

Antarctica becomes a classroom

BY PAUL MAYNE

Put yourself in the place of flying for countless hours in order to catch a ride on a nauseating three-day, 1,000-kilometre boat trip through breaking waves just so you can spend two weeks in the coldest place on earth.

For Dan Hammond, it was the best trip of his life.

"It was simply amazing, just fantastic," says the engineering student, following his recent return from the International Polar Year Antarctic University Expedition, dubbed Students on Ice. Hammond was one of 70 international students to participate in the educational expedition to Antarctica to learn about environmental issues and climate change.

"This was an opportunity to push myself further," says Hammond, already a strong environmental advocate. "It was a chance to network for positive change with students my age from around the world, all with similar interests. My passion has been re-energized and it has given me an opportunity to reflect on where I want to go with my life."

This ship-based field course immersed Hammond in research and lectures by polar experts, educators and researchers. And there was plenty of time to learn on the ship – during a three-day trek across the Drake Passage to get to Antarctica.

"We were literally hanging on in the lecture halls as the ship



© Students on Ice. 2009

Western Engineering student Dan Hammond spent two weeks in the frigid temperatures of Antarctica - and loved every minute of it.

rocked back and forth," says Hammond. "Once you got used to the swaying things got a bit better."

Upon arrival, Hammond

found a world difficult to put into words.

"Every stop was so awe-inspiring and unique," he says. "Everyone asks me what my favourite part of the trip was, but I honestly can't pick just one. How do you explain one day walking amongst the penguins, the next day hiking up a volcano, the next day scaling a glacier wall, watching an active glacier fall into the bay... you can't describe this in simple words."

While views were spectacular, the learning focus was on the environmental devastation of one of the most majestic and unique, yet isolated ecosystems on the planet.

"My idea of creating change needs an interdisciplinary approach. The more (people) that get involved, the more that can happen," says Hammond, who helped take ice samples for glaciological analysis.

While important to experience this for himself, sharing the story is also important. The first opportunity will be Friday and Saturday at an environmental fair at the

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Engineering student Dan Hammond

Spencer Engineering Building.

Exploring Sustainable Innovations and Solutions runs 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day in SEB 1001 (Undergraduate Engineering Society Resource Room) and features corporate booths, student projects, displays and research posters. Hammond will also speak, at a later date, during the University Students' Council Speaker Series.

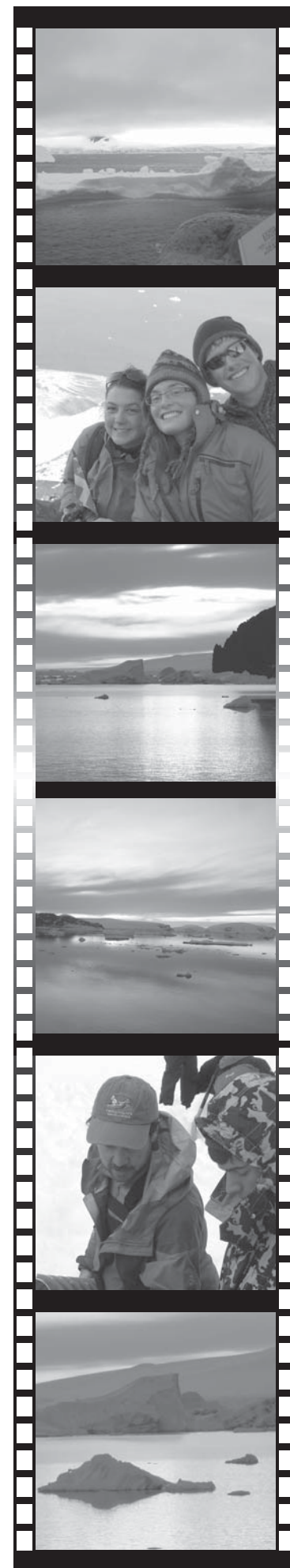
"There is no one way to solve the (environmental) problem," says Hammond. "It doesn't take much on an individual basis to make a substantive change to our planet. I have faith in humanity."

Read more about Hammond in Antarctica at www.uantarctic.org.



Photos courtesy of Dan Hammond

Penguins are just one of the many residents of Antarctica Dan Hammond came across during his two-week Students on Ice adventure.



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