



LEADERS OF TOMORROW
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

GREATER VANCOUVER
BOARD OF TRADE

Mentored to Lead, Connected to Serve

LOT 2025-26



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LEADERSHIP

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NETWORKING

VOLUNTEERISM

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A Welcome Message from the Communications Committee

At the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) program, mentorship and connection are at the heart of our experience. Through meaningful conversations, shared learning, and collaboration across committees, members continue to grow both personally and professionally.

This edition highlights how students are building relationships that extend beyond events and meetings. Through conversations and shared experiences, we learn from one another, support each other's growth, and find ways to make a meaningful difference in our community.

As the LOT Communications Committee, we are proud to share the voices and experiences of our fellow LOT members. We hope these stories reflect the strength of our community and inspire continued collaboration, and service throughout the program.

Thank you for being part of a community that is **mentored to lead and connected to serve!**

LEADING THE NEXT GEN

By Joshua Abesamis



I recently spoke with Sam, Chair of the Leaders of Tomorrow program at the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, about the impact of the program and the leadership qualities needed in today's evolving world.

Q: At its heart, what do you believe Leaders of Tomorrow represents for aspiring leaders?

Sam: Over the last 25 years with LOT, I've seen how the program provides a meaningful trajectory for those about to graduate, or who have recently graduated, to accelerate their growth. What I appreciate most is the many ways it supports people in their life and career, with mentors at the cornerstone. At its heart are connection, mentorship, and engagement, which create opportunities for individuals to learn, grow, and support one another.

Q: What kind of transformation do you hope mentees experience by the end of the program? How about mentors?

Sam: My hope is that each person joins LOT with curiosity and a readiness to make the most of their time in the program. As mentees move through the experience, it's important to pause and reflect on who they meet and what they learn along the way. By the end, the real question is not only what you participated in, but what you gained and how it will guide your path forward.

Q: In today's evolving landscape, what qualities do you believe leaders need most?

Sam: The pace of change today feels faster than ever. What we need are leaders who CARE. Collaboration, Adaptability, Resilience, and Empathy.

Leaders must listen, remain open to different perspectives, and navigate uncertainty with humility and confidence. The ability to collaborate, communicate clearly, and act with integrity will continue to define meaningful leadership.

Q: What excites you most about the future of Leaders of Tomorrow and the impact its graduates will have?

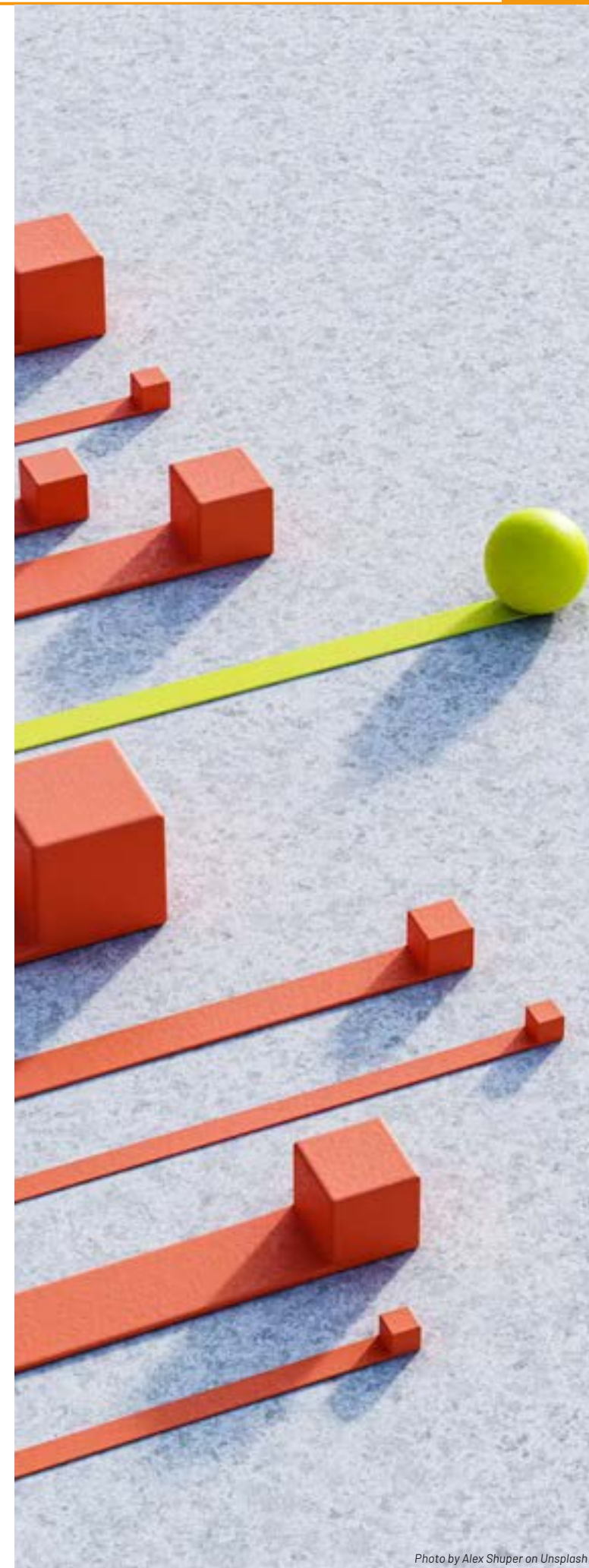
Sam: What excites me most are the possibilities that emerge from the experience. Over the years, I've witnessed incredible transformation as participants build meaningful connections and grow throughout the program. Many have gone on to achieve great things, and that success reflects the strength of the LOT community – including mentors, academic partners, sponsors, and dedicated leaders who support the program.

When reflecting on the future of the Leaders of Tomorrow program, Sam shared a sense of optimism and excitement. For him, the most rewarding aspect of the program is witnessing the possibilities that emerge from the experience.

Over time, he has seen participants undergo significant personal and professional transformation as they build strong networks and develop their leadership potential. Many alumni have gone on to achieve notable success in their respective fields, a testament to the strength and impact of the LOT community.

He also acknowledged that this success is not created in isolation. It is supported by a broader ecosystem that includes mentors, academic partners, sponsors, and dedicated leaders who collectively contribute to the program's long-term impact. 🌱

"At the heart of LOT are connection, mentorship, and engagement."



A LEADER’S COMMITMENT TO GIVING BACK

By Patricia Bonghanoy



Pam Ryan
President, Lucent Quay Consulting

“In my brain, they’re the young leaders of tomorrow. I look at their experiences and think, ‘I’ve learned so much from my mentees.’”



Mentorship for Pam, began with a realization. Trained as a transportation planner, she discovered that what energized her the most was not the technical design but the conversations behind it, leading her to build a career in transportation communications and community engagement. For over two decades, she has been guided by one question: *How can communication and engagement be done more meaningfully?*

A simple conversation with a student changed Pam’s perspectives. While attending in one of Board of Trade events, Pam learned about the Leaders of Tomorrow program from a student who encouraged her to apply as a mentor. Intrigued and wanting to give back, she joined and has returned year after year. Mentorship quickly became a meaningful extension of her leadership. For Pam, it reflects the same belief that has guided her career: that conversations have the power to shape growth.

A Philosophy of Ownership and Growth

Pam views mentorship as lived experience rather than a rigid format. Having benefited from informal mentors throughout her career, she understands the value of asking honest questions and learning from those who have walked the path before.

With her mentees, she begins by asking what they hope to gain and how they would like to shape their time together. Each session revisits goals, reflects on progress, and ends with clear next steps. Her philosophy is simple: the mentee sets the pace.

The Power of Mutual Growth

What Pam values most about mentorship is that it is never one-sided. While students gain confidence and clarity, she gains fresh perspectives that sharpen her coaching and leadership. She believes mentorship rewards initiative and participants get out of it what they are willing to put in.

For Pam, walking alongside the next generation is both a responsibility and a privilege. In choosing to give back with intention, she proves that the most meaningful leadership is measured not by titles, but by the lives we help shape. 🌈

MORE THAN A HANDSHAKE

By Patricia Bonghanoy

Networking within the Leaders of Tomorrow program goes beyond exchanging introductions. Through Board of Trade events, LOT-exclusive programs, and committee collaboration, members connect with industry professionals and fellow students to build a strong and supportive community.

To better understand how networking takes shape across the program, three students from different committees shared their experiences and insights. Their perspectives highlight how networking in LOT is not only about professional growth, but also about building meaningful and lasting relationships.



Q: What is your approach to networking, and what challenges have shaped it?

“I’m not really one to work the room. I’d rather have fewer but deeper conversations with people whose work actually interests me, and then stay connected. I used to feel intimidated talking to more experienced people, but I’ve learned that being genuinely curious works far better than any pitch I could memorize.”

Andrew Huang, Campus Connections

Q: What networking experience has been most meaningful to you, and why?

“Meeting Tamara Vrooman, President and CEO of Vancouver International Airport, at the SFU Annual Address was a key experience. I took the courage to connect with her and book a coffee chat, which led to deeper relationships and opened doors for LOT mentees to collaborate with YVR on future volunteering initiatives and training opportunities.”

Renelyn Macato, Community Outreach



Q: What networking advice would you offer to future LOT members?

“At the beginning, if you feel a bit awkward, my advice is to focus on creating one meaningful connection and following up afterward, rather than trying to meet as many people as possible. As you become more comfortable, you can start aiming to connect with more than one new person at each event.”

Gian Gunawan Putra, Regional and Civic Affairs

Hearing these stories made me realize that this has been my experience in LOT as well. Building connections in the program has never felt forced. As Sam Thiara shared during one of his LOT sessions, he prefers the term “relationship building,” and through LOT, I’ve come to understand why. Through Board of Trade events, committee collaborations, and conversations with mentors and fellow students, I’ve learned that the most meaningful connections come from genuine curiosity, authenticity, and taking the time to get to know others. LOT creates a space where students can build confidence, support one another, and feel part of a community that genuinely wants to see everyone succeed.

Even as the program comes to an end, I’ve realized that the value of LOT extends far beyond a single year. The relationships built here are worth nurturing because every person brings a unique perspective and lesson to share. Looking back, I see my LOT journey as a mosaic of learnings shaped by the people I met along the way. Each conversation, piece of advice, and shared experience has contributed to my growth, and I know those connections will continue to have an impact long after the program ends. 🌈

WE BECOME WHAT WE PRACTICE

By Patricia Bonghanoy



As mentees in the Leaders of Tomorrow Program, leadership is something we experience firsthand by showing up and contributing. From supporting events through room setup, to registration, wayfinding, and teardown, each experience teaches us different skills. We learn to be organized, adaptable, and responsive in fast-paced environments, while also understanding how much work happens behind the scenes to make each event successful. These moments may seem small, but they build our commitment and sense of responsibility over time.

Aside from supporting events, each committee creates opportunities for professional growth through volunteer projects, such as community engagement initiatives. Through these experiences, we strengthen our collaboration skills, learn to go above and beyond, and discover what we're capable of as a team. "Connected to serve" isn't just a theme, it's what we practice by contributing to our teams and community. Now that we're past the halfway point of the program, I can see how these experiences have pushed us to take initiative in ways we may not have imagined at the start of the journey. 🌈



"What we need are leaders who CARE – Collaboration, Adaptability, Resilience, and Empathy."

Sam Thiara, LOT Chair

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF GETTING INVOLVED

By Patricia Bonghanoy

"Volunteering is not transactional. It is about showing up with genuine intent to contribute."

Building on a strong culture of service and leadership, I had the privilege of interviewing Evgenia Popova, the 2024-25 LOT Mentee of the Year. Evgenia's experience reflects her deep commitment to her communities, which was intentionally shaped by her active involvement in the program.

During her time in LOT, Evgenia recalled volunteering at nearly 25 events and initiatives, the majority of which were initiated by the LOT EDI Committee. "EDI in Action" was her most memorable experience. because, as the event lead, she had both freedom and responsibility. The event turned out to be a huge success, with a high attendance rate, overwhelmingly positive feedback, and conversations that went beyond the LOT mentees and mentors. Through these experiences, Evgenia came to a powerful realization: behind every business community, there are people who simply want to be heard, seen, and connected.

For her, being a newcomer to Canada was a challenge, but volunteering made her feel more connected to her new home. It also became more than a way to give back because of how it helped her rebuild confidence in the local professional environment. Above all, creating genuine relationships that evolved into mentorship and support is what she is most thankful for. Along the way, it also clarified her career direction, reignited her passion for events and marketing, and helped her approach her job search with intention.

When she looked back at her LOT journey, Evgenia shared that she misses being part of LOT and GVBOT. The amount of support she received from program has shaped her perspective and honed her into someone who volunteers more and stays involved in the community to give back. Although she is now currently employed full-time, she still hopes to continue showing up

to events where she can lend a hand. By taking opportunities as they came, she discovered that some of the most meaningful growth happens when you are willing to step forward, even when you are uncertain where it might lead.

Listening to Evgenia's journey made me reflect on my experience in the program. I came to realize that volunteering is not just about filling roles or hours; rather, it is about choosing to be present and enjoying serving others. For me, volunteering has shaped my confidence, helped me build real connections, and find my own purpose. In many ways, I see that volunteering is less about the tasks we do and more about the people we become through the experience. 🌈



Evgenia Popova
2024-25 LOT Mentee of the Year



"We are not just running outreach activities. We are building future leaders who can create impact within their own communities."

Anu Rosebell
Campus Connections Advisor

Photo by Ryan Waring on Unsplash

COMMUNICATIONS | CAMPUS CONNECTION

By Patricia Bonghanoy



Nazmul Hasan, Victoria Lamela
Advisors, Communications Committee



Anu Rosebell, Rajveer Kaur
Advisors, Campus Connections Committee

The Communications Committee’s highlight for this year is the creation of this newsletter. The mentees, with the guidance of Nazmul Hasan and Victoria Lamela, set out to craft a publication that will celebrate and share stories within the Leaders of Tomorrow program to a wider audience. The inspiration came from their aspiration to communicate a deeper appreciation and celebration of the program. By conducting interviews and conversations with the mentees, mentors, advisors, and board, the team has a deeper understanding of the ways the program supports each person’s personal growth and career exploration.

What motivates the mentors is the way they see how the mentees lead with purpose. As they experience the program firsthand through their involvement with GVBOT events, they strive to advocate and pass forward these inspirations to future leaders. For them, this publication is a collection of every member’s passion that reflects the value of mentorship, connection, and service.

Most importantly, the committee looks forward to seeing their mentees continue to grow as leaders and create meaningful impact in their communities. The advisors believe that although this cohort might come to an end, they wish that their experience will last as they soar in their pursuits. 🌈

The Campus Connections Committee has a huge role in expanding LOT’s presence in different post-secondary institutions in Metro Vancouver. According to Anu Rosebell and Rajveer Kaur, the committee advisors, they launched an initiative called the *aLOTMore campaign*. Initially, it was a research-driven effort, but then transformed into a full-scale program where they identified and reached out to target institutions, and expanded their scope from Business schools to Arts and Social Sciences.

In March and April, the committee launched on-campus information sessions at institutions including Northeastern University, New York Institute of Technology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Langara College, and University Canada West. The most successful event for them was the info session at Langara College, as they garnered huge attendance, but most of all, they saw everyone get involved in engaging with peers, mentors, and everyone else in the room. For them, that is what LOT aims to achieve.

In the remaining months left for this cohort, the committee is expecting to strengthen its communication to maintain its momentum with institutions after the launch. They are also exploring more peer-led and ambassador-driven initiatives to sustain the campus presence they have established. 🌈

DIVERSITY & BELONGING | ENGAGEMENT

By Joshua Abesamis



Dhaara Thakkar , Alyssa Bautista
Advisors, Diversity & Belonging Committee



Pooja Panikar, Jasleen Kaur
Advisors, Engagement Committee

The Diversity & Belonging Committee is dedicated to creating a more inclusive and welcoming LOT experience while encouraging meaningful conversations around equity, representation, and belonging. This year, the committee focused on two key initiatives: *Project FABRIC*, which aims to develop a framework for incorporating diversity and belonging into event planning, and *The Equity Lab*, a collaborative workshop designed to help participants explore workplace barriers and create practical solutions for building more inclusive environments.

For Alyssa, the most meaningful part of the experience has been watching mentees grow into confident leaders. While she stepped into the advisor role expecting to guide students, she quickly discovered that mentorship is a two-way learning experience. Through thoughtful discussions, fresh perspectives, and a willingness to challenge ideas, mentees encouraged her to reflect on her own leadership and become more intentional in how she supports others.

Through *Project FABRIC*, *The Equity Lab*, and committee discussions, mentees have demonstrated a genuine commitment to creating positive change in their communities and future workplaces. As the committee looks ahead, its goal remains the same: to foster a culture of belonging and empower leaders to make a meaningful impact wherever they go. 🌈

The Engagement Committee is focused on creating meaningful, inclusive spaces where mentees can grow both professionally and personally within the Leaders of Tomorrow program. By organizing panel discussions, events, and collaborative initiatives, the team aims to connect members of the LOT cohort with one another and with the broader community.

Recently, the committee hosted its first online event, bringing together three women panelists from different industries to discuss personal branding. Beyond the discussion itself, the event highlighted the value of strong communication and teamwork behind the scenes. It also reinforced an important insight: participants are looking for practical topics and real-world advice delivered in formats that are accessible and easy to join.

Looking ahead, the Engagement Committee hopes to continue fostering a strong sense of community within the LOT cohort and the broader GVBOT network. Their goal is for participants to leave not only with actionable career insights, but with a deeper understanding of their own purpose.

More opportunities are on the way, and the committee looks forward to continuing to create spaces where learning, connection, and inspiration come together. 🌈

REGIONAL CIVIC AFFAIRS | COMMUNITY OUTREACH

By Patricia Bonghanoy



Angell Qu, Hajar Falouhi
Advisors, LOT Regional & Civic Affairs Committee



Lara Nakad, Laura Sanchez
Advisors, Community Outreach Committee

The LOT Regional & Civic Affairs Committee is headed by Angell Qu and Hajar Falouhi. Together, they have witnessed how their team evolved into a space where policy learning, collaboration among mentees, and leadership development come together. The committee is focused on policy analysis and is working closely with the Board of Trade to discuss major social issues surrounding Metro Vancouver. Mentees attend monthly meetings to take part in civic discussions, and they have completed policy briefings in pairs before presenting their recommendations to the Board.

LOT RCAC's most significant initiative this year is a research project on youth unemployment. Mentees are collaborating to design surveys and analyze responses to better grasp the current landscape of the job market. Since the start of the program, the advisors have observed a commendable improvement in member engagement. According to Angell, mentees have moved from being mere participants to active leaders. In fact, three outstanding mentees have moved into leadership roles for the research initiatives. This growth reflects the increasing confidence mentees have gained, including through external presentations and recognition for their work.

The committee currently remains focused on creating opportunities for policy engagement and leadership development for its mentees. 🌈

The Community Outreach Committee has been doing phenomenal work creating meaningful opportunities for LOT mentees. Led by Lara Nakad and Laura Sanchez, the committee has achieved multiple successes through impactful events and strong external partnerships.

Their mentees have actively participated in volunteer initiatives, including the *Run for the Cure* in support of the Canadian Cancer Society, when they raised more than \$200. They also volunteered at the Greater Vancouver Food Bank on several occasions, helping sort donations and support daily operations. During the holiday season, the committee led a Christmas campaign for Covenant House, delivering gifts to youth in the community. Beyond these initiatives, the committee organizes regular mentor meetings that give mentees valuable opportunities to connect, ask questions, and share ideas. They also host webinars featuring industry professionals who provide guidance on career development and job searching.

Taking their support a step further, the committee launched virtual series with Human Resources and recruitment professionals, giving mentees an inside look into modern recruitment. Through strong collaboration and a commitment to service, the committee continues to create meaningful experiences for LOT members, and we look forward to seeing what they accomplish next. 🌈

"LOT has helped me to practice and improve my networking skills through attending various events as well as learn more about leadership from my mentor who have helped me with guidance and knowledge."

- Abdalla Ahmed, Campus Connections

"My experience with LOT has been met with discovery, reflection, and perspective. The LOT platform has given me the space to have conversations with remarkable individuals who have implanted words of wisdom and have challenged me to look inward, redefine what leadership means to me, and recognize the leader that already exists within myself."

-Janelle Dalberry, LOT Regional & Civic Affairs

"What LOT built in me is the confidence to know I belong in the rooms I want to be in next. After arriving in Canada with no local network, joining the program provided the structured and credible path I needed to grow. LOT has taught me that the most meaningful kind of leadership is the kind that opens doors for others."

-Olatunji Awelenje, Diversity & Belonging

"Some of the most meaningful opportunities in my LOT journey came from simply being proactive and starting a conversation. When you approach networking with authenticity and intention, it becomes about building relationships, not transactions."

-Renelyn Macato, Community Outreach

"Being part of LOT has been a valuable learning experience for me. It has shown me that effective leadership comes from supporting others, staying open to different perspectives, and continuously learning. The program has helped me grow both personally and professionally, and it has strengthened my confidence in taking initiative and making a positive impact."

-Nitika Lamba, Communications

"LOT has been an inspiring space to connect with passionate individuals who are committed to making a difference in their communities. The experience has reinforced my belief that leadership is about empowering others, building meaningful relationships, and continuously growing alongside those you serve."

-Thai Bertelli, Engagement

"Being part of LOT has given me the opportunity to learn from diverse perspectives and build meaningful relationships. It has shaped my understanding of leadership as a journey of empathy, service, and empowering others while continuing to develop myself."

-Akanksha Johar, Communications

"LOT has shown me that to lead means showing up with intention, taking initiative, and uplifting the people around you. It's knowing your team, leveraging the strengths, and bringing in the right people when the project demands it. It takes a village."

-Tate Laxton-Coglon, LOT Regional & Civic Affairs Committee

"My experience in LOT has helped me build confidence and leadership skills. It has taught me that leadership means working well with others and being a positive role model. I have also learned how important it is to stay responsible and support my teammates."

-Andrey Tarasov, Communications

"Through conversations with inspiring leaders across Vancouver, I've realized that leadership, in its simplest form, is about people. Being genuine with those you serve and bringing everyone together toward a shared goal."

-Jasmin Dela Vega, Community Outreach

"One of the most meaningful parts of being involved with LOT has been the opportunity to connect with and learn from people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. The program has encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone, become more intentional in how I work with others, and take on new challenges with confidence. It has been a rewarding experience that has contributed to both my personal growth and my development as a future professional."

-Nate Koscinski, Communications

"One of the biggest lessons I learned through LOT is that people remember authenticity more than perfection. If you stay curious, ask good questions, and follow through, meaningful connections naturally follow."

-Andrew Huang, Campus Connections

"LOT has reinforced my view that leadership is about ownership, influence, and execution, reflected in our team's work on Project FABRIC, where we are translating inclusion principles into a measurable, real-world assessment tool. It has strengthened my commitment to leading with clarity, accountability, and impact over intent."

-Imaobong Kingsley, Diversity & Belonging

"Sometimes I still feel awkward starting conversations, but through LOT, I've learned that finding common ground and showing genuine interest goes a long way. The most meaningful opportunities often come from simple conversations."

-Gian Gunawan Putra, LOT Regional & Civic Affairs

"When I first heard about LOT, I thought it was simply a mentorship program. As I became more involved, I discovered a supportive community that offered valuable career guidance, meaningful connections, and leadership opportunities that helped me grow into a more confident person, both personally and professionally."

-Patricia Bonghanoy, Communications

"My experience in the LOT program continues to reinforce the ability to be adaptable in the face of personal commitments and the changing business world in 2026. Intertwined with my leadership style, I've been able to learn so much about Vancouver's place in international trade, and how students can take hold of opportunities through personal connection."

-Xian Kostyrko, LOT Regional & Civic Affairs

Mentee Reflections

Personal stories from the next generation of leaders

"My LOT journey has significantly shaped and deepened my understanding of leadership. Through volunteering, collaborating, and engaging regularly with my mentor, I have come to appreciate the importance of self-awareness, continuous learning, and lifelong growth. These experiences have shown me that leadership is not a destination, but a journey rooted in service, meaningful relationships, and creating a positive impact on others."

- Akua Boakye-Ansah, Campus Connections

"My LOT experience, combined with my background in my home country and studies at Langara, helped me better understand my own leadership style. I've also been encouraged and supported by committee members and fellow mentees, which has made my journey abroad feel more positive and meaningful."

-Yasuko Moriya, Engagement

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