

Algonquin Business Students Focus on Grenville Mutual Insurance **By Diana Fisher**

On February 14th 2008, Grenville Mutual hosted the Graduating Business Class from Algonquin College. They will be completing their program with an in-depth study on the HR practices of Grenville Mutual, ultimately bringing forward their own ideas on HR strategies for the Company.

Grenville was formed in 1892 with annual premiums of just over 13.3 million dollars, located 30 minutes south of Ottawa in Spencerville Ontario. This is an example of a story that will appear in local publications.



The graduating class of Ottawa Algonquin College Business students toured the head office of Grenville Mutual Insurance in Spencerville recently, in an example of community involvement that was mutually beneficial.

The school bus of thirty students emptied into the boardroom first thing in the morning, where they were greeted by General Manager Ross Lincoln.

“People are the most important part of any successful company,” Lincoln expounded. “At Grenville Mutual, we encourage our employees to maintain a strong balance between work and life.”

“We also ensure that a good Human Resources guideline structure is in place, which provides even our small staff with a sense of fairness and a feeling of security and stability.”

The class featured a specialization in Human Resources, and their focus on Grenville Mutual was definitely HR-based. This field trip was designed to provide students with material for their major project within the course.

Lincoln went on to explain that employees at Grenville Mutual are supported in their activities as good corporate citizens, believing that any positive endeavour can only increase morale and satisfaction in the workplace. The small head office in Spencerville maintains visibility in the community through an active relationship with 4-H in Eastern Ontario, and hopes that this partnership with Algonquin continues into the future.

After introductions, the class was divided into six teams, each one researching a different topic under the banner of Human Resources: Restructuring; Outsourcing; Staffing; Succession Training & Talent Management; Culture; Mergers and Acquisitions.

While the office continued daily operations, each team took a turn touring the facility and directing questions to the Team Leaders and Staff.

At the end of the interviews, the students gathered again in the boardroom to compare notes over some refreshments.

Class spokesperson Kelsey Cloutier highlighted some of the benefits of studying Business at Algonquin: “I like the hands-on aspect and the practical work experience we receive.” Most Algonquin instructors also work in the field, providing valuable current insight to students about the industry.



Another plus to learning at Algonquin is the smaller class size. “There’s more one-on-one with the instructors,” Cloutier explains. “They know your name, and they have more time to show concern and interest in your success.”

And why the HR specialization? “There is a social aspect to HR that I like, and there is also a growing need for HR specialists. With all of the baby boomers retiring, there will be a shortage of HR people by about 2013,” Cloutier predicted.



One of Cloutier’s classmates explained that he chose to take a Human Resources program at Algonquin - after already earning a Business Commerce degree at university - in order to gain an “insider’s perspective”. The biggest challenge that graduates have, he explained, is a lack of experience. The Algonquin HR program offers firsthand knowledge of the industry combined with work experience that is invaluable to its students. The field trip to Grenville Mutual was an extremely productive example of Algonquin’s cooperative work experience in action.