

LETTER FROM THE VADA PROGRAM PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR



Greetings – I hope you find yourself well and hopefully not too stir-crazy as we make our way through a very unexpected 2020.

We are now in the midst of the fourth year of the VADA Program, which means coming up to another round of reporting to our funder NSERC. While COVID-19 has presented

challenges to program delivery, I am proud of how the program has pivoted and continued to carry out its mandate in the face of so much uncertainty. I want to congratulate our faculty and students on their resilience and dedication the last few months. As a program we were fortunate to be well-situated for the shift to remote learning and have benefitted from affiliated faculty carrying out a variety of impactful COVID-19 research, much of which VADA Program students were able to learn about through the Summer School. Many of the student internship placements this year have also shifted to focus on or include work around COVID-19 or applied research and we are excited to learn more about how students have been able to contribute.

Our goal for the summer is to support the numerous international students to whom admission into the VADA Program was offered, but for whom uncertainty remains around if they will be able to join us in the Fall. We are certain that we will be able to continue delivering our program and do our best to continue improving the quality of our program, as we see through great learning outcomes and internship positions secured by our students along with help from our partners.

I wish you all a healthy 2020 and hope to see you all in person soon!

2020 Internship Placements

Most VADA Program students are now in the midst of their internships. Many placements are being completed remotely; both hosts and trainees have adapted quickly to the change in venue. Placements this year include:

Dillon Chimes	Global Health Informatics Group –Oxford University
Azizur Rahman	Healthy Child Manitoba Office
Yudi Santoso	Vancouver Island Health Authority
Jillian Rumore	Biochemistry and Medical Genetics – University of Manitoba
Qian Liu	Database and Data Mining Lab – University of Manitoba
Adriana-Stafania Ciupeanu	Sanofi
Simon Minshall	SUNY
Aaron Petkau	Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences - McMaster University
Lexy Anderson	Yukon Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health
Barret Monchka	Department of Radiology - University of Manitoba

Walid Shaiket	British Columbia Ministry of Health
Songwan Joun	Providence Health Care
Samar Sallam	Department of Psychology – University of Manitoba
Ruiyuan Yao	College of Pharmacy – University of Manitoba
Molly Pratt	British Columbia Centre for Disease Control
Yang Guo	Mathematics & Statistics - University of Saskatchewan
Ritesh Udhani	School of Engineering – Simon Fraser University
Amr Farghali	Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada

Our next newsletter will focus on several of these placements.

Internship Dispatch : Lexy Anderson



I completed my internship as a Public Health Officer (Student) with the Public Health Agency of Canada. I was placed at the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health in Whitehorse, Yukon under the supervision of the Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Catherine Elliott. I was originally hired to update a report on intentional self-injury and suicide in Yukon but given the timing of my internship (February-May 2020), I also had the valuable opportunity to contribute to Yukon's COVID-19 response. As a public health student, working as part of an interdisciplinary team during a global pandemic was a great learning opportunity. From mid-March to May 2020, I was the lead on the COVID-19 modelling efforts in Yukon. I knew very little about mathematical modelling before this work experience. I learned a lot through the connections I made with modelers from across Canada who were very willing to partner with us and share their expertise. I would highly recommend that all future VADA students consider taking an internship opportunity away from home. It was extremely rewarding to meet so many new people and to explore a region of Canada that I had never been to. I am thankful



that as part of the VADA Program, I was able to participate in such a rewarding internship placement.

Summer School

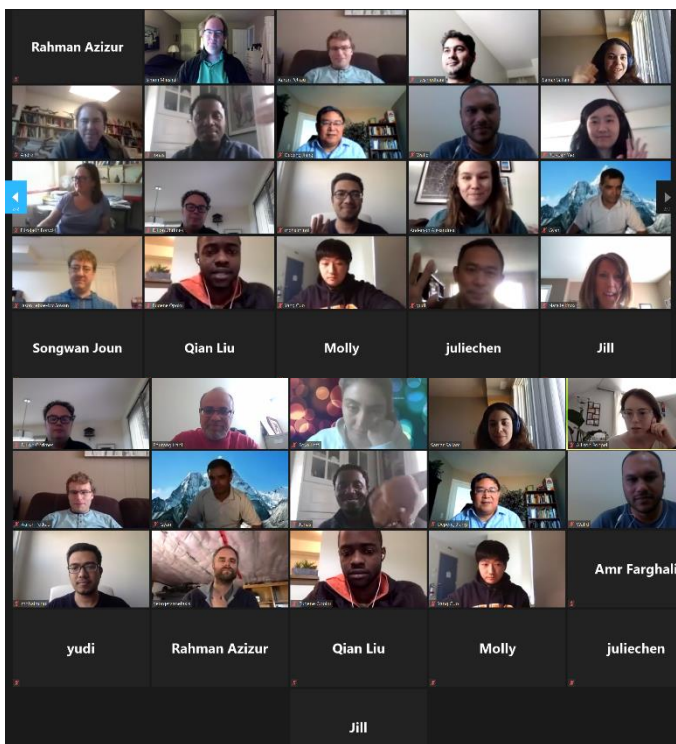
The 2020 VADA Program Summer School looked a little different this year due to the appearance of COVID-19. Rather than gathering in person, the school was moved online and took place over three days, from June 2nd – 4th 2020. Students took part in research presentations workshops on machine learning, COVID-19 analytics and visualization as well as sessions on project management and CV development. Some sessions were recorded and will be shared at a later date. Many VADA Program faculty participated by leading sessions or judging student research presentations. Students recognized for their research presentations included:

- Roya Lotfi
- Guo Yang
- Naomi Hamm
- Jill Rumore
- Simon Minshall
- Samar Sallam
- Jonas Bambi
- Molly Pratt
- Qian Liu
- Amr Farghali

The Summer School also was a chance to mark completion of the program for a number of students:

- Simon Minshall
- Aaron Petkau
- Lexy Anderson
- Barret Monchka
- Songwan Joun
- Ritesh Udhani
- Walid Shaiket
- Samar Sallam
- Ruiyuan Yao
- Molly Pratt
- Guo Yang

We wish them all the best in their future endeavours!



Pictured: The final group photo taken at summer school 2020

Stipend Increases

The VADA Program has incurred a surplus in previous years and will be increasing student stipend amounts for incoming students. MSc stipends will increase to \$19 000 from \$16 000 and PhD stipends will increase from \$19 000 to \$23 000.

COVID-19 and the VADA Program

The VADA Program has created a repository of data resources related to COVID-19 that may be of interest to current trainees, alumni and faculty. It will be updated periodically; requests for additions can be sent to allison.poppel@umanitoba.ca. Repository information can be found here - <http://vada.cs.umanitoba.ca/home/covid-19-and-the-vada-program/>

Conference Funding

In recognition of the impact that COVID-19 has on student travel to attend conferences and workshops, the VADA Program will be extending the deadline to use the \$500 allotted to each student to support conference-related expenses. Current students now have until the end of August 2021 to use their allocated funds for conference registration (including for online conferences), travel expenses, and accommodation expenses.

Funding requests cannot be made retroactively. Students interested in applying can contact Allison to request an application form.

RECENT STUDENT PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS

- **Qian Liu (University of Manitoba)** has received the Mindel Rady Olenick Fellowship in Human Genetics. Congratulations Qian!
- **Ritesh Udhani (University of Manitoba)** had a paper published in the 2020 Augmented Human conference proceedings entitled "Limb-O: Real-Time Comparison and Visualization of Lower Limb Motions". Well done Ritesh!