

How did you get that job?

This question, and others, are answered by 15 projects supported by the Graduate Community Building Fund

April 26, 2016 | By J. Latimer



From left: Keynote speaker Sherin Al-Safadi with Arun Dayanandan. | Photos by Franco Alo Photography

Seven biology graduates, seven different careers.

From a medical science liaison officer to a lab technician and a CEGEP professor, seven alumni from Concordia's [Department of Biology](#) returned to be panellists at the inaugural edition of [Beyond Books](#), a career-development and community-building discussion on March 16.

“We were happy to see how intergenerational it was and that we attracted more than 100 people from across all levels — undergrad, graduate, PhD and alumni,” says Arun Dayanandan, a third-year biology student and chair of the organizing committee.

“We hope we created something that can be used by many departments, not just biology, to network and build their own communities.”

The Graduate Community Building Fund at work

Beyond Books was one of 15 projects that received support from Concordia's new [Graduate Community Building Fund](#).

Launched earlier this year to foster intellectual communities across graduate programs at the university, the fund provides up to \$5,000 to student-driven projects that have the support of [graduate program directors](#).



From left: Alumna Caroline Bilhete with Sandra Chiovitti, quality assurance manager for InSymbiosis.

“The Graduate Community Building Fund is doing exactly what we intended — allowing students to interact with peers, professors and experts outside their immediate academic setting,” says Paula Wood-Adams, dean of Graduate Studies.

“The goal is for attendees to learn and create networks that will benefit both their present research and future careers.”

Dayanandan and his student organizing committee augmented their support from the Graduate Community Building Fund with sponsorship from the Department of Biology, the Biology Graduate Student Association, the Biology Student Association and the Office of the Vice-President of Research and Graduate Studies.

“Beyond Books is an excellent platform for students to hear about other people’s professional experiences,” says [Selvadurai Dayanandan](#), professor and graduate program director for the Department of Biology, and the project’s faculty mentor. “They got the chance to ask, ‘How did you get that job?’”

He says the initiative responds to one of the department’s main goals, which is to build mentorship — matching undergraduates with master’s students and alumni,

One panellist was Robert Carson, a Concordia alum who works as a teaching and instrumentation laboratory technician with the Department of Biology. “Life can be long but it’s even longer if you don’t love what you do,” he said during the panel discussion.

The evening wrapped up after a buffet dinner, featuring locally sourced food, Quebec wine and fair-trade tea and coffee.

“We wanted it to be a sustainable and fun event,” says Arun Dayanandan. “I think we succeeded.”

Apply for the [Graduate Community Building Fund](#). For questions, contact Maria Battaglino at 514-848-2424, ext. 3814, or at maria.battaglino@concordia.ca.

[Register](#) for the next Graduate Community Building Fund event, an open symposium, [Inviting Movements: Emerging Critical Disability and Deaf Perspectives and Practices](#), taking place on May 4 and 5 at the Black Box, Engineering, Computer Science and Visual Arts Integrated Complex (1515 Ste-Catherine St. W.), Sir George Williams Campus.

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