

[00:00:02.570] - Olivia S.

Hello, everyone. So this is going to be a roundtable discussion where three of my fellow students and I are going to be discussing the ExCELR option of the Quebec Studies department. First of all, let's quickly introduce ourselves. So, me, who is hosting the discussion: my name is Olivia Shan, I'm the current Coordinating Editor of the *McGill Daily*. Would you like to start?

[00:00:33.240] - Rebecca M.

Sure, why not? My name is Rebecca McFadyen. I'm a political science student here at McGill University. I'm in my fourth year and I have a minor in Quebec studies and in economics as well.

[00:00:45.090] - Olivia S.

Could you tell us also what you're thinking of pursuing following your graduation?

[00:00:50.250] - Rebecca M.

Well, tough question, but I'm not quite sure yet. I did really enjoy my work with community organizations, so that is definitely a sector that I'm looking to continue working in.

[00:01:01.700] - Olivia S.

Beautiful.

[00:01:02.870] - Kayleigh C.

So I'm Kayleigh Christensen. I just graduated from my bachelors at McGill in Sustainability, Science, and Society. In terms of future prospects, I'm looking to do a masters in urban planning and eventually become an urban planner of sorts.

[00:01:25.770] - Nina A.

And I'm Nina Arcuri. I'm a U3 history student with a minor in political science. For future plans, I'm trying to get a masters degree in teaching and hopefully continue to give a little bit back to the community.

[00:01:41.810] - Olivia S.

Beautiful. So these are our three guests. I also just wanted to give a very brief presentation of what the ExCELR program entails for listeners or readers who are not familiar with it yet. Basically, the Quebec Studies program at McGill University has this option for students who are interested in getting more involved in community organizations. It allows students to gain a deeper understanding of Montreal as a city outside of the classroom and gives great opportunities for students to apply their knowledge from their courses to actually contributing to local community organizations.

[00:02:35.410] - Olivia S.

All right, let's get to the questions then. I was wondering if you guys could tell me how did you first become aware of the option and especially what attracted you to signing up for it in the first place? So who would like to start?

[00:02:51.260] - Rebecca M.

I can start. So, for myself, I was looking for employment in Montreal during the summertime and I wanted to do work that I thought that I would feel proud of. I didn't want to work for a corporation or anything like that. And so I found the ExCELR program through the Quebec study site. And I thought that would be a great opportunity to be able to stay in Montreal over the summer and do something I'm actually passionate about.

[00:03:16.590] - Kayleigh C.

So I kind of discovered my interest in urban planning late in my degree, I would have liked to have done a minor in urban planning. So I was looking into it, and one of the course options for the minor is QCST 200, which is intro to Quebec studies. And first of all, I just thought that would be an interesting class. And then I was looking into it and realized that it had this integrated program— a community program. So that really drew me to the class— actually, it was one of the big reasons that I took it was because I wanted to do that program.

[00:04:03.470] - Nina A.

For myself, this had actually stemmed from a conversation that I was having with one of my profs regarding queer history, and by pure chance he thought of me during the conversation. Stephan needed someone to do a francophone part of the internship for the other person that was doing [the internship]. They were in the class and I submitted all my documents and they took me on basically right away in November. So I started a bit late, but I had the gist of the project and what this was meant to do, and I thought that this is an excellent opportunity to make research actually relevant to people's lives, especially a community that I care very deeply about, and I think is a great identifying feature of Montreal as well.

[00:04:58.110] - Olivia S.

Awesome. Now, I'd like to hear a bit more in depth your individual experiences, because all three of you interned or did volunteer work at different organizations. Do you want to start?

[00:05:15.700] - Rebecca M.

Yeah, I can start you off. I've actually done five of these, so, I have extensive experience.

[00:05:22.550] - Rebecca M.

There's the potential 6th on the way. But I started at the food bank, the Petit-Patrie Rosemont. I've also done work with the Peter-McGill Community Council, as well as an organization known as Apathy is Boring, which is they focus on youth becoming more politically involved. But most of my work has focused more on the food security side of things and food banks. So that's mainly been my type of work. And while I was there, [I did] multiple tasks with the more food oriented organizations. It could be something as simple as creating food baskets, or helping run a solidarity market, or the food bank. But I've also done some more research oriented things, like working with databases and collecting information for these organizations so that they could usually to start new projects or new initiatives that they were trying to get off the ground.

[00:06:24.810] - Olivia S.

Excellent.

[00:06:25.590] - Kayleigh C.

So, yeah, my experience, I guess, is kind of similar to yours in that I just did the one, though. I was at the Centre de ressources et d'action communautaire de la Petite-Patrie, which is essentially like a food bank, but they have a bunch of different projects that they do as well. And so my typical tasks, I want to say, were more with the actual very practical running of the food bank. So making baskets and then sorting through food and taking out the compost and stuff like that. But then also a big part of it was actually giving the food baskets to the members of the organization. And that, I think, was probably the most interesting part, was that those interactions with people who, in a normal context, I wouldn't really have a long interaction with or even see in my day to day life, especially like a food bank, which works with a lot of marginalized individuals. And so I think that's where I felt like, I guess what I was doing was the most change. It was bringing the most change because I could have these interactions with people and get to know them a little bit throughout the 40 hours that I did.

[00:08:08.270] - Nina A.

For myself. I worked at Fondation Émergence, which is an LGBTQ+ rights organization. And my job was to collect information on sensitivity training for police officers and see if any of these strategies employed by other people are things that we could use here in Quebec, because Émergence does a ton of sensitivity training and surveys and things like that. So as for tasks, I did a lot of, let's say, synthesization and trying to say, okay, this is how theory might be relevant. But then I realized, oh, no, this is not really relevant to the craft, and really got into the more practical efforts, and I organized everything in a big document like context: here's what they have done, here's what we can possibly do or apply. Linking documents, paperwork, kind of things like that. And I had the option to work on site and at home as well. So I did, like half and half. But either way, it was kind of just an office job. I was either on the office there or in my office at home.

[00:09:29.800] - Olivia S.
It was kind of a hybrid thing.

[00:09:31.080] - Nina A.
Exactly. Yeah.

[00:09:32.010] - Olivia S.
Interesting.

[00:09:35.130] - Kayleigh C.
I have a question.

[00:09:36.280] - Olivia S.
Yeah, go ahead.

[00:09:37.040] - Kayleigh C.
Could you explain what sensitivity training is?

[00:09:39.630] - Nina A.
Yeah. In this specific context, [sensitivity training] is how do we tell police officers how to interact with queer individuals. So a lot of it was all about vocabulary and just, like, very basic training. I remember talking to one of the people that had worked there, and it's like, if you want to start, I guess the word is "sensitized". People treat them as though they're like your dad or somebody's dad or grandpa. And it's like, okay, yeah, I totally get that. So it's just making them familiar with terms and concepts and how do you treat people respectfully. And how do you take complaints from people that, let's say, might have be in a domestic violence kind of relationship where both members are of the same gender? How do you approach that sort of thing?

[00:10:32.810] - Olivia S.
Great question. Thank you for that answer. I feel like there was such a variety in the organizations that you guys work with this past semester. I feel like for many students participating in the program, it's really their first time being exposed to and working so closely with on the ground with organizers and organizations who, like you guys said, are giving very practical help to our local communities. Were you guys feeling nervous or intimidated at all going into this process? And also, I'm excited to hear if you guys had any surprises across your internship at your respective organizations.

[00:11:25.120] - Olivia S.
Obviously, you weren't nervous because it was your fifth time.

[00:11:28.810] - Rebecca M.
Yeah, but I mean, for my first one, I definitely was. And honestly, even for the fifth one— it's a new job, it's a new environment. You're obviously still a little nervous. But it was definitely, for me in particular, it was the French aspect of it. I had never worked in such a bilingual environment before, in which I was really going to have to speak French almost daily and do work in French and write in French. So that was definitely a big difficulty for me and definitely a source of anxiety at first, but everyone was super nice and super comfortable and patient with me as I definitely improved my French. But at first it was tough. I think another thing is that when you first go in there, especially as a McGill student in particular, you kind of have this feeling that, oh, I'm going to go in there and I'm going to really help the organization. I'm really going to make a huge difference. And obviously you're there, you are making a difference. But Stephan talks about it a lot, the kind of pride and the hubris of McGill students thinking that they're going to be the one who's bringing this brand new idea to the organization and going there and realizing whatever you've thought of or whatever you've learned about, they've already thought of and they've already tried, or there's some sort of barrier in the way.

[00:12:45.540] - Rebecca M.
So realizing kind of like lowering your expectations or changing your expectations about how it's going to be and what your role is going to be in that organization was, I think, a really big part of

ExCELR and was really a learning curve, but a good learning curve. It's an important lesson. That's a lovely point.

[00:13:04.200] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah. No, I think I very much relate or experienced that myself. I like to think of myself as a humble person. But you still have this kind of idea going into it, and there's always certain expectations. And then once you're there, you kind of realize, for example, with Rebecca, she literally did my job. It's been done before. It will be done again by someone else. But then I think there's just, like, a process of kind of discovering other things that you can learn about, or maybe it seems like, smaller, but can often be more about positive experiences or stuff like that. And I think that, for me, in terms of whether or not [I was nervous] going into it, I'm reflecting on how I felt beforehand. I think similarly there was. There's always, like, a little bit of nerves going into, like, a new environment. And I think there is also, like, a question of, like, you know, wanting to do the right thing or not making mistakes. But I feel like the team or the people that I was working with helped make that transition really smooth. And I think one thing that I learned is that at a community organization, they need volunteers, and so they need to make the volunteers feel good and feel like they're doing things, because they *are*— they are contributing to the community.

[00:14:51.550] - Kayleigh C.

And so I kind of experienced the other side of that, where I was being validated by the people I was working with. And that felt really good and felt like I was making a contribution to the organization in a smaller way, perhaps, than when you think of it at first.

[00:15:18.070] - Nina A.

I wanted to give a little anecdote. I got a laugh out of one of the ExCELR meetings that we had done. And it was like, this is related to Rebecca's point about how we come in thinking, oh, we got great ideas, we're going to do great things. And I think the end lesson is, like, great things come with very small build up, and it's part of that process that you do something bigger, obviously. But we had a big research document, and because I wanted to show that, yeah, I'm working, I'm actually contributing to this (and my supervisor would review this word document) I would put like, oh, maybe we should review this thing and this thing and that thing. And at one point, I had put, maybe I should read some Michelle Foucault to understand how cops interact with gay people. And it's like, theoretically, it makes sense, right? And I talked to her. She's pursuing a master's or higher education, and she's like, yeah, you don't have to do that. Stay practical, stay normal with it. I'm like, okay, I get what we're doing here now.

[00:16:22.650] - Kayleigh C.

I totally understand.

[00:16:24.090] - Nina A.

And that was an awakening moment and it helped really cement the project. And it's like, okay, this is not like some abstract concept. You're here to help people that are in the community and the theory can stay there in the background and help fuel you. But in the end, it's like how you communicate to other people through language, how you speak to other people and how you make these changes material that really counts. And as for the question, I just want to go back to it because I wanted to describe a little experience that I had. Yeah, I had been a little bit nervous. I hadn't done an internship before, let alone at [an organization] like this. But when they were introducing me to the premises, they took me to the back warehouse room. It was just like a full archive of all the things they had done over the past 20 years. And Émergence came up with the International Day against homophobia and transphobia in 2003. They have all these documents and it's like, oh, even if you're just like a little part of this, it's really quite impressive and intimidating to be part of something that's just celebrated all over the world.

[00:17:33.810] - Nina A.

And it's like, wow, I'm here and I'm doing something. It's pretty impressive and intimidating, but you want to succeed at it anyways.

[00:17:43.190] - Olivia S.

Sure. And I had discussions about it with Stephan before and he told me how a program like ExCELR, when it was launched a few decades ago, it was a very radical, revolutionary idea and it took a lot of convincing, a lot of bureaucratic work, for it to even happen. And I wondered, especially since you all come from different majors—academically adjacent, but very different— I was wondering if you could maybe see an option like this becoming a model that can be replicated in other disciplines, in the faculty of Arts. And if so, how do you think that might help your experience as students? I was curious if you guys had thoughts on that.

[00:18:41.990] - Rebecca M.

I think absolutely it could be replicated in any other disciplines, especially in the arts and humanities. I think all these organizations, many of these organizations, would be happy to take people from various disciplines in terms of McGill as a school. Personally, I believe we should probably implement more on the spot, out of the classroom learning and perhaps like a co-op or internship programs to make this more viable options for people in various majors. I do think, obviously, as you just said, one of the things is that it does take a lot of time to get off the ground. There's a lot of bureaucratic stuff to get through to get a program like this off the ground. So I think we're a long ways away from it. And I think the other potential issue is the amount of organizations versus the amount of disciplines or people wanting to do this kind of experience in Montreal. Just because a lot of the placements that are offered through the Quebec studies, like the ExCELR placement, would also be very [competitive]. It would work very well with the history department, for example, or the political science department. So if it becomes a thing where they're all trying to poach the organizations to go with their program instead, I could see that being like a source of contention.

[00:20:00.660] - Rebecca M.

You don't want too many people trying to jump in the boat, but I definitely see the value in it. And I think more departments should try to take an approach where they get students out of the classroom.

[00:20:13.990] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah, 100% agree with that. I think it's especially interesting how this program is done by the Quebec studies department. But like we mentioned, I think at the beginning, but maybe we weren't recording, but Rebecca, you're the only one who's actually studying in Quebec studies. [It's great] just how it can bring in people from different backgrounds. And I think especially the way that Stephan has organized it, where the organizations are very much kind of social justice-oriented, in each their own different way. I think that as an overarching theme it can just be applied to so many the disciplines and [interest] so many people who are interested in making a change in that very ground up kind of way. I think for me particularly, I think [I wan] the only person coming from a slightly more science background or environment, and I thought that was interesting because I do know a lot of people in my program or in similar programs to mine who would be interested in this sort of thing. But I think diversifying it and bringing in more faculties and people from different backgrounds would just be enriching and I think there would be interest. The matter of putting in the work to make it happen, I think is challenging.

[00:21:59.470] - Olivia S.

And bringing more awareness [for the program option].

[00:22:01.360] - Kayleigh C.

Exactly. Yeah, for sure. That's super important. I guess it's part of what we're doing here.

[00:22:09.850] - Nina A.

At the risk of sounding a little bit radical, I almost feel like it's imperative to have these sorts of programs that are linking the academic world with the world that the everyday person lives in. Especially when you think about the decreasing relevance or decreasing enrollment in the humanities and arts that are happening these days. Well, this is coming for me, I work in an especially esoteric and annoying field—or I would like to—in history. And it's like you have to think about who is this for and what can I do to make it for other people. So even if you're just thinking about how soft skills might be relevant, the soft skills that you develop in arts and humanities programs, how that might be

relevant to community efforts and community building, then I think an internship is a good way to cement that. Yeah, I am worried about the way you said about the poaching. Maybe you don't want to throw all these children at internship programs and overwhelm them. But I really think that breaking down academia, and I hate saying like normal person, but that normal person barrier can only bring about good things because you have to give back somehow.

[00:23:33.670] - Nina A.

You have to make what you learned useful to someone else at some point and it can only bring about good things.

[00:23:41.830] - Olivia S.

Yeah, I couldn't agree more, actually.

[00:23:45.530] - Kayleigh C.

I also think that a lot of students have that feeling of wanting to give back and wanting to perhaps get involved with Montreal as a community outside of the very specific McGill space, but they just don't know how. And I think that making it more easily accessible or aware, raising awareness is really important.

[00:24:15.750] - Nina A.

And for what it's worth, I didn't know that this internship program existed at all until my prod had recommended it to me. So I think, I don't know if there are already posters up, so maybe that's my own fault. But yes, and more advertisement for this kind of stuff might be a little step forward. It's there, you can give back. It's useful for you. You can do it.

[00:24:36.110] - Olivia S.

Yeah, absolutely. Not to self-insert myself a little bit, but I definitely think this should be a more expanded option in many other disciplines. And I think it's a shame how in many majors, students that want to get more involved, want to get involved in organizations and contribute to their community, are having to do all that hard work themselves in their extracurricular time. And it's great that some people are doing that and are managing to do that on top of coursework, but again, I think it's great that the ExCELR program is there to kind of integrate that within the university [programs]. Oh, did you want to say something?

[00:25:24.710] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah, just about that specifically. And I think that there's also a way in which having a specific program enriches the experience and enriches the ability of the students us to contribute. And also what we get out of the experience in turn, is more rich when you have a certain level of encadrement where you have experts in the community who can do workshops. That part of the experience, I think definitely elevated it, made it deeper.

[00:26:10.240] - Olivia S.

I think absolutely, one complements the other.

[00:26:13.020] - Rebecca M.

Right.

[00:26:13.400] - Olivia S.

And elevates the other. And, in my conversations with Stephan, too, we discussed how McGill is kind of this illustrious flagship academic location, right, but McGill is also situated in Montreal and in Quebec, and that also has its own context and its own history. And maybe it should be part of a school's curriculum to also teach students about the city where McGill is located, to be connected to that city outside of academia. And also it might also be part of professors' responsibilities to instigate opportunities for that and for deeper reflection. So I was wondering, for our non-Montreal natives, but also for people like me who are native to Montreal, do you think this whole experience has allowed you to kind of think differently or have a different relationship or perspective of the city?

[00:27:27.920] - Rebecca M.

Yeah, absolutely. I think it kind of goes back to what we were just saying about McGill students getting out there and kind of escaping that McGill bubble, where you don't leave the two kilometer radius outside of the university, where you get closer to the city and you get closer to the people. And it does give you a different perspective and a deeper appreciation for the place that you're living in, the community you're living in. And I think it would really help. I mean, right now, there's definitely some tensions between Quebec and McGill or the anglophone community here in Montreal and Quebec in general. And I think opportunities such as ExCELR and kind of getting more involved with the more francophone community, escaping that McGill bubble and being less isolated, as you said, right in the heart of Montreal by spreading out through the ExCELR. I think it's really good for the Quebec-McGillian relationship, and it just helps you grow a lot as a person, you learn a lot, and really, I think it just gives you a richer university experience to get involved with the community around you and talk to someone older than 25.

[00:28:43.750] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah, I think for myself, being from Montreal, I guess the two kilometer radius was never the case because I'm commuting to get to school. But I still very much have circles that I run in, and a lot of my friends are from high school and even particularly, like, I went to an anglophone high school. So I am kind of in specific areas of the city where my friends are, where there's more anglophones. And so I think being part of even being from Montreal still brought in my experience of the city and gave me a richer understanding of the city that I've lived my whole life in. So I think it goes to show how much there is to learn from the various community organizations that ExCELR offers. And I really treasure that experience because I love the city and I think I'm always looking for ways to discover more about. So I'm super glad I had that opportunity.

[00:30:06.450] - Nina A.

For me, it's kind of echoing what Kaylee said. I'm from Montreal, but still within my own little cultural anglophone bubbles. And to be able to, I don't know, supersede that and go work for internship at Fondation Émergence really enlightened me to the colorful aspect, especially queer aspect of Montreal and how integral that was to the city's identity. Like, I knew it already, but I hadn't been integrated with it before, especially on such a close level, to see how all these internal mechanisms are working to make that aspect of Montreal so interesting and very iconic of it. But yeah, I thought that was very fulfilling to have that integration between myself and my city, which I had not had previously.

[00:31:18.570] - Olivia S.

Awesome. Yeah. I feel like we've been kind of talking on this theme for a while now, but I was wondering if you guys had additional comments about the value of bringing students out of classroom, of having a more hands on approach to academia, when academia is famously kind of anti that in many ways. If you guys have any more comments, we could also discuss them.

[00:31:47.650] - Rebecca M.

Don't want to get too repetitive, but yeah, I think it's really important to get out of the classroom and to actually experience these things. It definitely gives you a new perspective about what you're learning in the classroom and how these things actually look in real life. I mean, the academics in the ivory tower thing is no myth. It's really, truly there. It's easy to say these things at a classroom, but to see them in practice is different. I think it's good work experience in terms of like, you're going to learn skills that you wouldn't be able to learn in the classroom, right? Like communication and how to deal with this trouble in the workspace. That's not something you can exactly learn in the classroom. So I think it's extremely important to get us out there and to go actually talk to people in working.

[00:32:33.570] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah. I think what I noticed at first was definitely that life is just more complicated than you seem to think in school. And I think especially in the context of community work, you come to learn that people who work in this field are super driven, super passionate, and are doing great work. And some of that is just like menial tasks. I was just cleaning the coolers because you got to put the yogurt in the coolers, and it's like, obviously the people who are running the organization don't do that, but there's

just these things that have to get done for real help to come to people. And I think learning that was like a big thing for me and that I just want to encounter it in a classroom context.

[00:33:48.190] - Rebecca M.

I want to add really quickly, though, too, is that sometimes they actually do have to do those really minor tasks. Sometimes you see the director of the food bank or the CISA just like washing coolers. Sometimes if they don't have the volunteer or the manpower to do it, you're trying to do all the administrative stuff while also doing the minor stuff. So it's a weird dynamic you have in community organizations sometimes.

[00:34:12.420] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah, but I think that's how they're able to do their job, is to have that [in community organizations]. And that's how this practical thing where people who don't have access to food come here and get food. And that whole process requires the people involved to be flexible and to be accepting of stuff like that. But then also, I think it goes to show how everyone I encountered at the organization was just so driven and passionate for what they were doing and to help people. And I think that it's really something that fuels people in the community and gets them through such menial jobs, but also is really inspiring to see.

[00:35:14.950] - Nina A.

Yeah, I think those sorts of menial tasks, when you see the end product of what this does for the community, it's like, oh, this has value. It's not just a nonsense task, and it's definitely not something that's ever beneath you. It's a necessity that you have to participate in.

[00:35:34.330] - Olivia S.

Absolutely. Thank you for those additional comments. Those are great. The next question would be, what do you think are your biggest takeaways from your experiences? I know that's a kind of big question, but also I would like specifically, I'm interested in hearing about your individual futures and your careers. Do you think these takeaways would be relevant in your career and how they would be relevant, and how are you going to utilize them for the rest of your lives? So, yeah, I know this is kind of a big question, thinking about the future, which we all hate to do, but some things that I've already picked up, like the humility, kind of realizing how complex it is to concretize theoretical notions, and that it requires so much logistical and even menial labor that you wouldn't consider if you weren't actually on the ground doing those things. I was wondering if you had anything to add.

[00:36:46.370] - Rebecca M.

I kind of want to go back to what you were saying about flexibility because I think that's one of the main takeaways I took, is that especially in community work and community organizations, there's so many barriers, there's so many things that can go wrong and will go wrong no matter how good your plan is. You're going to have to be flexible. Things are dynamic, they're going to be changing constantly. You might lose funding, you might lose an employee. You don't know what's going to happen. Too many volunteers can call in sick. It could be something as simple as that. So I think a big thing I learned is that in whatever career you're in, whatever employment, you need to be adaptable to whatever challenges come your way. And in community organizations, those can be some very big challenges, which I think goes to the second thing I learned, which is specifically for this sector, which is like social work and community organization, I think perseverance is a really big one as well, which is that sometimes the impacts you make, it might feel like you're failing. You've been working with an organization for a while, but food insecurity is rising in Montreal.

[00:38:05.530] - Rebecca M.

You might start to doubt yourself and start to doubt your work and think, what's the point of any of this? I think especially in this sector, it's a big thing, is to keep your head up high. Even if something doesn't work out or if maybe a small task failed, you have to just keep going and tread forward and find a different way for path.

[00:38:27.650] - Kayleigh C.

I think my biggest takeaway from my experience is the importance of *people*, which I think depends

on who you are as an individual. But I think for myself, I've learned that what I want to be doing in the future will involve working with other people and working with other people who are passionate about what they're doing. Because I think my experience in the community sector is that there's a lot of challenges involved. People often are not paid as well as they should be, and funding is always this recurring question that's really challenging, but that's not why people are there. People have genuine intentions to help their community, and that makes the work that I was doing so much fun. And so not always, I guess, pure fun, but just very positive because everyone is there because they want to be there. And then that's in terms of who I was working with, I guess, in the organization, but also the interactions that I had with the actual members themselves, like the people who would come to pick up the food baskets. It was like this very immediate sense of this person now can eat and they're grateful, and they show their gratefulness to you. Even though I'm just a small piece in the organization that made it happen that they could have this food for the next few weeks. And I think that really energized me and made me excited to go back and to continue, I guess, helping people in that sense.

[00:40:36.650] - Nina A.

I think my biggest takeaway from this internship was that I learned the centrality of asking, "who is this for?" Whenever I'm doing mostly research based and paperwork, and it's like, okay, for what purpose? To what end am I doing this for? And it's to help a marginalized community that I care deeply about. And this is going to have an actual material effect on people's lives. So it made me think about, who is this for and how do I communicate to it, so this is actually effective. And considering that I want to go into teaching, I think this communicative aspect is so important because, yes, it's a lot of reading textbooks and such, but you have to pull out and synthesize this information. I would be teaching teenagers and telling them how is this important to you? How is this relevant to you? What is this going to teach you, and how does it help you perform as a member of society? And I think that's pretty applicable to most sort of theoretical things. [...] So, yes, trying to figure out the ends of theory, how to make theory useful for people.

[00:42:09.050] - Olivia S.

So we're coming down nearer to the end of our lovely discussion. [...] Let's move on to my last question for you guys. The purpose of this little kind of roundtable podcast is mainly for the students and maybe the organizations or the program directors who might be interested in taking on something like this for their own means. I'm wondering if you guys have any words of advice for anyone listening to this who is considering taking on the ExCELR program or hesitating to take it on.

[00:43:11.790] - Kayleigh C.

Go for it.

[00:43:13.310] - Nina A.

If you have nothing to lose and everything to gain, just go for it.

[00:43:17.760] - Rebecca M.

Yeah, I'd say you won't regret it. And if time management is a concern, [...] these organizations are flexible and they understand that you're a student, and so they're willing to be accommodating to the fact that you are on a student schedule and there might be a week where you have midterms where you're crazy busy and you can't do as much work. So it's an accommodating program that is flexible to your needs as well as the organization's needs, which I think is really one of the super big positives of it. So I highly recommend doing it.

[00:43:52.810] - Kayleigh C.

Yeah, I think if you have the opportunity, I don't think you should hesitate to take it because it is at this stage so well organized, and so there are people who will help you along the way if ever any issues come up with interpersonal issues, for example, with your supervisor, with other people you're working with. Stephan and other people who run the ExCELR program are super aware and ready to help you through stuff like that and present for questions.

[00:44:47.950] - Olivia S.

Stephan is the QST professor who organizes this whole thing, by the way, I should maybe have introduced him 50 minutes ago, but Stephan is a hugely passionate about the ExCELR program, and he's very open about it.

[00:45:05.250] - Nina A.

Yeah, basically echoing what you guys have said, it's a very welcoming program. Everyone that I've worked with has been super accommodating, super nice. Even if you're a little bit nervous at starting something, you just fall into the groove of it and, yeah, it's nothing to be afraid of. Go for it. It's going to be a wonderful experience.

[00:45:26.570] - Olivia S.

All right, well, those are all my questions. Thank you so much for sitting with me and having this wonderful discussion. I think it's a great way to obviously, hopefully help the program expand eventually and grow, but also I think it's a lovely kind of token of your individual experiences of the program. So, yeah, thank you so much.

[00:45:56.390] - Rebecca M.

Thank you for having us.