Purpose: To address the question, "What is the perceived value of graduates' professional work experience in early career hiring decisions?"

Methodology: An electronic survey was emailed to 10,000+ U.S. employers who regularly hired graduating seniors from 4-year colleges/universities.

Key Findings: What hiring managers valued above all else was the relevance of graduates' professional experiences to their post-graduation entry-level position of interest.

Practitioner Thoughts By Kelly Mahoney (Director, Career Development & Co-operative Education, Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba)

What insights did you gain from reading this article that were useful to you?

This research article reinforced empirically many of the assumptions I have made over the years working as a career services professional, supporting both students and employers. In particular, the important competitive advantage that students gain by acquiring relevant, professional work experience related to their field of studies while in university. Of particular interest to me was the positive correlation between professional work experience, receiving full time job offers at graduation, and initial and long term earning potential. This supports the critical work PSI’s are doing within the space of work-integrated learning to enhance students’ career success.

One challenge was that the research consisted of only U.S. participants. It would be interesting to see if these results remained consistent across other countries, especially in the Canadian context. One surprise for me was the preference expressed by employers for non university-affiliated work experience versus university-affiliated internship experience. I would question whether the internships included in the study were mandatory or optional? Paid or unpaid? How might these factors affect an employer’s perception of value? The other interesting finding was the preference for off-campus versus on-campus experience. How would these results vary given a specific discipline or major? Finally, length of work experience. It was interesting to see that employers’ perceived value of a university-affiliated work experience is positively impacted after a shorter length of time versus a non-university affiliated work experience - it took longer for students participating in non-university affiliated work experiences to gain credibility with employers than those engaged in a university-affiliated internship. Again, this may not apply in the Canadian context as internships in the U.S. tend to be shorter than traditional Canadian co-op work terms.

After reading this research article, I am committed to continuing to provide relevant experiential learning opportunities for my students as a means of ensuring successful transitions after graduation to meaningful and rewarding career outcomes.
Purpose: To explore the perceived professional development needs of work-integrated learning (WIL) practitioners from around the world.

Methodology: An online international survey was conducted with 668 WIL practitioners from 21 countries.

Key Findings: The survey results provide insight into the demographics of the international WIL community. Many participants reported that they have already received professional development in WIL; however, many also expressed needs in a number of different topic areas.

Practitioner Thoughts by Cora Dupuis (Co-operative Program Coordinator, Brandon University)

What insights did you gain from reading this article that were useful to you?

This is a timely and relevant piece. In the demographic data, I saw myself and my experience reflected, but I also saw new faces of the international WIL community for the first time. Additionally, within the professional development needs assessment I was reassured and affirmed by several conclusions, while simultaneously struck with new eye-opening realizations. For example, I am delighted to see such an emphasis on the need for professional development opportunities in areas such as "evaluating the quality and impact of WIL." On the other hand, I was somewhat dumbfounded to see "research" at the bottom of the list. All of this brought up new questions and identified new opportunities for me as a contributing member of this international community.

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