GMPA

**STUDYING FOR YOUR PHD – Kelly Habib (CIM member)**

Studying for a PhD presents its own challenges. From deciding where to study to the application process and finding the ideal work/life balance, can be a different experience for each person studying at different countries. Or maybe not?

**Kelly Habib** shares her experiences completing a PhD degree at McGill University in Canada.

**How long does it take to complete a PhD degree in Canada?**
Completion times vary but students typically complete the program in four to six years. In my case, it took me 3 years and 8 months.

**How did you get involved in this area of study/research?**
I met my supervisor at a conference that I was attending with my father who is in the mining industry as well. I was introduced to a professor from McGill University and asked if he was looking for any master's student in his group. I had studied Chemistry for my bachelor's and coincidentally he needed a student with a background in chemistry for a certain project he was working on. The project was on the development on an explosive-free method for the breakage of rock in underground mines using expansive cement. Following my master's degree, I expanded my project and continued with a PhD which allowed us to apply the technology in real mining application.

**Tell us about the process of applying for a PhD?**
The process was not complicated as I was going to continue my studies with the same supervisor from my master's degree. Since my supervisor was willing to keep me in his group and provide the funding, I simply applied through McGill again with a letter of intent, my transcripts from my master's and previous institution and two reference letters.

**What were the factors contribution to the choice of university?**
The two big factors were that McGill University is one of the universities in Montreal that have a strong mining engineering program and I also wanted to live back in my home city, Montreal

**How are PhD degrees funded in the country and how are you doing so?**
The two most common sources of funding are research grants such as NSERC and scholarships such as the McGill Engineering Doctoral Award MEDA which fund part of your Ph.D. salary or provide you with a stipend for a period of 3 years. The selection for the MEDA is assessed once admitted in the program and is based on the excellence of the student academic and research records including their previous publications. Both MEDA and external funding funded my thesis work. The external funding was part of a government Clean Growth Program initiative, through Natural Resources Canada. This program was launched 3 years ago to address climate change and impact on the environment. My supervisor and I applied for this research grant by submitting an extensive research proposal.

**What challenges have you experienced along the way?**
The biggest challenge I faced during my PhD. was the interruption of my lab work during the COVID-19 pandemic time and the time restraint that I had on the funding from the CGP which could not be extended indefinitely. However, with challenges come opportunities. This project allowed me to gain managerial experience and more responsibilities to deliver under tight deadlines. I was very fortunate to travel to present my work at national and international conferences which also helped me to improve my public speaking skills which I lacked before.

**How do you manage work/life balance while studying?**
During my PhD, it was sometimes hard to manage work/life balance. There are times where you are busier than others when deadlines are approaching. Sometimes you may work overtime and on weekends, but this is just the reality of going through a Ph.D. program. However, managing your time well when you are busy and making sure you are doing something for your mental health such as exercising or interacting with your friends is very important.

**Were your expectations met?**
As I am a near the end of my PhD, I feel like I have gotten a lot of opportunities and learning experiences about perseverance and discipline.