

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.

January 2017

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**Article #1:** Examining the influence of selected factors on perceived co-op work term quality from a student perspective (2016)

**Author:** Drewery, D. Nevison, C. Pretti, T. J., Cormier, L. Barclay, S. & Pennaforte, A.

**Journal:** Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 17(3), 265-277

**Source:** [Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education](#) (PDF)

**Purpose:** To test a model of co-op work-term quality from the perspective of the student.

**Methodology:** A quantitative survey was administered to 1,937 students to measure their perceptions of their most recent co-op work term.

**Key Findings:** Analyses confirmed the conceptual model indicating that the characteristics of the role, relationship with others, and the work environment all impacted co-op work-term quality.

### Practitioner's Thoughts by Franco Solimano (Co-op Student Experience Manager, CECA)

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

**A:** This study helps us understand what students find important during a work term, and how they are evaluating/measuring quality of their experience. Understanding these dimensions can be important when engaging with students and coaching them on a work term to reflect on their experience thus far (e.g. on site visits). The findings of this article could provide a roadmap of questions to be asked that will help students reflect on which quality dimensions already exist in their work term. As well, the article analyzes some of the other factors that affect the work term. In one case, it specifically highlights the correlation between work-family balance and a student's perceived quality of their work term – reminding us through research how work-life balance can impact a student's co-op experience in industry. Finally, the findings in this article have the potential to change what or how we communicate with our employers. Many employers want to provide the best possible learning environment for students, and they may look to our institution for advice on how to create these positive experiences. Sharing the findings of these articles in a productive way could help employers evaluate what they are already doing well and what they can change to ensure the work term offers high quality to students while still benefitting the employer.

**Article #2:** Re-conceptualising graduate employability: The importance of pre-professional identity (2016)

**Authors:** Jackson, D

**Journal:** Higher Education Research & Development, 1-15

**Source:** [Taylor & Francis Online](#)

## UPDATES

We are active on social media! Be sure to follow us on Twitter ([@UW\\_WatCACE](#)) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) for regular updates.

**Purpose:** This article argues for a redefinition of graduate employability to include pre-professional identity (PPI) or an understanding of the skills, qualities, culture, and ideology required for a student's intended profession.

**Design/Methodology:** A literature review was conducted in order to create an argument for integrating PPI into definitions of graduate work-readiness.

**Key Findings:** Using a communities of practice model, PPI can be developed during university years and prepare him/her for their intended profession.

### Practitioner's Thoughts by Marlene Griffith Wrubel (Student Advisor, CECA)

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

**A:** As a Co-op Student Advisor, it is important to look for novel ways to help students answer the question, what makes them employable and job ready? The author refers to this as graduate employability and suggests the development of a pre-professional identity (PPI) as a means to do this. PPI is the idea of students developing an affinity for and knowledge of their chosen profession before graduating from their academic program. It is a deliberate approach to professional job readiness that incorporates the overall university experience. Through a variety of co-op experiences and professional and social activities, students graduate with "a work related identity and disposition (pp926-927)".

I think the PPI model is relevant to advising students and career planning in light of parents and students insistence for utility in a university education that guarantees a job upon graduation. I am challenged to use resources available to me to help my co-op students make the connection between skill development, work, and developing a sense of self and a professional identity. Also, I am reminded to pay attention to campus initiatives such as Co-op 2.0 and taking advantage of services offered by the Centre for Career Action in moving students forward in becoming job ready and prepared to work in their profession.

## HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

### Contribute

If you have suggestions for articles that we should profile, or would like to contribute to the practitioner viewpoint to any future issues, we'd love to hear from you at [watcace@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:watcace@uwaterloo.ca).

### Subscribe

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