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BY DAVE HALL STAR BUSINESS REPORTER

# Program unites student, Dainty Foods

A University of Windsor graduate student is taking advantage of a new provincially funded internship program designed to move more students from the classroom into workplaces for hands-on training.

Sarina Turner, who is preparing her master's thesis on warehousing and distribution system optimization, is spending four months at Dainty Foods on the city's far west side, helping streamline the company's supply chain management system.

"It's invaluable experience and it neatly ties in with my master's thesis subject matter, so it's a perfect fit," said Turner, an engineering student who already has experience working at Dainty as part of an undergraduate co-op program.

Turner joined Dainty as a third-year student about 18 months ago and helped the company improve its production efficiencies.

"Sarina did a terrific job for us and we kept her on for a couple of days a week after the co-op program ran out," said Terry Henderson, president and CEO of Dainty Foods.

"When she came to us recently and explained how this new program would work, we thought it was a great idea."

Dubbed Accelerate Ontario, the program is funded by the province and the participating companies. It is designed to help move students from the classroom into the workforce for hands-on experience. It also enables businesses to benefit from new and innovative skill sets.

The graduate research internship program was created by MITACS, a national research network that connects Canadian researchers with companies and other organizations to solve key business and social challenges.

"I was looking for a way to fund my research and complete my master's when I came across this program and it seemed to be exactly what I was looking for," said Turner. "I presented it to Dainty and they liked the idea."

More than 1,700 internships will be made available across the province in such fields of study as engineering, urban planning, political science, geography, mathematics, business, environmental studies, architecture, veterinary studies, biology and computer science over the next four years.

"This program will show the province's graduate students that their research expertise is readily applicable to the new challenges experienced by the province's businesses, from furthering the development of a new technology or product to improving daily operations," said Arvind Gupta, scientific director of MITACS.

Dainty Foods is one of at least eight Ontario companies participating in the program.

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