



## **Canada's 2007 International Student of the Year is University of Manitoba student Alex Anton of Brazil**

*Ottawa:* Canada's 2007 International Student of the Year is Alex Anton, a University of Manitoba student from Brazil.

In his winning submission, Alex says: "My friends from China, Iraq, Mexico and India, together with my Canadian-born buddies, make me see the world as a wonderful reality where all these diverse cultures can harmoniously live together... I will leave Canada not only holding an academic degree. Among my paperwork, I will take back unforgettable accounts, new flavours, words, horizons, a global viewpoint, and certainly a more open-minded person."

The Liz Paterson International Student of the Year competition offers international students the opportunity to reflect on and write about the impact of their experience in Canada on their personal development and worldview. It also gives international education professionals the chance to recognize the valuable contributions these visitors make to our universities and colleges and to the Canadian community in general.

Organized by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), the International Student of the Year Award program invites international students to write a letter home, giving family or friends insights about their study sojourn in Canada. This year marks the third annual competition. CBIE thanks StudentGuard Health Insurance for its generous contributions to the Endowment Fund.

Alex Anton, along with 275 others, responded to CBIE's call for submissions. In addition to the recognition as International Student of the Year, he receives a \$500 prize.

Two further entrants receive honorable mentions with cash prizes:

Reyhaneh Namdar Baboli from Iran, studying at Université du Québec en Outaouais, won the second prize of \$300. She writes an unusual letter directly addressed to our country: "Canada, I learned many things from you. You taught me to respect people regardless of their nationality, race, language and culture. You taught me to see them as who they really are... You were always supportive and made me feel great."

Hafsa Ishtiaq from Panama, studying at University of British Columbia, won the third prize of \$200. Reflecting on her experience, she says: "My Canadian academic career is developing at UBC. I receive great attention from professors and staff, and I'm not just seen as another student, but an individual deserving of such education."

“CBIE is delighted to honour our international students through this annual competition, supported by international educators across the country,” says Jennifer Humphries, Vice-President, Membership and Scholarships. “Congratulations to Alex, Reyhaneh and Hafsa. They are exemplary representatives of all international students studying in Canada today.”

The Award is named for Elizabeth (Liz) Paterson, who for 25 years served as Director of the International Student Centre at the University of Toronto, guiding and encouraging thousands of young people from diverse countries. Liz's influence on the nascent world of international education extended across Canada through her mentoring of newcomers to the profession of international educator, her research and reports, and her service on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Bureau for International Education.

The full text of the winning letter and those that received an Honourable Mention can be found at [http://www.cbie.ca/paterson/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.cbie.ca/paterson/index_e.cfm).

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**Elizabeth Paterson International Student of the Year 2007 Award:**  
**Alex Anton**, a University of Manitoba student from Brazil

Mom,

The weather forecast already indicates temperatures in an ascendant curve, so are my attitude and enthusiasm for what is unquestionably being the most enriching experience of my existence. Since I heard Welcome followed by Bienvenue the metamorphosis and redefinition of old concepts occupies half of my diary. Curiously, every single glance, conversation, and footstep I take here brings me a lot more than I used to have in the warm and beautiful coast of southern Brazil.

In school I have been absorbing valuable lessons of humanism and professionalism from academics and professionals with varied backgrounds. The courses are tougher and more time-demanding than expected, however definitely worth taking. Papers, seminars and lab work: although engaging, this learning load is sometimes heavy.

Then I need to chill out, and relaxing I realize I am facing the unexpected again. My friends from China, Iraq, Mexico and India, together with my Canadian-born buddies, make me see the world as a wonderful reality where all these diverse cultures can harmoniously live together. Hanging out with these folks I discovered a whole new vocabulary and gastronomic temptations such as maple syrup, dim sum, falafel, tacos and endless curries. More than foods, I have been

shivering with amazing life stories. Diversity and tolerance are merged in a fluid atmosphere that characterizes the Canadian lifestyle. Often I feel like traveling around the globe with my feet on Winnipeg snow. Unpredictably, I sense that the more I hear and try to understand the Canadians, the more I understand myself. My leisure experience itself would be enough to write a thesis.

So much has changed lately mom. The concept of horizon, before seen as the infinite suggested by the endless magnitude of the sea, now has been added to the poignant and magic sunset and sunrise of the Canadian Prairies. For your surprise, I guess I will leave Canada not only holding an academic degree. Among my paperwork, I will take back unforgettable accounts, new flavours, words, horizons, a global viewpoint, and certainly a more open-minded person.

Tchau, Goodbye, Au revoir, Zai jian, Salaam, Namasté, Adiós...

**Honourable Mention:**

**Reyhaneh Namdar Baboli**, a Université du Québec en Outaouais student from Iran

My dear friend, Canada,

I left my country almost two years ago to see you, have experience living with you, finish my Masters in Project Management and finally go back to my country.

Canada, I think you remember how much I was worried when I met you for the first time. I was worried about the future. I was not sure if I am going to make it for two years away from my family, from the country where I was born and grew up. The country where I found all my friends and I had my best moments of my life. But, you were so kind. You helped me a lot from the first moment you saw me. I still remember you holding doors open for me when you were walking ahead of me. I still remember you smiling and helping without me asking.

Canada, I was worried about my financial situation. I was not sure if I can handle the expenses. But when I started my Masters, I never felt alone, as you were always there for me. You provided me with bursaries so I can pay my tuition fees and not worry about anything other than my courses. You even promised to hire me for some research work as part of my study. It was fabulous. You offered me a research assistantship so I could work on my thesis and get paid. Now, I have no worries about my tuition and I can focus on my courses with no financial concern. Thank you for your financial support.

Canada, I learned many things from you. You taught me to respect people regardless of their nationality, race, language and culture. You taught me to see them as who they really are. You also showed me if I try hard and improve in my studies, I won't be neglected. I knew you saw my efforts and I never felt lonely. You were always supportive and made me feel great.

Canada, first, I had my conversation with you in English. Later I saw you speaking French, so I decided to talk to you in French too. I could learn French in a short time and the first responsibility you gave me was an on-campus job in the university as a student guide to help English language students survive in a French environment. Can you imagine that? I improved my French a lot!

Canada, you don't know how much I am grateful to know you and spend my time with you. Therefore, I decided to stay with you. I applied for immigration and I am going to start my PhD soon. I have had an extraordinary experience with you that I have never had before. I hope I can be a good friend for you as well and help you keep smiling. By the way if you don't mind I would like to share my feeling and experience with all my friends. I want to send them this letter and encourage them to meet you. I know you love to make new friends.

Best regards,  
Reyhaneh Namdar Baboli

**Honourable Mention:**

**Hafsa Ishtiaq**, a University of British Columbia student from Panama

Tócame tu tambor. Mujeh dholak bajaanah nahi atha. Sólo siente el ritmo en tu sangre como lo hago yo con mi conga. ¡Toca! Teek hai& Dha-Dhak-Dha-Dhak ¡Así es! (Spanish & Urdu)

Dearest Nana,

I write to you as I tread the UBC earth flattened by apprentices before me. Waves of people scurry to class.

Look! There go Shehnaz, Xiaolian, Manuela and Mwamba. I smile to myself. We're so different, but I've never felt so at home. They don't call me Panamanian, woman, Muslim or heterosexual. They call me by my name like I call them by theirs. They are their own persona, yet we fuse like primary colours forming White. We are a Van Gogh masterpiece: Up close you appreciate our individual strokes. Step back and see us form a painting. Here, my eyes are jerked open to dialogue, acknowledgment and acceptance for different cultures. All nations are respected and celebrated.

I gulp the crisp air that nourishes a nation so concerned with the less fortunate. Canadian foreign policy and NGOs help the less privileged by supporting environmental, socio-economic, cultural and human rights. I am amazed at their achievements and the consciousness they garner for their causes. I aspire to learn greatly from them much like the Harpy Eagle secretly desires to coalesce with the Sun.

My Canadian academic career is developing at UBC. I receive great attention from professors and staff, and I'm not just seen as another student, but an individual deserving of such education. I obtain in-class instruction and out-of-class learning as I couple courses with numerous volunteering and work opportunities. I understand professionalism as instructors and employers guide me to new levels of knowledge and specialization. Yes, that implies I'm being more punctual lately!

I am more confident of myself. It's easier to meet people given how friendly Canadians are. I see great opportunities available here - all it takes is some effort to accomplish my dreams.

It's nightfall now. There's a distant drum beating. Its rhythm pounds in my blood. I hope one day, Nana, you can hear and feel it, too.

Love,  
Hafsa