

# It's never too early to give back, says business alumnus Douglas Okero

Douglas Okero, who earned his Business Administration certificate in 2003, has a message for UCFV graduates. "Don't forget where you came from. Don't forget the institution that helped you. Look back and see what you can do for UCFV and its current students."

**D**oug (Cert Bus Admin '03) asked for help as a student and received it, from staff, fellow students, UCFV alumni, and family. For Doug, looking back means reflecting on a journey that has only just begun in his adopted land.

It has been a whirlwind, world-spanning trip for Doug, but he wouldn't have it any other way. Since coming to Canada and the Fraser Valley in 2001, he has completed two top-notch co-op placements, received a top-quality education from UCFV, and secured a full-time job as a printing consultant with Abbotsford Printing.

Doug knew nothing about UCFV

or the Lower Mainland; he just knew he wanted a good education and solid job opportunities upon graduation. He did however have one strong advantage, family in Canada. His uncle had forged a path with his own successes in the Fraser Valley. Now the mayor of Mission, James Atebe had no trouble extolling the virtues and benefits of an education here. It helped too that the Atebe children had themselves expressed a desire to get their post-secondary schooling in their home region. The final draw was UCFV's reputation for small class sizes — the perfect aid to someone eager to learn but unfamiliar with his new surroundings.

Doug packed his things and bid goodbye to his native Nairobi, Kenya.

To say Abbotsford and Mission are a far cry from the heart of East Africa and the millions in Nairobi would be an understatement. But, to his credit, Doug has adapted and today gets teased by his family back in Kenya for his "Canadian" accent.

How do you acclimatize yourself in a new culture? Get involved, which is exactly what Doug did. He helped form the International Development Students club at UCFV and was the first president. What better way to meet other students in a similar situation as yourself, with the same hopes, fears, and issues?

# UCFVgiving

Doug also became active in his community, joining the Rotaract Club of the Lower Fraser Valley and being active in the Mission Folk Music Festival.

What's more, Doug benefited from the UCFV Co-op program while taking his business administration courses. The work-study terms gave him real-world exposure that ultimately helped him land a job.

Not only did the experiences in and out of UCFV give him a unique perspective on his new home, he developed ideals that he holds dear today.

So why give back at such an early stage in his career? By being involved in UCFV, by having an affinity for his university and by taking the experiences into his life outside Doug feels it is right to give back now and support international student development.

“For me looking back it's been a tough road. When I first came here there was nothing for international students in terms of scholarships.” explains Doug. “It was a struggle and there was little financial support. That has changed since



Posters, calendars, catalogs, they do it all. Douglas Okero stands by one of the presses at Abbotsford Printing. “As a printing consultant I’m always meeting interesting people.”

my leaving, but I wanted to do more.”

For Doug, doing something for UCFV translates into a minimum three-year commitment to the International Co-op Student Scholarship, pushing the award to \$500 from its current \$100. He's also creating a new scholarship of

\$500 available to local co-op students.

To Doug, it is about helping others when you know you can. His life taught him that. His time with UCFV has taught him that too.

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By Brian J Martin