Waterloo as a Model Employer
Student Research Project

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Presentation Outline

• Project Description
• Project Findings and Recommendations
• Proposed Welcome Package
• Next Steps
Project Background

- 6th Decade aspires for Waterloo to be “a model employer for co-op students (as rated by students), providing high quality work experiences especially for first-year students”
- Leadership forum discussion and follow-up working group
  - Proposed a multi-unit student research project as a way to start
# Students Involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alannah Robinson, 4B AHS (Coordinator)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Baetsen (Registrar Office)</td>
<td>Irene Izekeli (Registrar Office)</td>
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<td>Balkirat Chohan (Registrar Office)</td>
<td>Erika Naraghi (Retail Services)</td>
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<td>Evana Delay (WatPD)</td>
<td>Tori Nevin (Office of Development and Alumni Affairs)</td>
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<td>Dylan Gardner (Registrar Office)</td>
<td>Chantel Pilon (Student Success Office)</td>
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<td>Shannon Hall (OHD)</td>
<td>Julia Vit (Registrar Office)</td>
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<td>Robyn Hocking (WatPD)</td>
<td>Elizabeth Zhu (Cheriton School of Computer Science)</td>
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Research Team Roles

• WatCACE Director
  – Coordinate with the co-op supervisors whose students are part of the project
  – Supervise project coordinator
Research Team Roles

• WatCACE Student Project Coordinator
  – Employed part-time by WatCACE
  – Coordinate with WatCACE Director on scope and direction for the project
  – Coordinate and support the team of co-op students
  – Support the development of a presentation and report outlining results from the project
Research Team Roles

• Co-op students from participating dept’s
  – Commit 3 hours/week through work term
  – Review existing data and research
  – Conduct and compile interviews with co-op supervisors, co-op students and CECA staff
  – Develop a presentation and report outlining results from the project
Research Questions

• What are the common characteristics of a model employer for co-op students?
• What is the current situation for co-op students working at UWaterloo?
• What recommendations does the project team have for UWaterloo to be a model employer for its co-op students?
Survey Questions

• Three sets of questions developed for interviews with students, supervisors and CECA Student Advisors
  • Supervisors: hiring practices, responsibilities given, support provided
  • Students: motivations for working on campus, support given, work environment
  • CECA Student Advisors: common trends for on-campus supervisors and students
Interviews

- 25 interviews with supervisors on campus
- 20 interviews with co-op students working on campus
- 3 interviews with CECA student advisors who work with students employed on campus
- Transcripts prepared
- Themes identified
Findings and Recommendations

- Goal Setting
- Mid-term Evaluations
- Mentorship and Supervisor Support
- Job Shadowing
- Onboarding
Goal Setting: Student Benefits

• Increases satisfaction in the workplace by creating a way to focus on career goals
• Allows the conscious application of academic learning to practical experience
• Increases likelihood of supervisor support throughout the term; when supervisors understand what students’ goals are, they are more likely to provide the right types of support and guidance
Goal Setting: Supervisor Benefits

- Students who have been guided through the creation of clear goals will have more measurable contributions to the workplace.
- Work term evaluations become easier to complete when students’ goals have been clearly discussed throughout the term.
- Understanding what students want to achieve can help supervisors to determine how students can best contribute to the workplace.
Goal Setting: Implementation

• Set goals early in the term
• Revisit these goals during student meetings to make sure objectives remain clear
• Use goal-completion progress in mid-term and final evaluations
Mid-term Evaluations: Student Benefits

• Can use feedback to improve future performance
• Opportunity to learn about strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement
• Everyone’s on the same page: aligns student’s and supervisor’s vision of student performance
Mid-term Evaluations: Supervisor Benefits

• Providing praise and constructive criticism reinforces student’s desire to improve
• Promotes communication and goal setting
• Opportunity to realign expectations and articulate ways for students to enhance their contributions
Mid-term Evaluations: Implementation

• Use the same criteria from end-of-term evaluation form
• Give student a copy of the mid-term evaluation form at the beginning of the term
• Consider having student do a self-evaluation prior to meeting to discuss performance
Mentorship and Support: Student Benefits

• Learn from more experienced peers
• Build social and professional relationships
• Encouraged to ask questions, apply theoretical knowledge and better understand the structure of the workplace
Mentorship and Support: Supervisor Benefits

• Providing mentorship and support improves student engagement in the workplace

• Increases likelihood of students returning in future terms

• Increases student desire to contribute in a meaningful and useful way
Mentorship and Support: Implementation

• Attempt to connect with students
• Communicate availability
• Encourage students to connect with other experienced employees
• Encourage experienced employees to connect with students
Job Shadowing: Student Benefits

• Experiential learning:
  – increases practical knowledge
  – Improves self-confidence
  – Provides opportunity for employment
  – Allows students to gain skills to complement classroom learning

• Increased understanding and respect for other departments and roles within the workplace
Job Shadowing: Supervisor Benefits

• Provides more rounded work experience for the student
• Increases student independence and awareness of the broad operations within the workplace
• Increases likelihood that student will discover reasons to return to the workplace
Job Shadowing: Implementation

- Encourage students to approach other members of the workplace to explore shadowing opportunities
- Encourage members of the workplace to see merit in providing shadowing opportunities to students
Onboarding

“Onboarding, also known as organizational socialization, refers to the mechanism through which new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours to become effective organizational members”

A well-planned introduction to the workplace is seen as highly beneficial to students and co-op supervisors.
Proposed Welcome Package

Worksheets
• Welcome Letter
• Job Description
• Term Calendar
• Organizational Chart
• Special Projects
• Work Term Report
• Mid-term Performance Evaluation
• Exit Interview

Campus Resources
• OHD Principles
• OHD Student Leadership Program
• Student Success Office
• Athletics
• Federation of Students
• Centre for Career Action
• WatPD
Next Steps

• Winter 2013 Pilot of Welcome Package
  – Will send packages to supervisors interested in participating
  – Will send an electronic copy of the worksheets so they can be customized for the hiring department
  – Will send out brief surveys to participating supervisors and students

• Spring 2013 Staff Conference presentation and package roll-out
Next Steps, ctd.

• Exploration of how to promote more multi-unit projects for co-op students

• Multiple benefits to participating students and departments
  – Increased understanding and appreciation for the institution
  – Increased variety in work term experience
  – End product is a blend of the perspectives of a number of students working in a number of different units
Questions? Feedback?