Co-operative and Experiential Education

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO Co-operative and Experiential Education
ABOUT CO-OPERATIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION (CEE)

OUR VISION
Connecting imagination with impact for a better world through global leadership in co-operative and career education, experiential and work-integrated learning (WIL).

OUR MISSION
By developing talent for a complex future, advancing research and strengthening Waterloo’s sustainable and diverse communities, we will equip and empower learners for the future of work and lifelong learning.

We will do so through the work of our many portfolios, including:
› Office of the Associate Provost
› CEE Business Services
› Centre for Career Action
› Co-operative Education
› International Strategic Initiatives
› WIL Programs
› Work-Learn Institute (WxL)

Our work is guided by five strategic priorities:

- **Demonstrate global leadership**
- **Advance research for global impact**
- **Future proof students**
- **Future proof employers**
- **Future proof ourselves**
The last two years have tested and challenged our community here at the University of Waterloo and around the globe. Despite these obstacles, our staff at Co-operative and Experiential Education (CEE) rallied to support our students and employers in their success.

I am incredibly proud of the work completed within CEE to facilitate quality work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for our students. From spring 2021 to winter 2022, we witnessed a cohort of more than 23,000 students hired for jobs at organizations across the globe – the most students ever hired. Achieving this significant milestone despite many ongoing economic and global challenges is a testament to the strong foundation and reputational excellence we have established for CEE and the University of Waterloo both in Canada and around the world.

The workforce we recognize today will continue to change drastically in the next decade. In fact, by 2028, 58 per cent of the workforce will consist of Millennials and Gen Z. Many will hold jobs that do not yet exist. The value of WIL in preparing students with the skills to navigate developing industries is a proven way to help students feel more prepared to enter the workforce. In the coming years, we will continue to expand our portfolio of work to ensure that all Waterloo students have opportunities to participate in WIL.

With global challenges including recessions, political division and global warming, the future remains uncertain. Organizations must recruit and engage talent with the skills to innovate and adapt to navigate these challenges. Our Future Ready Talent Framework continues to assist students and organizations in understanding the value of skill transferability and of building key competencies that will be critical in the future. Instilling students with a sense of purpose in their career choices will also be essential in maintaining their motivation in a volatile and uncertain world.

The CEE strategic plan, established in 2020, will continue to act as our critical roadmap as we recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also continue to inform the expansion of our portfolio, especially as we look to increase partnerships with organizations and institutions from around the world, increase value to our employers and work to further future-proof ourselves.

Our foundation is strong and I look forward to working to further build upon the legacy established by more than 64 years of co-operative and experiential education here at Waterloo.
CEE is committed to mobilizing our unique resources, knowledge and leadership within our associations and collaborations with government and industry to grow and strengthen a robust global experiential learning ecosystem. This includes a focus on developing a deeper understanding of diversity, accessibility, sustainability and intercultural effectiveness within ourselves and our stakeholders.

**CEE’s employability rankings and innovation in WIL make headlines**

- **Waterloo rises in employability rankings:** 24th in the world and top five per cent among participating institutions in the 2022 QS Graduate Employability Rankings.
- **Giving students an EDGE:** From inception to doubling enrollment since the program’s start, students who are not in co-op programs speak to the success of this experiential education certificate program.
- **Waterloo co-op program sets record-highs in post-pandemic workforce:** In 2021, more than 23,000 students were hired on co-op work terms.
- **WIL is changing with the times:** CEE launched the WE Accelerate program – a new style of WIL specifically designed to provide an alternative for students without a co-op job on their first work term.

**Beyond digital: Accelerate with the skills you need**

The world is experiencing a significant digital shift as technology evolves the way we work – it is more important than ever to develop future-relevant skills and be able to use them across industries. Our expert panel of leaders from Microsoft, RBC and University of Waterloo explored the digital acceleration, what students and young professionals can do to thrive in the future of work, and what industry and universities can do to help.

**HOSTED THE FIRST VIRTUAL GLOBAL CONFERENCE**

of the World Association for Co-operative Education (WACE)
AWARDED
$500K
from the Global Skills Opportunity Fund for the Powering Change Project

26 GLOBAL SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

TOP 25
in the world
QS GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY RANKINGS

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

› World Association for Co-operative Education (WACE)
› Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada
› Co-operative Education & Internship Association (CEIA)
› Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning Ontario (EWO)
› Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE)

#1 IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
MACLEAN’S UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

CEE RESEARCH AND EXPERTISE
FEATURED IN 110 LOCAL AND GLOBAL MEDIA STORIES
The Work-Learn Institute (WxL) is the only research unit of its kind investigating the development of talent through quality WIL programs. Drawing on the world’s largest database of student and employer data (WaterlooWorks), WxL supports a research-based evolution of co-op and WIL to meet the changing demands of the labour market.

This research led to the development of the Future Ready Talent Framework (FRTF) – a tool to help students, employers and educators understand the competencies we all need to navigate the future of work and learning.

uwaterloo.ca/future-ready-talent-framework

Higher education institutions are looking to be allies for change and to help achieve the SDGs (un.org/sustainabledevelopment) through teaching, WIL, research and partnerships. Both the institutions and students play a vital role in taking on global challenges and ensuring a sustainable future.

Our study found that 13 per cent of students from the University of Waterloo’s Faculty of Environment carried out work related to the SDGs. They include zero hunger, quality education, and clean water and sanitation.

Universities can play a role in developing students who are ready to take on global challenges and bring those skills to the future workforce. Employers can play a key role in engaging students during a critical moment in their young careers.

The study, Improving engagement of interns and employers with the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) found that further engagement of co-op students (or interns) with the SDGs is required for them to be true agents of change in maintaining a sustainable world.

As a result of the study, Waterloo initiated a pilot program to further understand co-op student and employer perception of their engagement with the SDGs. Based on the approaches of the collaborators, the researchers implemented a self-guided exploration instrument in Spring 2021 across all international internships – whether done remotely or in-person abroad. Eventually, the goal is to extend the activity to domestic co-op terms.
Gen Z: Changing the world one co-op at a time

With so much uncertainty in the world, Jahanvi Desai (BES) doesn’t know exactly what her career will look like, but she is certain about one thing: she wants to engage in meaningful work. Like many Waterloo students, Desai is using her co-op experience to engage in work that advances the SDGs.

Whether it’s testing soil samples near Lake Erie, managing social media at a non-profit organization, or helping develop affordable housing, co-op work terms give Waterloo students an opportunity to make a social, environmental and economic impact at organizations around the world.

“Our programs offer outstanding opportunities abroad, and we can use those opportunities to determine how students play a role in creating a more sustainable future.”

Shabnam Ivkovic, Director, international strategic initiatives

Subscribe to WxL’s Insight newsletter to hear about events and research.
FUTURE PROOF OUR STUDENTS

A TIMELINE of Waterloo’s new WE Accelerate Program

APRIL 2021
Pilot program unveiled

MAY 2021
First cohort begins

DECEMBER 2021
570 students complete the program in its first two terms

JANUARY 2022
WE Accelerate continues through 2022 and beyond

uwat.ca/ZUL
WE Accelerate students turn a hopeful outcome into a rousing reality

It can be challenging enough to be a first work term student looking for a co-op job without adding a global pandemic to the equation. Yet, in 2021, that is exactly what many students faced.

Aseel Osman chose to enroll in the pilot offering of Waterloo Experience (WE) Accelerate for her first work term. And now, a year later, the decision is paying dividends. The Engineering student used her experience in the Digital Bootcamp stream of WE Accelerate to secure a position as a growth marketing intern at Sleek.

WE Accelerate is available to co-op students from all six faculties who are not able to secure a job in their first work term. Launched in Spring 2021, the program focuses on developing in-demand skills that student can leverage to work in a variety of future co-op positions.

This innovative program gives students the opportunity to solve real-world business problems and to choose from a variety of skill streams, including artificial intelligence and human-centered design. The skill streams and projects are developed in collaboration with employers like D2L, Deloitte, Manulife, Microsoft, Vidyard and University of Waterloo incubators.

“I remember when I got the interview, they were saying, ‘Oh, wow, we really didn’t think an engineering student would apply to this job.’ However, when they saw my resume, they were happy with all the experience that I ended up getting from WE Accelerate.”

Aseel Osman, Nanotechnology engineering student and WE Accelerate pilot participant

“If it weren’t for WE Accelerate, I don’t know if the co-op experience would have been as smooth as it was. I think the main thing employers are looking for is experience. Building a project with other students and working in a small company really helped me stand out and gave me what I was missing.”

Shaili Kadakia, Mathematics student and WE Accelerate pilot participant

“They were fire coming out of the gate. They contributed and were making recommendations that we liked. That was impressive.”

Charlotta Carter, Founder and CEO, LLENA (AI) and a WE Accelerate project provider

WXL HAS BEEN AWARDED A HEQCO GRANT

to study WE Accelerate outcomes in reversing unemployment
FUTURE PROOF OUR STUDENTS

Our research-backed Future Ready Talent Framework has been incorporated into co-op student evaluations, work term consultations, professional development courses and career workshops.

Co-op students rate their experience 8.5/10

23.5K+ Co-op work terms in 2021

1,114 New online learning assistant co-op positions created to support the transition to online learning during the pandemic

95% of co-op students were rated very good to outstanding by their employers for their paid work terms

4.5K Students completed PD1 – Career Fundamentals

Getting students job-ready by developing and receiving feedback on their cover letter and resume, practicing interview skills and learning to navigate their co-op job search

Centre for Career Action held 8,185 one-on-one appointments with students and staff

NEW in 2021

PD8 Intercultural Skills

Already our most popular elective – had over 2,300 enrollments and a satisfaction rating of 96%
Six women recognized as 2021 Co-op Student of the Year winners

From providing engaging social media for non-profits to developing an iOS app, University of Waterloo’s Co-op Students of the Year made a difference in 2021.

This year, six women were recognized for their exemplary performance amid another pandemic year of in-person, hybrid and remote work.

Each year, one student from each faculty at Waterloo is presented with a Co-op Student of the Year Award for exceptional contributions to their employers.

“To announce six outstanding women as our students of the year during a month when International Women’s Day falls is particularly special.”

Norah McRae, Associate provost, Co-operative and Experiential Education

Check out our Co-op Student of the Year page for more information on the winners
uwat.ca/ZUM

OUR CO-OP MEMBERS
ARE HIGHLY RATED
BY THEIR EMPLOYERS
FUTURE PROOF OUR STUDENTS

Co-op for Community program gives Waterloo students opportunity to help non-profit sector

uwat.ca/ZUA

Co-op for Community is a unique partnership between United Way Waterloo Region Communities and the University. The donor-funded program creates meaningful co-op jobs for Waterloo students from all disciplines to work at local non-profits that are affiliated with the United Way and need talent. Donations to the program go directly to support Waterloo co-op students.

Steve Menich believes that students can help build strong communities through working with non-profit organizations.

In 2004, Steve’s parents, Stephen and Eve Menich, made a generous gift to CEE, establishing a unique program that pays for students to become valuable staff resources at the United Way. Today, Steve and his wife Mary Ellen continue this impactful tradition.

THANKS TO GENEROUS DONORS, 12 STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO GIVE BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY through fully-funded work terms with the United Way
Based on his own meaningful experience as a co-op student during his time at Waterloo, Michael Steel and the Steel Family Foundation wanted to support non-profit organizations while helping students build their careers. The Steel Family Foundation established the Feridun Hamdullahpur Change Makers in Co-op program to fund positions at non-profit organizations.

“The next generation of talent wants to see their contributions affect their organization in meaningful ways. Co-op for Community provides opportunities for students to take their skills and energy and apply them in a way where they can see real impact.”

Norah McRae, Associate provost, Co-operative and Experiential Education

Michael Steele (BASc ’81) and his spouse Stacey know first-hand how the influence of an individual or event can change the course of a career – or even a life. Through awards sponsored by the Steele Family Foundation, they are giving University of Waterloo students the chance to find life-changing opportunities and experiences.

“When you donate to the Co-op for Community program, you’re giving us the opportunity to build skillsets, learn more about the non-profit sector and help others.”

Megan Logan, Arts and Business student
FUTURE PROOF OUR EMPLOYERS

Insights from the Work-Learn Institute’s (WxL) research can guide employers on how to implement a quality WIL program that builds a talent pipeline to add considerable value to an organization. WxL provides employers with consultations, customized insights and training programs to improve workforce recruitment, onboarding, upskilling and retention.

2020 EMPLOYER IMPACT AWARD RECIPIENTS

- **IMPACT IN INNOVATION**
  Geotab

- **IMPACT IN INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE**
  ASSA ABLOY

- **IMPACT IN RESEARCH**
  Odette Cancer Centre

- **IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE**
  Polar

- **IMPACT ON SUSTAINABILITY**
  Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy

45% OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS POSTED JOBS in WaterlooWorks after attending one of our co-op fundamentals sessions

90+ ATTENDEES at our Building the future manufacturing workforce event

WE CELEBRATED OUR EMPLOYERS by recognizing excellence and impact in the areas of innovation, international excellence, research, sustainability, and student experience with Employer Impact Awards

uwaterloo.ca/hire/cee-impact-awards
Axonify, a leader in training and communication solutions, helps frontline employees globally through its online learning management system.

They have hired University of Waterloo co-op students since 2016 in roles such as JavaScript developers, quality assurance analysts and product management support specialists. Andrea Vrbanac (she/her), vice president of people & culture at Axonify, gives us her insights on how the company attracts and retains early student talent:

“Co-op students bring creative energy and new perspectives to our team. Their impact and eagerness to contribute in a meaningful way is celebrated across the business, with accomplishments being recognized through our ‘Values in Action’ Slack channel during regular company update meetings. Employment of co-op students also gives our employees the opportunity to mentor bright and enthusiastic students, further enriching the experience of students and full-time Axonifiers alike.”
STRATEGIC PRIORITY

FUTURE PROOF OURSELVES

With the aim of fostering a culture of engagement, transparency and continuous improvement, we are implementing new onboarding and development processes. These include:

- foundational information about the Future Ready Talent Framework,
- equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism best practices,
- workforce planning,
- improving internal and external communications, and
- building self-awareness and intercultural skills.

**Wellness activities help CEE staff connect and recharge through challenging times**

[uwat.ca/ZUe](http://uwat.ca/ZUe)

While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted operations for various groups around campus, the Wellness Committee looked for ways to keep CEE staff connected when working remotely.

Formed in 2019, CEE’s Wellness Committee aligns itself with the University of Waterloo’s Wellness Collaborative. Currently, the committee has 16 members from across CEE’s six units.

CEE’s Wellness Committee prioritizes “mental wellness, spiritual wellness, sense of belonging, active living and healthy eating, and commitment to wellness at all levels,” explains Ross Johnston, executive director of Co-operative Education and founder of the committee. To promote these values, the Wellness Committee hosted 36 virtual events for staff, including mental health workshops, cooking classes, seminars and trivia.
“So often people talk about mental health and wellbeing, but they don’t put things into action. Not only does the Wellness Committee talk about the importance, they put on a wellness week to focus on mental health.”

Michelle Maree, CEE Wellness Committee representative
STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS AND FUTURE MILESTONES

GOAL

Continue to lead the world in co-operative education and support the workforce of the future through fully-integrated academic and experiential learning opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

› Leverage Waterloo’s employer, industry, government and alumni networks to enhance our connection to the community, Canada and the world.

› Continue to demonstrate global prominence in the development, recruitment and retention of future-ready talent, with a focus on building a diverse workforce.

› Increase interdisciplinary opportunities for co-op students to gain locally and globally relevant research experience.
Securing and advancing global leadership

**ACTION**

In 2023, CEE will host the global WACE Conference – an international conference focused on research and advancements in WIL. Industry leaders from more than 40 countries and 100 institutions will be invited to attend the conference in Waterloo to share learnings and advance the understanding, practice and leadership of co-operative education and WIL.

Further implementation of the FRTF

**ACTIONS**

› In 2022-23, we will further integrate the FRTF into the academic review process to create stronger alignment between academic courses and the WIL environment.
› We are developing new offerings including a pre-WIL experience course for graduate students centered around the FRTF.
› In 2023, we will host our first annual employer impact conference to further engage employers with key elements of the FRTF and SDGs while building collaborative relationships.

Increased impact on UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

**ACTION**

CEE’s international strategic initiatives will implement activities to support the SDGs in work term evaluations and launch a web page to highlight activities, opportunities and supports related to the SDGs and WIL.

Diversifying WIL opportunities and expanded models of WIL

**ACTIONS**

› WIL Programs will become the Centre for Work-Integrated Learning to better reflect the growing portfolio which includes programs (e.g., EDGE, WE Accelerate, Grad WIL), courses (e.g., WatPD) and other WIL-focused curriculum and strategic initiatives to help students see connections between WIL experiences and classroom learning.
› As WE Accelerate becomes an ongoing offering, our focus is to track student employment outcomes over time to understand its impact on future employment rates as compared to students employed in traditional co-op work terms.

Embedding equity in WIL

**ACTION**

In 2022, an Associate Director of Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and anti-Racism (EDI-R) and an Associate Director of Indigenous Relations will join CEE. These new positions report to the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and anti-Racism and the Office of Indigenous Relations, respectively. These roles will develop action plans for CEE in alignment with the direction from both offices.