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## Economics Grad Brings Creative Thinking to Heart of Canada's Financial District

**Ryan Durrell credits Trent University for mentorship, skills development, and freedom to explore**



Direction, exploration, acquisition of hard skills, and practical experience led recent graduate Ryan Durrell '97 from Trent University's Peterborough campus to Canada's financial capital.

Prior to stepping foot on campus at Trent University, Ryan Durrell '97 wanted to indulge his creative nature and become a computer animator, but after graduating with a B.Sc. Honours degree in [Economics](#) in 2002, he found himself working for an actuarial consulting firm in downtown Toronto.

It turns out, he's loving every minute of his unexpected career choice and credits his Trent experience for equipping him for success in a career that is constantly changing.

"Being able to spend time solving intricate business and insurance challenges means my job is always dynamic and interesting," said Mr. Durrell. "In my day to day work at Axxima, I will be an underwriter, insurance broker, analyst, and IT guy. Being able to wear many hats is what keeps me excited about what I do."

There are many factors that led Mr. Durrell to his current job as founding partner and CIO of Axxima, an Actuarial and Insurance Management Advisory firm. He believes that Trent University offered him the opportunity to explore many potential career paths, while his professors Bruce Cater and Torben Drewes helped him develop a sense of confidence and a real passion for economics.

"With some much-appreciated guidance from the dedicated professors at Trent University, I was able to choose a career path in a field that's both challenging and rewarding," stated Mr. Durrell. "The patience and

intelligence of the professors in the Economics department is second to none. If it wasn't for the personal attention given to me, I may have gone an entirely different direction in life."

The freedom to explore a variety of career paths during his education was reinforced by a learned, tangible skill set.

Mr. Durrell credits his proficiency in statistical analysis and advanced mathematics, which he learned at Trent, as invaluable to securing his first job in the insurance consulting field. "The practical skills from my program gave me the core skills I needed for my first job in this field. The varied classes I took at Trent gave me a well-rounded education. I'm a creative thinker in a financial industry; that's not very common, but Trent University allowed me to hone all those skills."

He looks forward to continuing to enjoy the challenging and rewarding work he does at Axxima and pursuing his love of collecting and racing automobiles with his wife, writer Alexandria Durrell, also a Trent alum.

As for new graduates, Mr. Durrell advises them to use common sense to their advantage. "Focus on critical thinking and analytical skills. No matter the career, these will take you far. Starting at the bottom is reality—never be ashamed of that. When you start at the bottom, there's only one place to go – up!"

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