

Worlds Challenge Challenge, Canada

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Following the completion of my third year exams and as an exciting start to the summer before my fourth and final year at the University of Liverpool, I had the opportunity to visit Canada and participate in the 'Worlds Challenge Challenge'. This is a global competition organised by the Western University of London, Ontario and aims to tackle environmental issues by utilising at least one of the United Nations 20 sustainability goals to set up a business. I visited Western University as part of a team of 3: myself and two PHD students, who had successfully won the Liverpool stage of this competition.



The ultimate purpose of this trip was to present our sustainable business idea in a 7 minute presentation to a panel of judges, well versed in sustainability, in front of an audience of both our competitors and also via a livestream to be viewed by people around the globe. The stakes were incredibly high as the prize to be won was a donation of thirty thousand dollars towards the business pitched. I would never have been able to participate in such a competition on the opposite side of the world from where I've grown up without the help of the international mobility fund! The trip itself featured an action packed week full of activities based in and around the Western University campus. These activities ranged from rigorous presentation practice to fancy dinners and regular team building exercises with members of the competitor teams. In order to get involved in the next Worlds Challenge Challenge as I did, you can visit the Western University website and register your interest here-

<https://www.uwo.ca/projects/worldschallengechallenge/>

Whilst this was only a relatively short trip compared to what some of my peers got up to over the summer, the experience was invaluable, and I can reflect on a big difference to my personal and professional development. I met and socialised with people from around the globe and as far away as Australia and Japan that I would never usually interact with. These interactions occurred in relaxed settings where we would go for evening meals of traditional Canadian Poutine but also in more professional environments where I would need a three-piece suit and be eating at the same table as the President of Western University! I definitely feel more confident thanks to this trip as it pushed me far outside of my comfort zone, particularly when giving the final presentation to what felt like a packed room full of hundreds of eyes but was probably in reality only around fifty audience members. In my personal life I am definitely more willing to go out of my way to interact with people that I wouldn't usually and regardless of where people are from, I know that in some way we'll be able to communicate and get along.

This high pressure, jam-packed week of activities and presentations would not have been accessible for me if it had not been for the International Mobility Fund. This award went towards covering the cost of the trip and also incidental costs whilst out in Canada such as my transport to and from the airport (via a very bumpy, lengthy coach journey)! I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity that this afforded me and think that anyone even considering a trip abroad related to their personal and academic development should definitely take the chance.