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.

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**Article #1:** Exploring cooperative education students' performance and success: A case study (2016)

**Author:** Nevison, C. & Pretti, T. J.

**Journal:** Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 17(3), 325-335

**Source:** Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education

**Purpose:** To investigate how the workplace environment can impact the performance and productivity of the co-op student.

**Methodology:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to form a case study examining a successful co-op workplace.

**Key Findings:** Interviews with students highlighted a few key themes such as autonomy, commitment, motivation, and mentorship which all play a role in increasing the success of the co-op student.

**Practitioner’s Thoughts by Gonenc Fenton (Business Developer, CECA, University of Waterloo)**

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

**A:** If from this we could extrapolate some clear steps on how to be an effective Student Supervisor, we could share this with our employers and increase overall satisfaction rates of students on co-op work terms.

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

**A:** This could increase the confidence of employers who are often unsure of uWaterloo's expectations in hiring a uWaterloo co-op student.

**Q:** Are these findings relevant for other stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, faculty)? If so, in what ways could this information be shared with them?

**A:** Definitely relevant for students and employers. Relevant as well to faculty who also hire co-op students for their research work. This is also a good education piece and validates much of what CECA has known and practiced for some time.

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

**A:** Clearly this was one case. We'd need to apply this methodology to other employers and investigate whether the theories hold true.
Purpose: Researchers examined the way professionals talk about their capacity for resilience and how narratives could be used to construct stories about resilience and aid in developing this capacity.

Methodology: Narrative analyses were used to examine in-depth interviews conducted with 30 participants who all were in various career, life stage, and professional roles.

Key Findings: Resilience was viewed as important by participants and associated with building professional identity. Students’ understanding of resilience should be integrated into WIL programs to improve the quality of experiences and increase students’ success in their careers.

Practitioner’s Thoughts by Rachel Jenson (Faculty Relations Manager, CECA, University of Waterloo)

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

A: Reflection practices are embedded into experiential education opportunities here at Waterloo. Specifically in Co-operative Education, knowing that securing the first work term can be onerous, there may be value in purposeful interventions early on, or right from the outset of a co-op degree, as students begin experiencing challenges or barriers to employment opportunities. There is no doubt benefit to reflecting on a previous job search experience as you prepare for the next co-op search, but we’ve also seen positive conversations come out of efforts to catch students at specific points in the recruitment term when they may be feeling negatively. If we can reach students as they are facing these difficulties, there may be greater possibility of modifying job search behaviour and expectations.

Concepts and real-life examples of building resilience and overcoming career obstacles should be part of the framework of co-op at Waterloo. We shouldn't be afraid to discuss, and even normalize, employment and career challenges that our students are coming up against.