
My journey to get into SHAD wasn't the cleanest or perfect in any way. When I was applying to SHAD, I knew I had very little chance of getting into the program. I withheld a 87% average, with all my STEM courses being lower than my average. For extracurriculars, I had nothing in terms of athletic and artistic accomplishments. My only commitments were to student leadership conferences which had paled in comparison to the people who had vast experiences in student experiences. I knew that I'd most likely be cut from the program, but I still held on to the little hope that I could redeem myself with the supplementary long answer questions. I tried the hardest I could possibly do at the time on them, and it worked- I got wait-listed! For me it was far better than not being in at all. Months passed until I received an e-mail in late March saying that SHAD would not accept anymore wait-listed candidates unless unforeseen circumstances happen to substitute me with another SHAD. During the first week of June, I received a call from Cheryl Thompson offering me a position to attend SHAD Carleton 2015. I was ecstatic, but I knew that it was a pipe dream for me as my family didn't have the financial means to take me to SHAD.

No matter what, I felt that financial support wouldn't come simply because I was one of the last SHAD's that had been accepted. But I decided to give it a shot regardless, so I didn't have any regrets later on in the future. Contacting for financial support provided me \$1000 in bursaries, but that certainly wasn't enough for my family's current financial situation. It turned out that the revenue report that was requested from SHAD was the last year my father was employed, boasting a higher income than the one we now possess. Reapplying with the most recent revenue form provided my family a total of \$3000 in bursaries, which was still on the higher end for my family. After much deliberation, my family decided to send me to SHAD knowing that the cost of the program fee may be too high for them to manage.

I entered SHAD with the mindset knowing that this was a do or die month. I needed to go above and beyond my current abilities to have made it anywhere close to the investment my family put on me. Although I was always a person who wasn't exceptionally proficient at STEM courses, I had to immerse myself within all the workshops and lectures to understand the content that may appear easier to others. I firmly believed that I was nowhere near the caliber that SHAD desired, but I'd do everything in my power to try to attain the level of proficiency required. All of my worries about inferiority and belief that the other SHAD's would ostracize me were dispelled when I had set foot inside the Prescott house in Carleton University. The people there were truly special, both the staff and SHAD's were incredibly open, positive and reserved any negative judgement. It was a remarkable month in every way, shape, and form. From the insightful lectures and highly insightful workshops, to the excitement of camping and exploring Downtown Ottawa- SHAD had the perfect balance between working hard and playing hard. Everyday was filled with something new for all of us, and over time- shy, introverted SHAD's opened up to everyone. Even though houses divided us, all 52 SHAD's and staff united to be family for an uncommon purpose. One that seemed intangible and unattainable but it became all the more realistic as days progressed. The idea of creating an ideal society was created at the end of SHAD, a pipe dream that was brought to real life. While the dream ends when the dreamer awakens, the dreamer will always be captivated by an afterthought, and recreate the dream into reality. The afterthought I had that carried on when I left the program was a jenga block having the word "halcyon" written on it.

Being SHAD #52 felt nothing to be ashamed of after the first couple of days. Although I felt I wouldn't be of use during the design project or any of the STEM activities, the open environment of the people I worked with always allowed me to find a niche to be part of. Knowing that SHAD was a do or die month for me, I opened up to everyone right from the get go, in aspirations of having a memorable experience with everyone at SHAD and to personally know them for something special. I tried my best to lead with example to make an impression on everyone. I was the master of my days at SHAD, and I made sure that no one could stop me. My efforts for giving it my all from the beginning were rewarded after winning

SHAD Carleton's design project and becoming the group's liaison for the project at national's. As well, the staff made me speak at the Carleton banquet as they believed I was a person who best described the program by example. After speaking in the banquet about my financial troubles, I was rewarded another \$1000 in bursaries, totaling it up to \$4000. This made it far more accessible for my family to pay off the program fee.

Exiting SHAD, I've learned an innumerable amount of lessons. And now I bring back to my community unrivaled passion for student leadership, dedication, and resilience to make it out of any situation I've been entrenched in. I'm doing everything in my power as design project liaison to make Carleton's team successful for the National SHAD cup. As of now, I'm working part-time to repay the reduced fee to my family. Although this may sound like a burden, I'm grateful that the generosity of the Ontario Ministry of Education has provided me a way of accepting new responsibilities in order to develop as a mature person. As a new SHAD fellow, I will do everything in my power to make sure that your investment in me was all the worthwhile, because I know that without this experience I would only see despair in my family's situation. Because of SHAD, I've seen the light that excellence should never be barred by financial barriers, that there can always be a diamond in the rough. At SHAD I learned that:

Good people are not those that lack flaws,
The brave are not those who feel no fear,
And the generous are not those who never feel selfish
Extraordinary people are not extraordinary because they are invulnerable to uncouth bias
They are extraordinary because they decided to do something about it.

The point of SHAD is to come back with an uncommon purpose, with a unique network of individuals. But this doesn't mean we should limit it to the community of SHAD fellows. I will do my part as a SHAD fellow to show other students in my community the window of SHAD. Some of them might be like me, where when I could only see the floor, it's others who made my window a door. I will do my best to make a positive impact on their lives and show them the impact SHAD can have on them in order to expand the network of people to share this uncommon purpose with. In pursuit of "halcyon", it is imperative to cultivate leadership within the minds of the youth and to make them seek the change they so desire. In our lives we have to choose to be the layer of the bricks that seal our fate, or to be the architect of what beauty we might create.

And so I thank the Ministry for allowing me to change the direction of my path, from sealing my fate into become this architect. And I hope you are able to support others just like me, because I guarantee you we will do anything in our power to achieve greatness.

Many thanks,

SHAD Carleton 2015 Alumni and proud SHAD Fellow