



Carleton launches expanded Rwanda media internship program for Journalism students

First of 20 journalism students head off on Rwanda adventure May 8

OTTAWA (May 7, 2007)– Carleton University’s Rwanda Initiative project has been expanded once again to include a new media internship program that will see Carleton journalism students fan out across Rwanda this spring and summer to work as media interns at newspapers, radio stations, a video-documentary unit and the national TV network.

In total, 20 students from Carleton’s prestigious School of Journalism and Communication will travel to Rwanda this spring and summer for eight-week placements with media organizations. The first batch of students – a group of seven – departs for Rwanda tomorrow to begin the adventure of a lifetime. Others will follow in the coming weeks and months. All of the participants are available for interviews.

The first group of interns will include Melodie Cardin from Gatineau, Quebec; Drew Davidson, Thornton, Ont.; Kate Harper, Oakville; David Kawai, Mississauga; Kyla Pearson, Calgary; Marie-Jo Proulx, Montreal (departing late May); Emilie Tobin, Ottawa and Cynthia Vukets, Kitchener-Waterloo. Christine Spetz, from Saskatoon, is already in Rwanda [Biographical notes are listed below].

Carleton’s Rwanda Initiative is a media capacity-building project established in 2006. News media in Rwanda were central to the 1994 genocide, when hate media played a role in the killing campaign. And because of a lack of attention to Rwanda, international news media initially downplayed or misconstrued what was happening in the tiny central African country.

“The essence of Carleton’s Rwanda Initiative has been to address both sides of that media equation, to build the capacity of the media in Rwanda and to foster an interest in Africa among a new generation of Canadian journalists,” said Carleton journalism professor Allan Thompson, who launched the project last year and recently published an edited collection called *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* [www.idrc.ca/rwandagenocide].

In the first phase of the successful journalism teaching partnership, launched in January 2006, between Carleton’s School of Journalism and Communication and its counterpart at the National University of Rwanda in Butare, nearly a dozen veteran journalists and journalism educators traveled to Rwanda to take up positions as visiting lecturers. All participants published blogs on the project website – www.RwandaInitiative.ca - describing their experiences. This year’s media interns will be posting blogs as well.

The Rwanda Initiative also grew last year to include a media internship pilot project that saw 14 Carleton students work at *The New Times* newspaper, the English-language daily based in Kigali. Based on the successful experience with the New Times, this year’s expanded internship will include placements at the New Times as well as the Umuseso/Newsline newspaper group, the French-language newspaper Grands Lacs Hebdo, Radio Rwanda, TV Rwanda, the private radio station Contact FM and the video-documentary unit of Internews.

This internship will expose the interns not only to the current conditions of life in Rwanda but also challenge them on how best to improve reporting of these conditions domestically and internationally. Freedom of expression in Rwanda is still being tested and the country suffers from a lack of professional media standards. This project is an invaluable opportunity for interns to work overseas in a developing country, to gain the kind of hands-on experience that is crucial to success in Canadian journalism and make a significant contribution to the future of Rwandan journalism.

Alongside the ongoing visiting lecturer program at the university in Butare, the Rwanda Initiative has also recently launched a new media training program that will see a number of veteran Canadian journalists travel to Rwanda to train working journalists at the same media outlets where the media interns will be placed. One of the first to participate in the new media training program is John Honderich, former publisher of the Toronto Star and current chairman of the Torstar Voting Trust. Mr. Honderich, who arrived in Rwanda recently and will be working at the New Times, has also made a personal donation to the Rwanda Initiative to help fund the media internship program.

For further information or to arrange interviews with any of the media interns or other project participants, please contact:

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The first group of interns includes:



Melodie Cardin is from Gatineau, Quebec, although she grew up in British Columbia, spending some of her time in the north and some on Vancouver Island, and has lived in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and Ontario as well. She has also been travelling to Belize, Central America since she was a baby, and considers it her second home. She has just completed her Bachelor of Journalism at Carleton with a minor in Women's Studies, and is looking forward to working at Radio Rwanda.

Drew Davidson is a graduating Carleton Journalism student from Thornton, Ontario. She is especially interested in television journalism but hopes to travel and hear the stories of people from around the world. Drew learned on an exchange to Costa Rica that although life was much harder compared to her sleepy hometown, everyone just wanted to tell the stories that made them laugh. Now, she wants to hear these same stories from the people of Rwanda, where she will work as an intern at Internews.



Kate Harper is from Oakville, Ont., just west of Toronto. Since she was little, she has been fascinated with words and writing, and has recently been focusing on turning that enthrallment with language into a career in journalism. She is interested in international affairs, human rights, and music. As a member of Carleton University's Journalists for Human Rights, she helped send equipment to Rwanda's Radio Izuba in 2005 and 2006. In Rwanda she will work at the New Times newspaper in Kigali.

David Kawai is a freelance photographer from Mississauga, Ontario who has just completed a degree in Journalism and English at Carleton University. Currently based in Ottawa, David has worked for publications like The Ottawa Citizen and Ottawa Magazine. His travels have taken him through Japan, Europe and Southeast Asia, and The Rwanda Initiative will be his first assignment in Africa. In Rwanda he will work at the New Times and Umuseso/Newsline.



Kyla Pearson was born in Calgary, Alberta, and since high school has taken every opportunity to experience the world. She has traveled throughout Latin America, South East Asia, and to areas of Europe and North Africa. Before coming to Carleton, Kyla studied for three years at Mount Royal College in Calgary, where she was lucky enough to participate in two international exchanges – the first to Guadalajara, Mexico, and the second to Hong Kong. She came to Carleton in 2005. She has just completed her third year of the program and will be working at TV Rwanda.

Marie-Jo Proulx is a native of Montreal. Before starting the Master in Journalism program at Carleton University, she worked for three years as a senior writer for Windy City Times in Chicago, where she also volunteered as an interpreter between asylum seekers and medical professionals. Prior to this, she was a French language coordinator at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (England). Marie-Jo has a B.A. in political science from Concordia University and has studied linguistics at the graduate level at UQAM. She is particularly interested in human rights, equal representation, and health care. When in Rwanda, she hopes to research issues relating to reproductive rights and will work at Grands Lacs Hebdo and Umuseso/Newsline.



Christine Spetz just completed the first year of Carleton's Master of Journalism program. She is Bachelor of Arts French Honours graduate from the University of Saskatchewan. Before coming to Carleton a combined interest in the French language and travel took her to France, where she spent eight months studying French Literature at Université Marc Bloch. When not traveling, Christine has worked as a French Language Monitor for the Federal-Provincial Programs Unit; a Researcher/Writer with Meewasin Valley Authority; and a lifeguard and swimming instructor. While in Rwanda she will do research on working conditions for journalists and will spend time at several newspapers.

Emilie Tobin was born and raised in Ottawa. She recently graduated from Carleton University with a Combined Honours Degree in Journalism and Political Science. Emilie is an avid hockey fan who is dedicated to her beloved Ottawa Senators. Although she currently works for the federal public service, her real dream is to one day become a play-by-play hockey commentator on Hockey Night in Canada. In Rwanda she will work with Grands Lacs Hebdo.



Cynthia Vukets is nearing completion of Carleton's Bachelor of Journalism program but also spent last year on exchange in France. Her interest in African media was piqued by her involvement with the organization Journalists for Human Rights, especially as president of the Carleton chapter this year. She hopes to learn more about Rwandan culture and the role of journalism in African society through this internship. Cynthia is from Kitchener-Waterloo and enjoys riding horses and playing piano. In Rwanda she will work for the New Times and Umuseso/Newsline.