



October 27, 2013

RySciMatch 2014: Creating Undergraduate Research Opportunities for the Next Generation of Experiential Learners

C&B Press – Getting off to a good start is an important advantage in any field of study or competition. Ryerson's SciMatch program has been created to do just that. Affectionately known as "RySciMatch" this non-credit, certificate course is offered to Ryerson undergraduate students who are interested in acquiring research experience.

The program recruits senior undergraduate volunteers, as well as alumni and faculty members, to formally mentor current undergrad students (mentees) on research opportunities in the Faculty of Science. The program involves helping mentees identify their interests, educating them on the research areas and opportunities within the faculty, helping them critically analyze the literature in their related fields, and develop networking skills, etc.



Ryerson Alumni:
Ahmad Sidiqi

RySciMatch was initiated by an enthusiastic former undergraduate of the Chemistry and Biology Department, Ahmad Sidiqi. Now in graduate school at the University of Toronto, Ahmad is still keenly involved in the development of the program. "Ahmad has been a strong supporter of this idea since it's inception more than a year ago," said Dr. Bryan Koivisto "he has lobbied and solicited feedback from all levels, and now we are ready to launch this program in the Winter of 2014."

One of the challenges in offering such a program is to find the volunteers, and make sure that it offers something for all people involved. "Students are looking to participate and make a difference, so there are always a large number willing to volunteer, but there needs to be a carrot for the Faculty members to participate as well." said Dr. Koivisto, "Faculty members benefit from such a research 'bootcamp', because the training given to the students during these sessions, better prepares them for research in a laboratory environment, and any student who gains the certificate has demonstrated a level of commitment necessary work on a research project."

"SciMatch is a program where students, will have the opportunity to work in the research labs here at Ryerson. Not only is this a great way to gain hands-on experience on the theories you're studying in class, but it also helps you build work experience, gain references from professors, and potentially make money in the process. There is so much for students to gain, and it is an amazing experience." said Ahmad Sidiqi. "Those students who come out to training sessions display the level of commitment necessary to begin working in their field of interest."

Table 1: CHY142 (2nd Year Organic Chemistry) Students interested in RySciMatch*

Students by Discipline	Number of Students (% of group)	Students by Year	Number of Students
Chemistry	13 (53%)	2nd Year	86
Medical Physics	20 (53%)	3rd Year	14
Biology	63 (48%)	4th Year	6
Contemporary Science	3 (27%)		
Mathematics	2 (66%)		
Total	108 (51%)		

**poll conducted on Oct. 7, 2013*

The program, at a glance, will have 10 modular sessions regularly throughout the semester, and students will need to attend 8 sessions to get the certificate. Sessions will be hosted by the RSS and Course Unions, but the modular sessions include;

- 1) Volunteering Opportunities and Time Management
- 2) Gradschool 101 and Career Goals - Where do you want to be in 5-10 years?
- 3) Undergraduate Grants and Funding Opportunities
- 4) Interviewing and Networking Skills
- 5) Laboratory Safety - WHMIS, biosafety, etc.
- 6) Computer Resources - Reviewing Literature and Endnote-like databases
- 7) Technical writing - Curriculum Vitae, cover letters, project descriptions/abstracts
- 8) Research at Ryerson 101
- 9) Project development 101 - taking your research project by the horns!
- 10) Research Shadowing - What it means to be a mentor/mentee!

In addition, we will have students spend 1 hour, in two different labs shadowing an undergraduate thesis student or graduate student, to gain an increased exposure to the lab environment.

"SciMatch is an amazing opportunity for any science student that is interested in furthering their career in research, or is even considering the idea." says Ryerson Science Society President Jessica Machado, "Students would be able to explore their interests and apply their knowledge under the supervision of an upper year undergraduate or graduate student and professor. SciMatch is also a program that prepares students with skills that can be applied extensively and ranges from time management to project development."

Scimatch will begin in January 2014. To register and for more information see the respective links below.

Mentee - <https://docs.google.com/a/ryerson.ca/forms/d/1ElMPeDZ0uuHupmGZ63vtjTurMGnplGVw7DDChKt0zxY/edit?usp=sharing>

Mentor - <https://docs.google.com/a/ryerson.ca/forms/d/1gZOrCCsqgBHPIM85BIR8kwGZYREhG0PLVQg-kv2jII/edit?usp=sharing>