

Co-op Research Matters is a monthly newsletter on what's happening in co-op research and WatCACE. We will profile published research, by us and others, and include a practitioner's viewpoint on the article. In addition, we will share updates on current WatCACE projects.

### MAY 2016 ISSUE

- **Article #1**
- **Article #2**
- **Upcoming Events**

**Article #1:** How often do they change their minds and does work-integrated learning play a role? An examination of “major changers” and career uncertainty in higher education.

**Authors:** Maureen Drysdale, Natalie Frost, Margaret McBeath

**Journal:** Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Vol 16 Iss: 2, pg. 145-152

Visit the [Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education website](#) to access the article.

### PURPOSE

To examine the role of cooperative education in changing majors and career uncertainty in Canadian university students.

### DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

143 co-op and non-co-op students at Waterloo completed an online survey.

### PRACTITIONER'S THOUGHTS BY ROSEMARY KAY

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

The findings of this study reinforce my view that work-integrated learning stimulates a positive, synergistic relationship between clear academic focus and career confidence. As a practitioner, it is not surprising to learn that when researchers examined how often students change their minds about their major, they found that “students in cooperative education programs change their majors significantly less often than students in regular programs.” The study suggests that students’ career certainty is enhanced across all academic programs, regardless of major, as they begin the process of integrating their chosen educational plan with work experience. The article also astutely acknowledges the complexity of factors affecting student decision-making.

Does this study raise questions for you that require further research/investigation?

This study is consistent with the substantive body of authoritative research extolling the benefits of work-integrated learning. As the recognized visionary leader in co-operative education, I wonder whether Waterloo can extend our strategic leadership role in WIL. How could we enhance and promote increased access to WIL resources for all Waterloo students? Future investigations could reveal additional innovative solutions to deepen student engagement with WIL resources.

**Article #2:** A behaviour focused assessment of co-op performance: A comparison of co-op and non-co-op graduating students.

**Authors:** Antoine Pennaforte

**Journal:** Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Vol 17 Iss:1, pg. 62-74

Visit the [Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education website](#) to access the article.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, June 23, 2016

### Recent Trends in WIL Research: Where is it going?

Join Dr. Karsten Zegwaard, Director of Cooperative Education at the University of Waikato (New Zealand) and Editor-in-Chief of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, in a discussion on the trends in work integrated learning (WIL) research. Visit the [WatCACE website](#) for more information.

## PURPOSE

To propose a new definition of individuals' performance in work-integrated learning and how to identify performance behaviours of student workers.

## DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

Online survey of 4,707 co-op and non-co-op students at Waterloo with at least one work term or summer work experience.

## PRACTITIONER'S THOUGHTS BY HAROLD HARDER

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

- Student's "task" and "team" performance measures increased as the student's understanding of the workplace and their own level of self-awareness increased.
- When Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) students are treated the same as the employer's full-time staff, the student's performance scores increased. In these workplace environments, students tend to become more "proactive" and contribute more "new ideas."
- According to Pennaforte (2016) stronger connections should be built between all stakeholders in the WIL educational process. Pennaforte (2016) especially mentioned the importance of faculty members working with WIL practitioners (i.e. student advisors and account managers in the uWaterloo CECA context) to help ensure learning expectations are met both in class and at work.

How might the results of this study impact how you do your job?

Sometimes co-op employers ask me how they can be a better employer or how they can best help co-op students grow and develop. As a student advisor and when appropriate, I will mention to employers that recent research has suggested that the more students feel a sense of belonging to their team and organization the greater the likelihood that students will be more proactive and will generate more new ideas. I will continue to offer the [Employer Support Tools](#) to employers that includes effective materials to help facilitate all aspects of the co-op work term including the onboarding process that is critical to student's work performance success.

## HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

### Subscribe

Future issues of Co-op Research Matters newsletters will not be sent out as a blast to the full department, so please let us know if you want to be on our mailing list. Email [watcace@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:watcace@uwaterloo.ca) with your email address with the title "Subscribe to Co-op Research Matters."

### Contribute

If you have suggestions for articles that we should profile, or would like to be contribute the 'practitioner' viewpoint to any of our future issues, please send us a message to [watcace@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:watcace@uwaterloo.ca).