are, and to take so much time for the students. The School makes a point of finding the best person for each subject matter, and I appreciate that.

I not only learned valuable skills, I was also able to build a professional network. As a result I was able to transition into my new career before I even finished my courses; I still have three classes left!”
KATHERINE-MARIE ALBISI  
Diploma in Public Relations and Communications Management

“I was interested in the PR program because I’m a blogger. As a result I’ve been invited to many PR events, and I was interested in finding out more about what it’s like to be on the other side.

I just completed the program this summer, and I’ve already applied what I’ve learned. I did some volunteer work where we had to reach out to the press and develop press releases, and I knew exactly what to do.

“One of the highlights was an elective course, Developing Leadership Skills, with Bob Saggers. I loved it – and I learned a lot about myself.”

One of the highlights was an elective course, Developing Leadership Skills, with Bob Saggers. I loved it – and I learned a lot about myself. Now I’m a vice-president at MACES (McGill Association of Continuing Education Students), which is something I never did during my undergraduate studies.

Taking part in the School’s marketing campaign is pretty cool. I go to school here, I’m a VP here – McGill is my entire life, so I have a lot to say about it! And I’m already thinking of taking an economics class next semester.”

WILL BALDEH-VAINQUEUR  
Comprehensive Project Management

“I enrolled in the Comprehensive Project Management course because I wanted a better perspective on how to develop projects, as well as the business aspects of this area. I got what I wanted, and more – it made me decide to actually pursue project management as a career!

“My favourite part was working on the final project, which was developing a plant upgrade. We planned the entire concept – from demolition to construction – and it allowed us to think outside the box.”

My favourite part was working on the final project, which was developing a plant upgrade. We planned the entire concept – from demolition to construction – and it allowed us to think outside the box. The course was very convenient in terms of balancing work, personal life, and family – having class a few hours a week was very useful. I’d recommend the course to anyone who’s thinking of taking project management, and a couple of my friends have already taken it.

Being included in the School’s marketing campaign is very flattering. I’ve taken a course here, I got my job because of it, and I was able to give back to the School – my life has come full circle!”
NM Noticias Montreal, a Spanish-language news website aimed at Quebec newcomers, has become a recognized leader among its audience. It was named Company of the Year by Québec’s Chambre de commerce latino-américaine du Québec, and the initial online publication has expanded to include Encuentros NM, which consists of small conference events discussing topics about Montreal’s immigrant experience.

“One man had arrived in Montreal the day before the event – we were one of the first places he went when he stepped off the plane,” exclaims Pablo A. Ortiz, the site’s editor and co-founder.

“Our readership consists of two groups; those who’ve arrived within a year or two, and those who are close to completing their immigration,” continues Ortiz. “They’re looking for information regarding the whole integration process, but everything revolves around getting a job.”

The School wanted to connect with this diverse group, so it partnered with NM Noticias Montreal last fall to publish career-related blog posts in Spanish and participate in Encuentros events.

“It’s a way to reach out and get our message across about our offerings,” says Elana Trager, the School’s Senior Marketing and Communications Advisor. “We offer advice and attend events, all of which ensures that the community knows we are available as a resource: for education, and for career advising and transition services.” Past blog topics have included conducting a job search, gaining local credentials, and entrepreneurship.

“I think McGill has done an amazing job,” says Ortiz. “The articles summarize a lot of information, and connect directly with people. Our events are a chance to talk face-to-face and answer questions, and it’s an honour to have McGill included. Our readers know it’s the best-ranked university in Canada, and that’s something people really appreciate – it motivates them.”

Although some newcomers have misconceptions about McGill, they soon find that it offers many options other than a four-year degree. “Some people may be scared to apply to McGill,” says Ortiz. “But it’s a great university with a lot of great programs – we’re really happy to see how eager people from the Hispanic community are to approach them.”

A recent Encuentros Montreal event
Un tout nouveau portail de l’Université McGill fait connaître un côté moins connu de l’institution : la francophonie présente sur le campus, et tous les services qui s’y rattachent.

Lancé à la fin du mois de septembre, le site Internet « Vivre en français » a nécessité plus d’un an de travail. La plate-forme regroupe tous les services offerts en français sur le campus, comme des cours de langue seconde ou d’autres ressources. Le site s’adresse aux francophones et à ceux qui voudraient apprendre la langue, comme les nouveaux arrivants. Les étudiants pourront également y retrouver des informations sur les programmes qui requièrent une connaissance du français. Les internautes pourront aussi découvrir l’implication de l’université au sein de la communauté de Montréal. Le tout est émaillé d’informations et de statistiques sur la langue de Molière à McGill.

« L’amour d’une langue et sa promotion passe par sa découverte », estime la gestionnaire du projet, Manon Gadbois. En plus de toutes les informations disponibles sur le site, il y a aussi des pistes pour faciliter l’intégration des membres de la communauté, rajoute-t-elle. « Ce portail a pour objectif de mieux vivre ensemble le français et assurer par le fait même une plus grande visibilité de l’université dans le contexte francophone, montréalais et québécois. »

 Avec cette promotion d’un milieu plus francophile, le tout nouveau site Internet pourrait aussi inciter davantage de personnes à venir étudier à McGill. D’ailleurs, le portail reflète la croissance du nombre d’étudiants français sur le campus, dont le nombre a bondi de 127 % au cours des cinq dernières années.

Déjà, la vidéo qui fait découvrir la plate-forme a été visionnée à 21 000 reprises.

Le projet a été développé par l’École d’éducation permanente, et pour la doyenne, Judith Potter, ce nouvel outil est très important, puisqu’il renforce le positionnement de l’École d’éducation permanente et l’Université McGill dans la communauté montréalaise et québécoise. « Ce fut aussi une superbe occasion de démontrer les capacités de notre école de travailler avec d’autres départements de façon efficace pour que ce soit bénéfique pour tous », selon elle.

Le site est le fruit d’une collaboration entre l’université et le gouvernement du Québec, puisque le projet a été appuyé par l’Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF). « L’initiative que nous lançons est porteuse d’avenir pour l’université, la communauté montréalaise, pour les gens qui viennent aménager leurs carrières ici et aussi pour les communautés où ces personnes vont s’installer pour y vivre », d’après Jorge Passalacqua, directeur général adjoint de l’OQLF.
BARRY DOUEK

Barry Douek leads a double life. By day he works full-time in quality assurance in the risk and audit department at Randstad’s Montreal headquarters, and by night he’s an accounting student. He’s completed the Diploma in Accounting and is now taking courses in preparation for the School’s Graduate Certificate in Professional Accounting program.

Douek made the decision to go back to school four years ago. He started by enrolling in one course per semester, but is now doing two. “There’s never a dull moment,” he admits, “but it makes things interesting. Especially since I’m working, and the position is pretty demanding. It’s tough, but at the same time, it just makes you more dedicated.”

The good news is that he implements everything he learns at school on the job. “It’s funny – in almost every class there’s something I can apply to what I do now in internal auditing. I can always relate, even if it’s just a little piece of information. It’s really interesting to use what I’m learning in the real world at the same time.”

He balances school and work, and carves out personal time as well. “I give myself at least one night of fun – I still play hockey once or twice a week. Some things you have to cut down on, but [friends and family] understand.” His employer is also encouraging. “They offer to pay if it’s in direct relation to your work; you have to get certain marks, so it’s extra motivation.”

For those who have been thinking of going back to school, “I’d say honestly that if you want to do it, you should do it. I think the hardest part is deciding to go back. But you have to take it seriously, and don’t think it’s going to be easy. Once you do, you realize it’s very rewarding.”
It’s Always a Good Time to Learn

Jeff Sidel spent his retirement in a way you might not expect: he went back to school. After a 26-year career at Merck Frosst Canada, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, he retired and realized he had “a burning desire to go back to school. I wanted to be stimulated, and explore areas that I found interesting. I wasn’t exactly sure what I was going to be doing for the rest of my life, but I was eager to learn.”

He attended an information session at the School, and met with an academic advisor, who was “wonderful. She was very encouraging, and explained each program in detail.” He began by taking a Graduate Certificate in Taxation, followed by a Graduate Certificate in International Business, and then a Diploma in Management - Treasury - Finance Concentration. “Yes, I took them one after another,” says Sidel. “They complemented each other, and I thought, this is fun – I want to continue.”

After 26 years in business, Sidel could tell the School was doing a “really good job in terms of presenting real world scenarios. In business you’re constantly working in team settings and doing work with other departments.” He found his instructors “very easy to talk to,” applied himself to his studies, and upon graduation, he ranked first in his class and was awarded the American Express Prize in Management – Treasury & Finance.

Meanwhile, issues in his personal life were unfolding. His mother-in-law became ill, and as one of the family caregivers, he very suddenly found himself “taking on the tremendous responsibility of managing her affairs,” including finances, medical care, property management, and legal aspects. “It’s time-consuming, and in many cases it can be overwhelming – emotionally, physically, and mentally.”

But Sidel saw an opportunity among the challenges. “Although there were a lot of resources for the family caregiver, there was no one group to guide you. I came to the conclusion that there was business potential there and started to explore the idea of helping others. A number of courses in my programs were about starting a business, and without even realizing it, all the blocks started to fall into place.” Sidel spoke with financiers, lawyers, and social workers; their advice was invaluable. He then reached out to accounting firm Crowe BGK and submitted a business plan. In January 2011, Crowe BGK Seniors Advisory Group was launched as a division of the company. “It’s been very successful, and we’re helping a lot of families.”

Sidel hopes his success can in turn inspire other potential student entrepreneurs. “An opportunity presented itself, and it was because of my program that I was able to create a successful business enterprise,” he states. “I want others to see me as an alumni who really made it a success, and I hope they’re motivated as a result.”

The Write Stuff

Meet Maxime Lauzé. Born and raised in Montreal, and now in his fourth year studying mechanical engineering at McGill, he is the inaugural winner of the Excellence in Written Communications prize awarded jointly by the McGill Writing Centre and the Faculty of Engineering. The prize is awarded for the best research paper written in the Writing Centre’s Communication in Engineering course, which is required for nearly all engineering students.

There were 337 students enrolled in the Fall 2014 semester, and Lauzé’s paper, entitled Recycling Carbon Fibre Reinforced Composites: A Market Environment Assessment, was selected as the best paper overall based on depth of research, integration of academic sources, and the coherence, consistency, and overall quality of writing.

When he was notified of the honour, “I was very surprised,” says Lauzé. “I spent a lot of time on it, and I enjoyed writing it, but I didn’t expect to win.”

The course includes instruction on writing professional emails, cover letters, résumés, a research paper, and a business proposal. “We learn how to present technical ideas and innovation in a vocabulary that general audiences would understand. That’s one of the main difficulties for engineering students, and engineers as well.”

Although many students find it challenging, Lauzé’s take on the course would no doubt make his professor, Marianne Filion, proud. “A lot of my colleagues thought she was strict, but it was for good reasons. When you write a professional letter or a research paper, and there are a few things off, that’s all you need for someone to stop paying attention to what you’re saying. If you don’t present your ideas well, people won’t know how good your work is.”

Lauzé learned how to build an outline, enjoyed working with Endnote, an online citation guide available through the McGill Library, and felt the business proposal assignment was very relevant to his field. “My friends have start-ups. They’re smart, but you can’t do that if you don’t know how to talk to investors. Business students give so many presentations per semester; in engineering, you may present once in your whole undergrad. But if you want to develop an idea or start a company, communication skills are always relevant.”

Something that makes Lauzé’s win even more impressive is that English is his second language. “I went to an English high school, and I think that helped my writing skills. I’d like to stay in Montreal and work here. Engineering is tied to business, and English is the language of business, so this class is a good move.”