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Danielle Tait to receive inaugural Young Alumnus Achievement Award

In the six short years since she graduated with a Bachelor of Management, Danielle Tait's (BMgt '10) career has been marked by significant achievements at a world-class art gallery.

First hired as special events coordinator in 2008, she worked her way through a variety of positions to become associate director at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (SAAG) in June of 2013. In addition to managing increased job responsibilities, Tait gives back to her community through her involvement with the local chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and as a board member for Economic Development Lethbridge. She has done volunteer work with groups in Tanzania and has supported a number of volunteer organizations, like the Rotary Club of Lethbridge Urban Spirits. All these accomplishments make her a most worthy recipient of the University of Lethbridge Alumni Association's inaugural Young Alumnus Achievement Award.

The award recognizes U of L alumni—wherever they may be in the world—who are 35 or younger and have demonstrated leadership in their field or in their volunteer efforts, in their service to humanity and who are role models for graduating students.

"We are extremely proud to recognize Danielle with our first ever Young Alumnus Achievement Award," says Randy Kobbert (BMgt '86), president of the U of L Alumni Association (ULAA). "Her professionalism and community-mindedness demonstrate her commitment to excellence, her passion for the not-for-profit art sector and her enthusiasm for SAAG."

"I felt honoured and flattered and very surprised," says Tait as she recalls the moment she learned she was being recognized.

As part of the award, Tait will be delivering the keynote speech at a breakfast for graduating students to be held on March 31.

Tait, who majored in marketing and graduated with distinction, says her U of L education gave her a solid foundation for what has become a successful career. While she was still a student, Tait worked at SAAG through a co-op placement. She coordinated special events, including two major fundraisers. After her co-op term was complete, she was hired by the gallery to plan another special event—a retirement party for former curator Joan Stebbins.

“It was the best introduction to the gallery I could have ever had,” says Tait. “It was a really in-depth look at the history of SAAG and it gave me a greater understanding of the gallery and exposed me to so many artists and their exhibitions.”

Following that event, the gallery hired Tait as its first manager of fund development in 2009. Even though she was still in school full-time, she took some applied studies courses that allowed her to use the theory she was learning in the classroom and apply it in a real-world setting.

Her current duties allow her to use many aspects of her education in management. She’s involved in human resources, works with SAAG’s board of directors, manages the gallery’s finances and budgeting, supervises administrative staff and oversees fundraising events. In her role, and as a charter member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Tait has built a network of relationships throughout the community.

Tait comes from a family of accountants and enrolled at the U of L with the intention of following the family career path. However, after the first couple of accounting courses, she realized it wasn’t the career for her. She was enjoying her marketing classes and chose to put her focus there.

She credits the Faculty of Management for teaching her how to craft a resumé, create a presentation, participate in mock job interviews, work in groups and speak in public.

“Starting university, I was very quiet and shy and the thought of getting up to speak in front of anybody would cause me to lose sleep. Now I do it all the time as part of my job and the experience I got at university brought out that confidence in me,” she says. “Ultimately, I have the University to thank for what’s now become a rewarding and enriching career. When I began my studies 10 years ago, I never would have imagined that I would end up as associate director at one of the most important contemporary art galleries in the country. I’m very grateful.”

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