

How US PSEs are plugging the "brain drain"

As the "brain drain" battle wages on, a number of U.S. public colleges and universities are turning towards specific initiatives to retain valuable faculty. Boosting faculty salaries is a primary pre-emptive tactic. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Workology

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Expansion in Ottawa

Ottawa's two universities are seeking out more space to keep up with the rising student population. The University of Ottawa has issued a request for proposals to house its library warehouse while Carleton University seeks expansion as well.

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Hop, skip and a jump to flip, soar and a leap

OddJobs

Diane Peters



Ever wonder what those lithe gymnasts romping across the mat in China this week will do when they grow up? You can't vault competitively forever.

But you can flip, soar, leap and balance for pay audiences, at least in your late thirties.

That's what Montrealler Stacy Clark, 38, does. She started gymnastics at age six and competed at the national level until a back injury made her quit in her mid-teens. "It was hugely disappointing. When you do a sport like that, which takes up so much of your time, it really defines you." She then had a "normal" life and went to Ryerson for media arts and got a job in advertising in Toronto.

She was 26 when she saw an outdoor flying trapeze rig and people doing aerial stunts. "Wow, I really have to try that," she said to herself. So she signed up for a circus class at Harbourfront Centre and took to it immediately. Eventually, she was taking classes four nights a



After vaulting competitively, Stacey Clark turned it into a career.

week.

She met professional dancer Robin Szuch and the two worked well together. Realizing no one in Canada was doing circus work as street performers, they created High Strung Aerial Dance in 2000. They had a portable 20-foot-high trapeze made and landed their first gig within a few months.

Weekends were soon filled with outdoor performances in summer and corporate gigs in winter. Clark kept working, but her

boss gave her the summer of 2003 off to perform. She quit the following spring when the company was offered, in quick succession, work on a TV show, a trip to Japan and a job with the Canadian Opera Company.

High Strung's street show combines theatre, comedy, acrobatics and aerial stunts. Clark wears a bun and plays the "straight" character while Szuch wears pigtails and is a total goof.

The show takes a lot of energy, strength and flexibility. On non performance

The Lowdown

Job title: Aerialist
Salary: "I make as much as I did as an account director at an advertising agency."
Education: While Clark went the recreational training route, there are accredited circus schools across the country
Best part of the job: "Keeping fit is a perk, but the best part is that I love it."
Worst part of the job: "We don't have a crew, so we have to do everything ourselves."

days, to keep in top condition — not to mention looking great in her spandex costume — Clark either runs or does yoga.

While maybe not as grueling as competitive athletics, this is a physical job that Clark knows she can't do forever. She recently moved back to Montreal to take a job with Cirque du Soleil as a talent scout. Her employer, of course, lets her take time off for performances.

"If my body hurts and I'm not having fun, then I don't want to do this," she says of her exit plan. "But right now, it's the greatest job on earth. We've performed in hail and in the pouring rain and we always have fun."

Diane Peters once hawked magic pens at the Canadian National Exhibition. She's now a writer and part-time journalism instructor.

Family carpet business has an irresistible draw

ANDREW KING
for Metro Vancouver



In the 1970s, Mohammad Salari followed his heritage by starting a Persian rug store in Germany before moving the rugs and his family to Vancouver in the late eighties.

Now his son Sasan has continued what his father started.

"I decided I didn't want to sit in front of a computer for 12 hours a day," said Sasan Salari, who had been tinkering with a career in technology before choosing rugs full-time.

Salari worked in the family business part-time as a student, but he never thought he would end up taking over the business.

"There's something that's just very satisfying about going in. You come into the store, you open the door, you smell the rugs ... over the last year or two I really decided (this was) what I wanted to do."

He knew that if he wanted the business to succeed, he would have to change the way people think of a carpet store.

Salari transformed rug shopping into a unique experience, modelling the showroom after an art gallery by hanging Persian rugs from the walls like canvases.

"We tried to look at the business in a completely

different way," said Salari. "When people think of a Persian rug store or a carpet store you know you think of piles on the floor ... when people come to our showroom it's something that's unexpected."

"It's really more of a showroom, a gallery, re-focussing on the art and the artistry."

He said that the home re-modelling craze and countless reality home renovation shows have also helped draw more customers and their designers to the store.

"I think people are a lot more aware of what's out there to some degree," he said, adding that the majority of his customers are well versed in carpet design and know what they are looking for.

When asked whether he hopes his two-year-old son will one day want to take over the business, he said: "I think I want to say 'No, I wish he didn't. You always want to them to do something else and strike off on their own path, but you never know, the draw, it might pull him in.'"

"He's definitely going to be working there in the summers. That's for sure."



Sasan Salari

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