

Norris takes us behind the scenes at the Calgary airport

At the Calgary Airport, a passenger checks in for a flight, and watches his suitcase glide away behind the counter. Below him, a woman sighs with relief as the conveyor springs to life and luggage begins to appear. For the traveler, the baggage system is a mystery of the airport that starts and ends the trip. For **Kirsten Norris, ASNT '06**, the magic of keeping the conveyor moving smoothly is part of a regular day at work.

The Automated Systems Engineering Technology program at SAIT is not always familiar to people, but it is becoming increasingly important for today's technology-reliant society. From programming the computer systems to assembling the mechanisms, the ASNT program prepares students for designing and maintaining the systems that keep our modern world running.

As a Technician/Electrician Apprentice for MJF Mechanical Ltd., Norris is contracted out to The Calgary Airport Authority to maintain the automated baggage system. Equipment from Siemens and Jarvis Webb provide the muscle, and Rockwell software allows Norris to use her SAIT education to keep the system flowing.

Norris was always interested in technology and engineering. Her older sister became an electrical engineer, and she dreamed of following her into an engineering field. She didn't know much about Automated Systems Engineering when she began the program, but by her second year, she was working on an ALS Laboratories flashpoint testing project: an automated system that tested the



ignition point of chemical vapour without human intervention.

Like other programs at SAIT, the training in ASNT goes beyond the technical realm of automated projects. "SAIT not only taught me what I needed to know for automation systems," says Norris, "but how to handle myself in the real world." Her instructors had worked in the field, and brought their experience to help prepare the students. "Since then, I have already faced some of the challenges they said I would. Because of those instructors, those challenges weren't nearly as hard to handle."

Despite the importance of automated technology in our society, ASNT is still a growing program at SAIT. "Each year the lab gets something new, something that will give more and more experience for the graduates going into the workforce" says Norris. With the constant improvement, graduates will embark on careers in a new world of automated technology.

Norris plans to continue her work with the Calgary Airport, so long as travelers know she is not the one to blame when their luggage is lost. 📦

Lauren Shaw