

Student Finds Values Alignment with Rehabilitation Start-up

Click&Push Accessibility Inc. is an Edmonton-based tech start-up that spun out of the Rehabilitation Robotics Laboratory at the University of Alberta. As a company with the singular mission to serve and improve lives, Click&Push is developing an app called The Atlas. It will serve individuals with mobility challenges by fostering a community that supports user-generated accessibility reporting and niche content.

The Atlas is a GPS-based consumer mobile app application that works much like Google maps. App users are able to enter static and dynamic built environment barriers as well as positive accessibility features they encounter. These barriers and features include sidewalk construction/repair, potholes, gravel, lack of curb cuts, elevator outages, and accessible parking and washrooms. As a multi-sided platform, The Atlas's user-generated data creates value by connecting app users with accessible businesses, and supports advocacy at a local and municipal level for greater accessibility of public spaces.

In January of 2020, as the company grew, the team began searching for extra hands to fulfill their needs. They found the Boosting Biotech Summer Internship program and were able to hire their first student intern. The extra hands proved so valuable, they continued to bring in student support to help drive their technological and business development. Having appreciated their experience with BioAlberta's funding program, they hired another student named Valerie Nadeau. Interested in the healthcare field, Nadeau wanted to explore what a career in Rehabilitation Medicine might look like.

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She then came across a summer student job posting with Click&Push Accessibility, and was intrigued by the opportunity to biotechnology enhance the quality of life for many wheelchair users through the use of their mobile app.

"The experience was phenomenal," Nadeau said. "It has allowed me to learn how to promote accessibility to Edmonton's general public and businesses. It was also eye-opening to see the significant accessibility issue we currently face in our city. The mobile app and the active mapping I did around the city this summer could really make a huge difference in a person's life and help mitigate these issues."

The overall experience has been a remarkable one for Nadeau, she said. For her, the most exciting part for her throughout this experience was communicating with businesses across the city about the accessibility issues we currently face and possibilities for to improvement. As a result, Nadeau said she hopes to continue health research in this field.

Click&Push will continue to grow their team throughout the next year, and is hoping to finish the Atlas for release in early 2022.

"I'll cherish this experience for the rest of my schooling, and honestly the rest of my life," she said. "I really appreciate BioAlberta, and don't think it would've been possible without their support."

Boosting Biotech

The Boosting Biotech initiative is a collaboration of BioAlberta, Innovative Medicines Canada, the Alberta Government, and Western Economic Diversification to support innovation and commercialization of discoveries by Alberta researchers and small and medium sized enterprises in the life sciences sector through experiential learning opportunities.

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