

# SIAST business and industry dinners

## The power of networking

By Sheila Bautz  
For L-P Specialty Products

When it comes to job seeking, who you know can help. And you're likely to get an introduction at the 2013 SIAST business and industry dinners, presented by Graham Group Ltd. The dinners give employers and students a valuable networking opportunity from which students could walk away with new contacts, mentors in their industry or even a job offer.

"The business and industry dinners have become SIAST's signature event in our campus communities. The events provide SIAST with the opportunity to achieve three very important goals: connecting SIAST students with prospective employers, celebrating the partnership between SIAST and industry, and raising funds for scholarships and bursaries that support student success," said Pam McLellan, director of Donor and Alumni Relations at SIAST. "The dinners have grown significantly over the last five years. I think that reflects the high demand for SIAST graduates, and the critical role SIAST graduates play in the sustainable development of Saskatchewan's economy."

### Job opportunities

Employers are seated with SIAST students who are studying in the field of that employer's business or industry. Seated together, the SIAST student and industry employer have the opportunity to connect. The result is lively conversation that includes industry updates, discussion about current practices and market evaluation.

Both employers and students benefit from the arrangement. Students have the opportunity to gain valuable insight from industry experts and practice being interviewed. Employers can informally interview and meet qualified prospects to fulfill upcoming hiring needs. Oftentimes, resumés and business cards are exchanged and the connections made at the event continue to grow. In some instances, the introduction at a business and industry dinner can lead to a job offer.

During March, the SIAST business and industry dinners are being held in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon. The growing numbers are an indication of the increasing success of the event. This year, more than 1,200 guests are expected at the dinners, with approximately 480 attendees in Moose Jaw, 190 attendees in Prince Albert, 300 attendees in Regina and 400 attendees in Saskatoon.

### Celebrating the connection of SIAST and industry

While the event connects students with industry, it also celebrates the partnership between SIAST and industry. With more than 150 programs at SIAST, the employers represented at the event are diverse. SIAST serves 26,000 distinct students with programs that touch every sector of the economy. SIAST operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

Program offerings are based on industry needs in such fields as engineering technologies, science and health, business, community services, and nursing. In recent years, SIAST has added Mining Engineering Technology, Business Information Systems and Funeral Services programs in response to industry demand. The demand for employees in various industry sectors has created a 30 per cent enrolment growth at SIAST over the past four years.

"With the economy growing, people with specific industry training are in huge demand," said McLellan. "SIAST business dinners support student training and what industry needs. We like to say our programs range from 'brake work to blood work.' And, as our president and CEO Dr. Larry Rosia says, 'If every SIAST graduate stopped working for an hour, the province would grind to a halt.'"

"The knowledge and skills students develop through their education at SIAST are instrumental for when they enter the workforce," said June Verhelst, vice-president of Industrial Saskatchewan at Graham Group Ltd, the presenting sponsor.

"SIAST graduates are very well-equipped to resolve challenges and adapt to new opportunities that either the construction industry or a particular job site present. Graham is proud to sponsor this event and we look forward to continuing our relationship with SIAST and its graduates."

With smaller classroom sizes at SIAST campuses, there is an advantage and benefit for students to receive one-on-one, focused training with instructors. Further, every SIAST program combines theory with the hands-on application of that knowledge. This practical learning provides an advantage when SIAST grads are job seeking, contributing to a consistently high graduate employment rate. The most recent SIAST graduate employment survey found that 93 per cent of grads were employed approximately six months after graduation, surpassing the youth employment rate



Netha Dyck, dean of SIAST Nursing, with Bonita Linklater, SIAST Practical Nursing program alumna (2006) and award recipient.

Photo supplied by SIAST

in Saskatchewan.

"I think that speaks clearly about how SIAST works with industry," said McLellan. "The bottom line is that SIAST grads get jobs with our curriculum and training — that's our goal."

Graduates often become business and industry leaders, saying that SIAST opened the door of possibilities for them. Alumni participate in the business and industry dinners as speakers or return as industry reps looking for employees.

### Funding scholarships and bursaries

Funds raised at the business and industry dinners are part of the \$1.5 million in scholarships and bursaries that are available to SIAST students each year. The Ministry of Advanced Education matches money raised at the business and industry dinners through its Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity program. After matching,

SIAST will be able to provide an estimated \$275,000 in scholarships and bursaries to students in the next academic year.

For more information about how you and your business can become involved, contact the Donor and Alumni relations office by calling 306-659-3733 or visiting [www.gosiasst.com](http://www.gosiasst.com) and clicking on "Giving."

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