

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.

NOVEMBER 2016

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Article #1: Lifelong learning characteristics, adjustment and extra-role performance in cooperative education.

Authors: Drewery, D., Nevison, C., Pretti, T. J., & Pennaforte, A. (2016)

Journal: Journal of Education and Work, 1-15.

Source: [Taylor & Francis Online](#) (log into the University of Waterloo Library site to access from off-campus)

Purpose: To examine the influence of co-op students' lifelong learning characteristics on socialization outcomes and three types of extra-role performance.

Design/Methodology: This study used a cross-sectional survey of 1,698 undergraduate students from uWaterloo enrolled in co-op and who had just completed a work term in a new role.

Key Findings: Lifelong learning has a positive effect on adjustment and all three forms of performance. Furthermore, adjustment actually explains the link between lifelong learning and performance. Only when lifelong learners are adequately adjusted can they perform at higher levels.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Phil Bezaire

Q: In what ways do these findings have the potential to change practice for us at Waterloo?

A: In an effort to employ more and more co-op students every year, it is easy to forget that student success in co-op means more than simply finding a job. We spend considerable time in preparing students for the job search, but comparatively less time preparing students to walk into a new job and hit the ground running. As such, there could be value in expanding resources aimed at improving performance on the work term.

Given the importance of workplace adjustment in driving organizational success, a specific area of focus may be in emphasizing the importance of adjustment, and teaching how to do so effectively in a new environment. In doing so, we might better equip students to develop desirable employee behaviours and be proactive contributors on their work terms. In turn, this could result in higher overall performance on the work term, improved post-graduation success, and greater employer satisfaction.

There may also be value in considering new co-op evaluation criteria that more directly incorporate elements of adjustment in the workplace. Given the correlation between performance and adjustment, aligning evaluation criteria to related factors such as understanding, confidence, and social acceptance may produce more meaningful co-op evaluations.

Article #2: Perceived employability among undergraduates and the importance of career self-management, work experience and individual characteristics.

Authors: Jackson, D., & Wilton, N. (2016).

Journal: Higher Education Research & Development, 1-16.

Source: [Taylor & Francis Online](#) (log into the University of Waterloo Library site to access from off-campus)

UPDATES

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HECQO) published "[A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning.](#)"

A number of Waterloo faculty and CECA staff contributed to this project through focus groups conducted in June 2015.

Purpose: To examine individuals' perceptions of their employability and the associated influence of career management ability, work experience, and individual differences on perceived employability.

Design/Methodology: An online survey was administered to 480 business undergraduate students at a UK and Australian university.

Key Findings: Undergraduates demonstrate high levels of perceived employability and certain career management competencies (such as transition learning and decision-making), work experience, and individual characteristics all influenced these perceptions.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Katie Denomme

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

A: There were a lot of influences on perceived employability in this article that directly relate to so much of what CECA does. It was very interesting to confirm many of my own observations from working with students through the career development process. Consciously developing decision-making skills can develop confidence for the job search process, and just reflecting on this is a nice reminder of all the campus courses like ARTS111 and AHS107, and programming through WatPD and the new EDGE certificate that complement the work that CECA does with students on researching, reflecting on, and navigating the career decision making process. Many junior students believe they get hired based on their skills, without factoring in who they know or their knowledge of the labour market. This article underscored for me that it is so very important for CECA to encourage networking and market research in the early years of university to promote confidence, and to target resilience building and confidence interventions with our students in addition to skill building.

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

A: This study confirms that our current emphasis on networking and field/employer research is a great way to build students' perceived employability. During visits and virtual conversations with students, Student Advisors encourage students to make the most of their work terms by networking within the companies, reaching out, asking questions, and building more connections. In appointments and workshops Career Advisors emphasize how to network, and the importance of understanding your target employers.

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