Sophie HOWE'11

Before the rest of the world adopted "machine learning", "device agnostic", "AI" and "middleware" as buzzwords to tack onto products deemed to be on the cutting edge of technology, I was driving back and forth between Toronto and Kitchener/Waterloo, wrapping my head around the nuances of these foreign concepts and how to communicate them to the layperson.

In 2014, I co-founded Xesto, a machine learning start-up, with my business partner, whom I had met at the University of Toronto while I was studying commerce and he was in computer science.

As many say and few will experience, the life of a start-up founder is one of volatility: you believe your idea and vision will change the world, but the highs are high and the lows are low. Xesto operates in two spaces: the gesture recognition space and the artificial intelligence space. We make it easy to make applications touchless and interactive, and machine learning is an integral part of how we do this.

Through perseverance and hard work, my weekly trips from Toronto to Waterloo have changed to bi-weekly trips from Toronto to Silicon Valley. By winter 2018, my company will be closing a $1.3 million seed round and we'll expand our team and build machine-learning tools that will one day be powering the tech you hold in your hands.

Branksome prepared me well for my current experiences: work hard, hold yourself accountable and believe in yourself.

Sarah ROSENBLAT'10

I am a project coordinator for SWEB Development, which is the North American arm of the renewable energy development company W.E.B Windenergie AG.

At SWEB, we develop wind and solar projects across the Eastern and Central regions of Canada, as well as the in the Northeastern states. My focus is on solar development in Massachusetts. I find potential land for new commercial-scale solar sites and ensure the solar projects get through permitting, interconnection, construction, and then into commercial operation. I also assist the wind development team by liaising between our company and the regional transmission organization, such as the Independent System Operator for New England (ISO-NE).

My interest in the renewable energy field was tweaked during my time at university. At Queen's, my degree was in Geography and Environmental Studies, but during those years, I also earned a Geographic Information Science (GIS) Certificate. At Dalhousie University, I completed a Master's in Resource and Environmental Management, where I focused on the spatial correlations of energy efficiency.

It was my background in GIS and interest in the energy field that led me to apply for the GIS project coordinator position at SWEB. I am now in the heart of renewable energy development.
The future looks bright for renewable energy across North America, and I am excited to see where it takes me.